

9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

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India's GDP rank varies with measurement method

Source: The post India's GDP rank varies with measurement method has been created, based on the article "Is India the world's fourth largest economy?" published in "The Hindu" on 2nd June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Growth and development

Context: Recent discussions arose due to IMF's 2024 GDP projections, placing India potentially as the world's fourth-largest economy by 2025, surpassing Japan. This sparked political narratives emphasizing India's future economic status, highlighting debates around GDP measurement methods and their implications for accurately assessing economic performance and social progress.

Significance of GDP Rankings

- 1. Political Implications:** India's anticipated rise to the fourth-largest economy by 2025 has been attributed politically to leadership success. The government predicts India could become the third-largest economy by 2028, aiming for a high-income, developed status by 2047.
- 2. Limitations of GDP as an Indicator:** GDP doesn't reflect living standards, health, education, or income distribution. It excludes crucial non-market activities, like unpaid women's labor. Despite calls for alternative metrics, GDP remains dominant in economic discourse.

Complexities in GDP Measurement

- 1. Multiple GDP Estimates:** Comparing GDP internationally involves challenges due to varied methodologies and data quality. GDP estimates are initially available only in national currencies, necessitating conversion to a common currency, typically the U.S. dollar.
- 2. Conversion Challenges:** Two main methods convert GDP into dollars: market exchange rates and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Market exchange rates convert GDP at current foreign exchange values. This method positions India as the fifth-largest economy since 2021, projected fourth by 2025, and third by 2028.

Market Exchange Rate vs. PPP

- 1. Limitations of Market Exchange Rates:** Market rates are volatile, hindering stable GDP comparisons over time. They inadequately reflect differences in purchasing power, particularly for non-traded goods like housing and personal services, where developing countries generally have lower prices due to lower wages.
- 2. Advantages of PPP Method:** PPP adjusts GDP to reflect relative purchasing power by equalizing prices for a common basket of goods across countries. This method significantly boosts GDP figures for developing countries like India, providing a better comparison basis.
- 3. India's GDP Rank in PPP Terms:** India became the third-largest economy in PPP terms in 2009 and maintained this rank since. However, PPP ranks show no significant improvement projected between 2024 and 2030, unlike market exchange rate predictions.

Interpretation and Misuse of GDP Metrics

- 1. Misleading Narratives:** Celebrating India's GDP rank based solely on market exchange rates suits certain political narratives but misrepresents actual economic standing. High PPP rankings can create illusions of rapid economic convergence with developed countries.
- 2. Cautions with PPP Metrics:** PPP inflates GDP figures more dramatically for poorer countries with extensive informal economies, significant underemployment, and low wages. Therefore, India's high PPP-based GDP doesn't imply rapid convergence with economies like the U.S., Japan, or Germany.

Real Economic Progress Indicators

1. **Per Capita GDP Reality:** Despite large absolute GDP, India's per capita GDP remains low—\$2,711 in 2024—ranking 144th globally by market exchange rates and 127th by PPP. This highlights the limited correlation between total GDP size and individual prosperity.
2. **Comparative Development Metrics:** Effective economic assessment requires broader indicators measuring fundamental social and economic well-being beyond GDP. Such metrics more accurately reflect genuine progress and living conditions.

Question for practice:

Examine how different methods of GDP measurement influence the perception of India's economic status globally.

Advanced Cooling Methods Cut Data Centre Emissions and Consumption

Source: The post Advanced Cooling Methods Cut Data Centre Emissions and Consumption has been created, based on the article “**How the technology industry is trying to meet its climate goals**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 2nd June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- environmental pollution and degradation. And Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology

Context: The ICT industry must urgently reduce emissions and energy use to meet global climate goals. A new *Nature* study by Microsoft and WSP Global shows that advanced cooling methods—cold plates and immersion cooling—can significantly reduce emissions, energy consumption, and water use compared to traditional air-based cooling.

The Challenge of Heat in Data Centres

1. **How Heat Affects Electronics:** Microchips generate intense heat, like a crowded kitchen. Tighter packing and heavier workloads make chips hotter. Without cooling, systems can fail quickly due to overheating.
2. **Why Cooling Matters:** Heat slows electronic signals, causing malfunctions. Effective cooling ensures smooth performance, longer lifespan, and protects devices from heat damage—similar to how hydration sustains athletes.
3. **Escalating Demands:** Smaller and faster chips drive demand for advanced cooling. As cloud computing grows, data centres must scale capacity while improving heat mitigation.

The Push for Greener Cooling Solutions

1. **Climate Targets for ICT:** To limit global warming, the ICT sector must cut emissions by 42% from 2015 levels by 2030. Greener cooling designs are critical to achieve this.
2. **Need for Systemic Change:** Isolated energy fixes are not enough. If cooling systems run on fossil fuels or use harmful materials, they risk shifting rather than reducing emissions.
3. **Performance of Modern Chips:** Improved chip efficiency is not sufficient. Without better cooling, performance gains are undermined by heat build-up.

Liquid Cooling Technologies Explained

1. **Cold Plates:** Cold plates sit directly on hot chips. Coolant in microchannels absorbs heat and carries it away. This method is 50–80% more effective than traditional fans.

2. Immersion Cooling: Immersion systems submerge hardware in special fluids. In one-phase systems, the fluid stays liquid. In two-phase cooling, it vaporizes, condenses, and recirculates. Both operate silently and reduce corrosion.

3. Benefits and Barriers: These methods improve efficiency and reliability while reducing carbon footprint. However, design complexity and fluid regulations hinder faster adoption.

Evaluating Environmental Trade-Offs

1. Life Cycle Assessment Approach: The study evaluated cold plate, immersion, and air cooling from production to disposal. Cold plate and immersion cooling showed superior performance across emissions, energy, and water use.

2. Limitations of Green Claims: Sustainable cooling must consider full impact. If powered by coal or using toxic fluids, benefits diminish.

3. Systemic Thinking Over Isolated Fixes: Technology must pair with clean energy sources. Without this, environmental benefits are incomplete.

Twin Strategies for Sustainable Cooling

1. Tech Upgrades and Renewable Energy: Cold plates and immersion cooling cut emissions by 15–21%, energy by 15–20%, and water use by 31–52%. These gains are higher than with air cooling.

2. Renewable Energy's Amplified Impact: Switching to clean power cuts emissions by 85–90% and water demand by up to 85%, regardless of cooling method.

3. Holistic Solutions for ICT's Future: The path to climate goals requires combining efficient cooling with renewable energy. Both are essential for a truly green ICT sector.

Question for practice:

Discuss how advanced cooling technologies can help reduce the environmental impact of data centres.

BluSmart collapse shows why culture and governance matter

Source: The post BluSmart collapse shows why culture and governance matter has been created, based on the article “**Slackening corporate governance**” published in “**Financial Express**” on 2nd June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper4-corporate governance.

Context: The collapse of BluSmart, a promising electric vehicle taxi service, has reignited concerns about governance, regulatory neglect, and institutional culture. Its failure has affected not only investors but also a broad group of stakeholders who had placed their trust in its clean and reliable service.

BluSmart's Rise and Sudden Collapse

1. A Trusted Brand Built Quickly: BluSmart offered a clean, dependable transport option and quickly earned customer trust. It stood out in India's tough market by providing value, competitive pricing, wide coverage, and consistent delivery.

2. Comparison with Past Corporate Failures: Like Kingfisher Airlines and Jet Airways, BluSmart had a strong brand and loyal base but collapsed due to poor governance. Such companies win public affection through efficiency but falter when internal systems fail.

3. Ignored Governance Norms: BluSmart joins a long list of Indian firms that ignored foundational business principles. Many collapses in recent years point to widespread disregard for robust governance standards.

Wider Ecosystem Impact

- 1. Fallout for Stakeholders:** BluSmart's failure impacted not just employees but also consumers and vendors. Public disappointment reflects the vital role such companies play in daily life.
- 2. Investor Sentiment and Risk:** These incidents deter especially foreign investors. When governance collapses, doubts emerge about the entrepreneur's vision, stalling investment and sector growth.
- 3. Concerns Over Compliance:** The BluSmart case highlights casual attitudes toward regulatory compliance in fundraising and operations, triggering questions about startup accountability.

From Companies to Institutions

- 1. Superficial Employer Branding:** Firms aspire to be "employers of choice," but few build the required processes. Preferential treatment for promoters undermines this ambition.
- 2. Need for Equitable Culture:** True workplace excellence requires inclusivity, fairness, and a purpose-driven environment where all feel valued and empowered.

Importance of Culture from the Start

- 1. Culture as Foundation:** Stability, transparency, and consistent performance must be embedded early. They are not corrective tools but building blocks of success.
- 2. Ethics Must Be Proactive:** Strong culture prevents collapse. These principles, like physical laws, determine whether organisations endure or fall. Ignoring them is a gamble against long-term survival.

Question for practice:

Examine how the collapse of BluSmart highlights the importance of corporate governance and organisational culture in sustaining business success.

Japan chooses innovation over regulation in AI law

Source: The post Japan chooses innovation over regulation in AI law has been created, based on the article "**How Japan's new AI Act fosters an innovation-first ecosystem**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 3rd June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology, and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights

Context: In May 2025, Japan enacted a transformative AI law focused on **voluntary cooperation over rigid regulation**. Unlike the EU's strict, risk-based model, Japan emphasizes **innovation, coordination, and international leadership**. This approach reflects a strategic choice to make AI the **foundation of national economic revival and digital strength**.

For detailed information on **AI regulation** [read this article here](#)

A Distinctive Legislative Philosophy

- 1. Departure from Risk-Based Regulation:** Japan's law contrasts with the **EU AI Act**, which categorizes AI by risk levels and imposes legal obligations. In contrast, Japan **avoids risk classifications and penalties**, prioritizing flexibility and innovation. Departure from Risk-Based Regulation.

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2. **Establishing a Strategy Headquarters:** An Artificial Intelligence Strategy Headquarters under the Cabinet is tasked with implementing a Basic Plan for AI. It spans research, deployment, global cooperation, and education.

3. **Voluntary Responsibility over Enforcement:** The law promotes **ethical AI use** through voluntary efforts. **Local governments, academia, businesses, and the public** are assigned roles. The government ensures support and guidance without strict enforcement.

4. **State-Led Facilitation and Innovation:** AI is positioned as critical for **economic growth, national security, and administrative efficiency**. The **state acts as a facilitator**, creating an environment free of bureaucratic barriers.

Strengths and Strategic Benefits

1. **Avoiding Overregulation:** The law avoids **stifling innovation** by removing legal constraints. This encourages growth across sectors **without premature legal restrictions**. Avoiding Overregulation.

2. **Signaling Support to Stakeholders:** It assures stakeholders that the **government supports development** rather than regulating it. This may **stimulate broader participation** in AI innovation.

3. **Promoting Public-Private Synergy:** By involving diverse actors, Japan promotes a **unified innovation ecosystem**. **Shared goals** among institutions, academia, and industry drive implementation.

4. **Flexibility and Future-Proofing:** The law allows for periodic reviews and amendments, enabling it to adapt to future challenges and global trends.

Risks and Uncertainties

1. **Accountability Gaps:** Without strict rules, concerns arise over **unreported harm, bias, and AI misuse**. There's uncertainty around **who is accountable** when things go wrong.

2. **Public Trust and Legal Clarity:** The lack of **clear safeguards** could weaken public confidence. As AI becomes widespread, **demands for enforceable standards** may increase.

3. **Balancing Speed with Responsibility:** Japan's approach may favor **agility**, but **defining "responsible AI" in legal terms** may become necessary to maintain credibility.

International Positioning and Global Coordination

1. **Responding to Geopolitical Pressures:** Japan's model is driven by **demographic and technological needs**. Unlike the EU's rights-based stance, Japan views AI as a **growth catalyst**.

2. **Commitment to Global Standards:** **Article 17** mandates **international cooperation**. Japan aligns with **G7, OECD, and UN AI frameworks**, reinforcing its leadership ambitions.

3. **A Diplomatic and Strategic Balance:** Japan aims to **shape global norms** while promoting innovation, balancing national interest with global expectations.

Comparative Global Approaches

1. **The U.S. Model:** The **AI Disclosure Act** promotes transparency and security. It supports **agency-level, sector-specific oversight** for balanced innovation. The U.S. Model

2. **The UAE's Executive-Led Strategy:** The UAE uses pilot programmes and targeted regulation to create trusted ecosystems, blending state control and business agility.

3. **Cultural Confidence in Coordination:** Japan's model is built on institutional trust and consensus governance. Its success hinges on effective coordination and adaptability.

Question for practice:

Evaluate Japan's approach to AI regulation in comparison with the European Union and other global models.

India can benefit from United States research cuts

Source: The post India can benefit from United States research cuts has been created, based on the article "Trump effect: A brain drain from the US to India?" published in "Businessline" on 3rd June 2025

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

Context: The Trump Administration's drastic budget cuts in U.S. medical research pose a setback for global disease control. However, this challenge creates a strategic opportunity for India to attract top-tier scientific talent—especially of Indian origin—to strengthen its healthcare research ecosystem in line with the nation's Viksit Bharat development goals.

Budget Cuts and Global Impact

1. **Severe Reductions in Research Funding:** The 2026 U.S. budget proposes a 26% cut to the Department of Health and Human Services, reducing its allocation by \$100 billion. The National Institutes of Health alone would face a 40% cut, losing \$19 billion—crippling infrastructure, facilities, and administrative support systems.

2. **Threats to Research Environment:** In addition to financial cuts, curbs on academic freedom by the U.S. administration dampen motivation. A shift in research priorities further disrupts the high-quality research environment that universities depend on.

3. **Global Talent Migration Likely:** Due to these setbacks, many scholars may seek to move to more research-friendly environments. Europe and China have already begun actively recruiting U.S.-based researchers.

India's Opportunity and Talent Edge

1. **High-Calibre Talent Pool:** Many U.S. researchers are of Indian origin, particularly in STEM and life sciences, and may be inclined to return. Their experience with advanced technologies and global knowledge networks adds great value to India's research capabilities.

2. **Urgent Public Health Needs:** India's growing burden of infectious diseases, zoonotic outbreaks, and non-communicable diseases like cancer and heart ailments calls for urgent research-driven solutions. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has identified eleven diseases as national research priorities.

3. **Need for India-Specific Research:** Global solutions may not suit India's genetic and socio-economic diversity. India should partner with relevant U.S.-based research teams to create India-centric innovations.

Research Ecosystem and Strategic Strengths

1. **Existing Technological Capacity:** India has strong talent in data science, a growing AI base, and a dynamic pharmaceutical sector. Combined with metro-based healthcare infrastructure, these can support top-quality research.

2. Enabling Projects and Platforms: India's digital public infrastructure and large datasets aid rapid validation. The Genome India Project, aiming to sequence 10,000 genomes, will support precision medicine.

3. Path to Global Research Leadership: Integrated efforts in AI, genomics, and healthcare can enable risk-based diagnostics and optimised population-level healthcare—benefiting India and the world.

Structural Reforms Needed

1. Enhancing AI Research Focus: India's AI efforts are currently skewed toward simpler applications. To support medical research, AI must evolve to address complex ethical and legal dimensions.

2. Better Institutional Integration: Despite ICMR and industry progress, stronger coordination is essential. A horizontal and vertical collaboration matrix can connect efforts and improve outcomes.

3. Building Research-Conducive Environments: To attract global talent, India must offer meaningful missions, academic freedom, and administrative autonomy in research institutions.

Repatriating Talent Effectively

1. Learning from the Past: Previous attempts to bring back researchers were inconsistent. However, institutions like IITs and IISc can now offer global-quality environments and should be empowered to host returnees.

2. Policy and Funding Reforms: India must ensure competitive pay, reduce red tape, and ease partnerships. Strong institutional support is vital for long-term success.

3. Urgency and National Drive Needed: Like the post-1991 return of engineers that revived the auto sector, India can now lead in health research—with top-level political backing and active private sector involvement.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can turn the US research funding cuts into an opportunity to strengthen its healthcare research ecosystem.

India Must Secure Critical Minerals for Clean Energy

Source: The post India Must Secure Critical Minerals for Clean Energy has been created, based on the article “**India Must Secure Critical Minerals for Clean Energy**” published in “**Business Standard**” on 3rd June 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 recent Chinese restrictions on rare earth magnet exports have exposed India's deep reliance on mineral imports. This disruption threatens the EV and clean energy sectors, prompting urgent calls for policy shifts in exploration, mining, and processing of critical minerals.

For detailed information on **Critical Mineral Mission of India- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Dependence on Chinese Exports

1. Rare Earth Magnet Shortages: China's April 4 export curbs have left Indian EV makers scrambling, with inventories depleting. Industry delegations are now trying to negotiate with China while seeking assistance from India's commerce ministry.

2. Overdependence on Imports: India depends heavily on imported rare earth elements (REEs), despite needing only small amounts. These are essential for green energy, electronics, and defence technology.

3. Wider Supply Chain Risks: India also imports other critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite. Supply disruptions in any of these threaten clean energy plans and electric mobility targets.

Structural Weaknesses in India's Mineral Sector

1. Neglect of Exploration and Mining: Despite having domestic reserves, India has failed to develop them. Bureaucratic hurdles and slow government action have impeded large-scale mineral exploration.

2. Absence of Processing Capacity: India lacks capacity in processing key minerals like lithium, graphite, and REEs. Without these facilities, the country remains dependent on external suppliers for refined products.

3. Policy and Institutional Gaps: Over-reliance on public sector companies and poorly designed auction models have discouraged private and global investments in mineral exploration and mining.

Global Competition and China's Dominance

1. China's Supply Chain Control: China leads in both mining and processing of REEs, cobalt, lithium, and graphite. It controls major mines in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and has built massive refining capacity.

2. Slow Global Response: While countries like the US, UK, EU, and India have recognized their dependence on China, meaningful action to diversify supply chains is only now beginning.

3. India's Comparative Potential: India holds significant cobalt and REE reserves. Lithium reserves are limited, but global alternatives exist in countries like Australia, Argentina, and the US — yet China dominates due to its processing scale.

Urgent Need for Domestic Capacity Building

1. Accelerated Exploration Needed: Recent announcements suggest intent to fast-track exploration, but progress remains slow. A complete overhaul of India's approach is necessary.

2. Processing as a Strategic Priority: Without domestic processing, self-reliance is impossible. India must design production-linked incentives (PLIs) to attract investment, despite environmental concerns.

3. Widening the Focus: Beyond current critical minerals, India should also prioritize thorium and natural hydrogen, both of which offer strategic energy potential. Thorium can revolutionize nuclear energy, and India has strong reserves.

Conclusion

India must overcome its inertia in mineral policy. It needs faster exploration, private sector participation, and strong incentives for domestic processing. Without these, India's clean energy ambitions will remain at the mercy of geopolitical pressures.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's dependence on critical mineral imports impacts its clean energy and electric vehicle ambitions.

India transforms energy sector to fuel growth

Source: The post India transforms energy sector to fuel growth has been created, based on the article “A strategy fuelled by vision, powered by energy” published in “The Hindu” on 4th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Growth and development And Infrastructure (energy)

Context: India recently overtook Japan as the world's fourth-largest economy, with its GDP reaching \$4.3 trillion in 2025. This marks a decade of reform-driven growth under Prime Minister Modi. The energy sector has played a vital role in this economic transformation.

Strategic Energy Vision for a Growing Economy

- 1. Rising Global Energy Role:** India is the third-largest energy and oil consumer and the fourth-largest LNG importer. With demand projected to grow 2.5 times by 2047, India will drive 25% of global incremental demand.
- 2. Four-Pillar Energy Strategy:** The government addresses availability, affordability, and sustainability by focusing on (1) diversification, (2) domestic production, (3) renewable transition, and (4) affordability.
- 3. Expanding Exploration Acreage:** Exploration coverage doubled from 8% in 2021 to 16% in 2025. Reforms like reducing 'No-Go' areas by 99% and Open Acreage Licensing (OALP) rounds support the goal of covering 1 million sq. km by 2030.
- 4. New Pricing Mechanism and Contracts:** Gas prices are now linked to 10% of the Indian crude basket, with a 20% premium for new wells. Shared infrastructure and revenue-sharing contracts reduce costs and speed up monetisation.

Strengthening Exploration and Production

- 1. Technological Boost to Exploration:** Initiatives like Mission Anveshan, airborne gravity gradiometry, and continental shelf mapping have expanded data and built confidence in frontier basins like Andamans, Mahanadi, and Cauvery.
- 2. Significant Discoveries Across Basins:** Over 25 hydrocarbon finds have been made in Mumbai Offshore, Cambay, Mahanadi, and Assam basins. Key sites include Suryamani, Vajramani, Utkal, and Konark, adding 75 MMtoe and 2,700 MMSCM of gas.
- 3. Global Collaborations for Output Growth:** ONGC's partnership with bp is set to raise Mumbai High oil output by 44% and gas by 89%. A Houston-based data centre enhances global access to India's exploration data.

Expanding Infrastructure and Access

- 1. Fuel Supply and Distribution Network:** India operates 24,000 km of pipelines and nearly 96,000 retail outlets. Over 67 million people visit petrol stations daily.
- 2. City Gas Growth and Tariff Reform:** City gas networks expanded from 55 to 307 areas since 2014. PNG connections rose from 25 lakh to 1.5 crore, and CNG stations crossed 7,500. Unified tariffs ensure broad access.
- 3. Natural Gas Stability and Growth:** Gas production rose from 28.7 BCM in 2020–21 to 36.4 BCM in 2023–24. Gas is now in the 'No Cut' category for transport and household use.

Accelerating the Green Energy Shift

- 1. Biofuel Impact and Ethanol Scaling:** Ethanol blending rose from 1.5% in 2013 to 19.7% in 2025. This saved ₹1.26 lakh crore in forex, cut emissions by 643 lakh MT, and paid ₹2.79 lakh crore to distillers and farmers.

2. Compressed Biogas and Feedstock Diversification: Over 100 CBG plants are operational under SATAT, with a 5% blending target by 2028. Feedstocks now range from molasses to maize.

3. Green Hydrogen Initiatives: Tenders for 8.62 lakh tonnes of hydrogen and 3,000 MW of electrolyzers have been awarded. Major projects are led by IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, and NRL.

4. Hybrid Energy Policy Reform: The Oilfields Act 2024 enables hybrid leases. Simplified contracts for small fields ease compliance and unlock marginal reserves.

Enhancing Efficiency through Integration

1. Digital Mapping and Planning Synergy: Over one lakh energy assets are mapped under PM Gati Shakti. Integration with the National Master Plan has saved ₹169 crore on projects like the Indo-Nepal pipeline.

2. Simplified Contracting Systems: Policy reforms have boosted competitiveness and unlocked new production zones across sedimentary basins.

Protecting Consumer Interests

1. Subsidised Pricing Amid Global Volatility: Despite a 58% surge in global LPG prices, PMUY beneficiaries pay ₹553 per cylinder through targeted subsidies.

2. Stable Domestic Fuel Prices: Excise duty cuts have kept fuel prices stable, unlike in neighbouring countries.

3. Energy as a Pillar of Sovereignty: India's energy ecosystem now reflects confidence, resilience, and long-term vision for sustainability and national security.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's energy sector reforms have contributed to its rise as the world's fourth-largest economy.

India and Australia deepen strategic defence cooperation

Source: The post India and Australia deepen strategic defence cooperation has been created, based on the article "India-Australia defence ties beyond American shadows" published in "The Hindu" on 4th June 2025

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

Context: Donald Trump's potential return to the U.S. presidency has disrupted global security dynamics. With NATO under burden-sharing pressure and reduced American commitments, middle powers like India and Australia face a strategic moment to enhance their bilateral defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Strategic Complementarity and Shared Vision

1. Geographic and Operational Synergy: Australia bridges the Indian and Pacific Oceans and holds military assets near Southeast Asia. This supports India's maritime goals. The Australian Defence Force's coalition experience adds value to Indian capabilities, evident in the recent air-to-air refuelling arrangement.

2. Converging Interests: Both nations are concerned about China's assertive behaviour and seek regional stability. Australia's influence in the Pacific complements India's expanding outreach to island nations.

3. Bilateral Foundation Strength: India's ties with Japan, South Korea, and Europe are useful, but the New Delhi-Canberra relationship stands out for its institutional depth. Australia now views India as a "top-tier security partner," based on a decade of high-level political and strategic investment.

Institutional Mechanisms and Military Cooperation

1. Strategic Frameworks: The 2020 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the 2+2 ministerial dialogue since 2021 support coordinated strategic planning.

2. Interoperability Arrangements: The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement facilitates shared logistics during joint operations. The 2024 refuelling pact enables the Royal Australian Air Force to expand the reach of Indian aircraft.

3. Regular Military Exercises: Exercises like AUSTRAHIND (Army), AUSINDEX (Navy), and participation in Pitch Black and Malabar reflect consistent military cooperation and trust-building.

Limitations and :Regional Complexities

1. India's Continental Challenges: India faces ongoing border disputes with China and security issues with Pakistan, limiting its ability to fully shift to maritime strategy.

2. Australia's Defence Transition: Australia is redefining its regional role through AUKUS, advanced acquisitions, and deeper ties with island nations. This process is still evolving.

Priority Areas for Deeper Engagement

1. Expand Tri-Service Cooperation: Current naval focus should widen. Joint tri-service exercises and a staff-level forum are needed. A major combined exercise within a decade could test interoperability.

2. Enhanced Representation in Canberra: India should raise its Defence Adviser's post to a one-star level and add Army and Air Force officers. Dedicated staff should handle Pacific Island engagement.

3. Strengthen Operational-Level Dialogue: Uniformed personnel should contribute to strategic talks. Fellowships and war-gaming exchanges can promote shared understanding.

4. Joint MRO and Patrol Boat Initiatives: India and Australia can collaborate in naval MRO. Co-producing patrol boats for island nations would increase mutual technological exposure and regional impact.

Resetting Defence Industry Collaboration

1. Tapping MSME Potential: Indian firms often avoid Australian-based OEMs. The MSME sectors in both countries can jointly develop dual-use technologies.

2. Aligning Innovation Models: Both sides are promoting indigenisation. A framework like U.S.-India INDUS X could support MSME-level collaboration in defence and aerospace.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India and Australia can strengthen their defence cooperation to address emerging regional security challenges.

Decisions on mustard oil shape India's public health future

Source: The post Decisions on mustard oil shape India's public health future has been created, based on the article "A ban, a split verdict, and a health concern" published in "The Hindu" on 4th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Agriculture And bio-technology

Context: Two major decisions—the 2021 FSSAI ban on blended mustard oil and the 2024 Supreme Court ruling against GM mustard (DMH-11)—aimed to protect public health. However, these actions alone may not fully address the health concerns caused by high erucic acid levels in Indian mustard oil.

Regulatory Actions and Their Objectives

1. **FSSAI Ban on Blending:** The FSSAI banned manufacturing and sale of blended mustard oil from June 2021 to curb adulteration and boost domestic mustard production. Indian law permits up to 20% blending with other oils, but this was disallowed for mustard oil.

2. **Supreme Court on GM Mustard:** In July 2024, the Supreme Court invalidated the government's approval for GM mustard DMH-11, citing insufficient health impact evaluation.

3. **Common Health Goal:** Both actions aimed to protect mustard oil consumers' health, but key challenges remain unaddressed.

Health Risks from Erucic Acid

1. **Excessive Levels in Indian Mustard:** Indian mustard oil contains 40–54% erucic acid, far exceeding the global standard of <5%. This raises health concerns in many countries.

2. **Animal Study Findings:** Lab tests show high erucic acid causes heart problems, organ damage, and growth issues in animals. While human effects remain unproven, the oil faces global stigma.

3. **Global Practice:** Countries like Canada and Europe use canola oil, which has less than 2% erucic acid.

Blending: Challenges and Possibilities

1. **Nutritional Benefits:** Blended mustard oil lowers erucic acid content and improves the fatty acid profile, reducing LDL and increasing HDL cholesterol.

2. **Adulteration Concerns:** FSSAI's 2020 survey found 24.21% of oil samples, especially mustard oil, failed quality standards due to adulteration.

3. **Better Regulation, Not Ban:** Blended oil should be allowed in sealed, branded form with clear labelling. State-level enforcement and food safety infrastructure must be strengthened.

Promise of GM Mustard

1. **DMH-11's Advantages:** DMH-11 offers higher yield and 30–35% erucic acid, lower than traditional mustard. This reduces blending needs and edible oil imports.

2. **Health and Economic Gains:** With India's edible oil import bill at \$20.56 billion, promoting GM mustard can reduce dependence on imports.

3. **Long-Term Priority:** India must develop mustard crops with <5% erucic acid to meet global health standards and ensure public safety.

Question for practice:

Examine how the two major decisions on mustard oil—FSSAI's blending ban and the Supreme Court's ruling on GM mustard—impact public health and edible oil policy in India.

Human exposomics approach can improve public health

Source: The post Human exposomics approach can improve public health has been created, based on the article "Exposomics for better environmental health" published in "The Hindu" on 5th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health. AND GS Paper3- Environment

Context: World Environment Day 2025 focuses on ending plastic pollution. This brings attention to invisible hazards like microplastics, which cannot be detected with current technologies. India, bearing 25% of the global environmental disease burden, must adopt integrated, science-based approaches like *exposomics* to reduce health risks and healthcare costs.

The Growing Environmental Disease Burden

1. **India's Alarming Health Impact:** India faces nearly three million deaths and over 100 million DALYs from occupational and environmental health (OEH) risks. Air pollution and solid fuel use are leading contributors.
2. **Global Estimates from GBD 2021:** The Global Burden of Disease study in 2021 attributed 18.9% of global deaths and 14.4% of DALYs to OEH risks. PM2.5 caused 4.7 million deaths, and household air pollution led to 3.1 million.
3. **Link to Chronic Diseases:** In India, OEH risks are responsible for more than 50% of non-communicable disease burdens such as heart disease, stroke, asthma, COPD, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.
4. **Severe Effects on Children:** Lead exposure in children under five results in high IQ loss. India alone accounts for 154 million IQ points lost—20% of the global estimate.

Gaps in Current Risk Assessments

1. **Limited Range of Factors:** Current GBD assessments include only around 11 environmental risks due to a lack of human exposure data. Missing categories include microplastics, chemical mixtures, and noise pollution.
2. **Overlooked Interactions:** Environmental risks interact with metabolic, behavioral, genetic, and social factors in complex ways. Single-risk estimates miss these synergies.
3. **Amplified Risks from Climate Change:** Climate change worsens heat, air pollution, storms, floods, and vector-borne diseases. It also impacts food systems and mental health, especially in underserved populations.
4. **Inadequate Models for Policy:** Because many risks and their interactions are unaccounted for, current disease burden estimates are conservative and not useful for prioritizing scalable prevention strategies.

Exposomics: A Holistic Solution

1. **Beyond Genetics:** Genetics alone explains less than half the risk for common diseases. Genome mapping led to the idea of the exposome, which tracks all life-long exposures affecting health.
2. **What the Exposome Captures:** The exposome includes exposures from chemical, biological, physical, and psycho-social environments. It studies how these interact with diet, lifestyle, and biology to influence disease.
3. **Technologies Enabling Exposomics:** It uses wearable sensors, untargeted biomonitoring, organs-on-chips, and AI for exposure-wide association studies (EWAS) to match genome-wide models.
4. **Urgent Need for Data Infrastructure:** For exposomics to work, interoperable and accessible data ecosystems are essential. Harmonised repositories must support long-term collaboration.

India's Opportunity for Integration

1. **Time to Leap Ahead:** Though challenging, India can adopt exposomics through its strength in digital and data-driven public health. It enables early disease prediction and low-cost care.

2. Embedding Environmental Health: By aligning environmental and health systems, India can reduce chronic disease and improve preventive care efficiency.

3. Towards a Healthier Future: India must engage with the global exposome movement. Future Environment Days may celebrate the exposome as the key to achieving health equity and prevention.

Question for practice:

Examine how the concept of the human exposome can help address the limitations of current environmental health risk assessments in India.

India must revive forgotten crops for sustainable future

Source: The post India must revive forgotten crops for sustainable future has been created, based on the article “Aiming for an era of ‘biohappiness ’in India” published in “The Hindu” on 5th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Agriculture and Environment

Context: India’s agrobiodiversity and traditional food knowledge are rapidly declining, especially in tribal and rural regions. This loss mirrors the global biodiversity crisis and threatens nutrition security, cultural identity, and ecological resilience.

India’s Rich Biodiversity and Its Decline

1. Global Significance of India’s Biodiversity: India holds nearly **8% of the world’s biodiversity**, despite covering only **2% of global land area**. It is one of **17 megadiverse countries**, contains parts of **four global biodiversity hotspots**, and is a centre of **global food-crop diversity**.

2. Economic and Ecological Importance: India’s forests provide ecosystem services valued at over **₹130 trillion annually**, sustaining most rural livelihoods. The ongoing depletion of biodiversity reduces **GDP** and blocks progress toward **sustainable development**.

3. Homogenized Food Systems and Their Consequences: Global food systems rely heavily on just **three crops—rice, wheat, and maize**—which provide over **50% of plant-based calories**. This concentration results in **nutritional imbalances** and **greater vulnerability to climate shocks**.

4. Health Impacts of Crop Uniformity: Technological advances in agriculture have increased productivity, but benefits are **unevenly distributed**. The focus on few staples correlates with rising **non-communicable diseases** like **obesity and diabetes**, exposing the fragility of current food systems.

The Value of Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS)

1. Nutritional and Climate Resilience: Crops such as **small millets, amaranth, jackfruit, buckwheat, yams, and indigenous legumes** are rich in nutrients, adapted to local climates, and resilient to stress. These “**orphan crops**” are now considered “**opportunity crops**.”

2. Loss of Indigenous Knowledge: Traditional knowledge of the **nutritional and medicinal** value of local plants is fading. This includes practices preserved by communities like the **Nyishi and Apatani** in northeast India.

3. Cultural and Culinary Importance: These crops are deeply tied to **local traditions** and **ecological wisdom**, essential for building **sustainable and diverse food systems**.

Revival through Community-Led Missions

1. Restoring Agrobiodiversity in Kolli Hills: Farmers in **Kolli Hills, Tamil Nadu**, once grew millets but shifted to **cash crops** like cassava and pepper, reducing crop diversity. The **M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation**

(MSSRF) helped restore millet cultivation through **community empowerment**, especially **women**, and promotion of **local value chains**.

2. **Millet Missions Across States:** Initiatives like the **Shree Anna Yojana** and **Odisha Millet Mission** promote millet revival. In **Koraput district**, community efforts are reviving millet cultivation from **seed to consumption**.

3. **Expanding Public Food Programs:** National efforts focus on **ragi, jowar, and bajra**. Future steps should expand to **minor millets** and include them in the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.

Future Directions and Biohappiness

1. **Towards an Evergreen Revolution:** The **Evergreen Revolution** envisioned by **M.S. Swaminathan** emphasized **ecological balance** and **nutrition security**, not chemical intensification.

2. **New Scientific Opportunities:** India can lead an **interdisciplinary biodiversity science** to address food, health, climate, disaster risk, and employment needs for **1.4 billion people**.

3. **Path to Biohappiness:** Using biodiversity for public well-being can lead to **Biohappiness**—a future grounded in **health, sustainability, and cultural pride**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India can revive its agrobiodiversity to ensure nutrition security and ecological sustainability.

India must coordinate monetary and fiscal strategy for recovery

Source: The post India must coordinate monetary and fiscal strategy for recovery has been created, based on the article “**Need for monetary, fiscal support**” published in “**Businessline**” on 5th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy- growth and development

Context: India is navigating external conflicts, trade disruptions, and domestic economic challenges. The post-conflict scenario with Pakistan and global tariff wars raise questions about the appropriate roles of monetary and fiscal policy. This article discusses how the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) and fiscal measures must coordinate to support recovery.

Evolving Role of Monetary Policy

1. **Favourable Conditions for Rate Cut:** With growth staying below potential and inflation at 4%, the MPC faces a favourable setting to cut interest rates. The main issue is determining the right quantum and its alignment with fiscal measures.

2. **External Pressures on Policy:** Rising Japanese yields and core inflation raise risks of yen carry-trade reversal. MPC decisions must account for such global factors while maintaining domestic stability.

3. **Targeted Credit Support:** Credit easing should focus on specific sectors. Fiscal policy must complement this to maximise policy effectiveness.

Fiscal Policy Imperatives Post-Conflict

1. **Increased Defence and Infrastructure Spending:** Post-Operation Sindoor, defence and infrastructure outlays will rise. Indigenous missile and drone production has improved, boosting related sectors.

2. **Surge in Defence Sector Stocks:** The Nifty India Defence Index rose 20% in 20 days, outperforming Nifty50. Firms like Cochin Shipyard and Bharat Dynamics are leading this growth.

3. Financing for Smaller Suppliers: Smaller supply-chain firms need adequate bank financing to sustain growth and promote manufacturing self-reliance.

Trade and Currency Management

1. Weak Global Demand Conditions: Uncertain global policies are affecting exporters and importers. Export credit growth remains sluggish, indicating demand weakness.

2. Beyond Credit: Structural Support Needed: Exports need infrastructure, digitalisation, and streamlined trade finance to regain momentum.

3. Flexible Exchange Rate Regime: Though the rupee is stable, a market-driven rate under orderly conditions enables firms to hedge risks and gives monetary policy more autonomy.

Inflation Control and Supply Reforms

1. Persistent Consumer Price Pressure: Despite recent low inflation driven by food prices, consumers face higher costs. FMCG firms using “double-shrinkflation” strategies hurt consumer welfare.

2. Supply-Side Reforms Essential: Improving storage, logistics, crop diversification, and easing input bottlenecks are necessary to ensure long-term price stability.

3. Leveraging Low Crude Prices: Passing on crude oil price benefits can ease inflation and create space for further rate cuts.

Strategic Global Positioning

1. Opportunities in Global Realignment: Conflicts and trade wars may open new trade routes and alliances. India should explore emerging connector countries to diversify trade.

2. Unlocking India's Global Potential: These shifts can redefine India's trade strategy and boost long-term growth.

Question for practice:

Examine how coordinated monetary and fiscal policies can help India manage economic recovery amid external conflicts and global trade disruptions.

India must respond to the changing UK EU ties

Source: The post India must respond to the changing UK EU ties has been created, based on the article “A Eurocentric reset, a gateway for India” published in “The Hindu” on 6th June 2025

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

Context: U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent agreement with the EU marks a significant reset in their relations. This development, encompassing trade, defence, and border regulations, demands India's attention due to its strategic implications, potentially reshaping trade dynamics, diplomatic alliances, and diaspora mobility.

Impact on India's Export Dynamics

1. Trade Simplification and Compliance: The U.K.-EU regulatory alignment may ease compliance for Indian exporters. Currently, India's exports to the EU and U.K. total approximately \$98 billion annually. Unified standards could streamline processes and reduce costs, notably benefiting pharmaceuticals and seafood sectors.

2. Sector-specific Opportunities: India, a major generic medicine supplier to the U.K., stands to gain significantly from unified pharmaceutical standards, accelerating approvals. Indian seafood exports, valued at around \$7.38 billion, could also face fewer trade barriers, enhancing competitiveness.

3. Challenges for SMEs: However, stringent unified standards could disadvantage Indian SMEs lacking resources. To mitigate this, India should intensify initiatives like the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) and Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes to strengthen export capabilities.

For detailed information on **India-UK Free Trade Agreement 2025: A Strategic Leap in Bilateral and Global Trade Architecture** [read this article here](#)

Strengthening India's Diplomatic Influence

1. Enhanced Global Coordination: A unified U.K.-EU foreign policy strengthens India's international positioning, notably in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, G-20, and WTO. India's existing strategic partnerships with the EU and U.K. could benefit significantly from coordinated western diplomacy.

2. Defence and Technological Cooperation: Deeper cooperation with the U.K. and EU, particularly France and Germany, can enhance India's defence modernisation. Landmark defence agreements and trade with these nations provide opportunities for advanced technological collaboration, particularly addressing shared concerns about China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

3. Leadership in Global Governance: India's role in global governance could be amplified by leveraging the U.K.-EU alignment. A united Western stance could support India's initiatives on climate finance, digital infrastructure, and international governance reform, especially following India's 2023 G-20 presidency.

Boosting Diaspora and Mobility Opportunities

1. Enhanced Talent Mobility: The U.K.-EU border coordination could improve mobility opportunities for Indian professionals. Currently, the U.K. is a major destination for Indian students, with over 1,10,000 student visas issued in 2024. Better border policies could foster a semi-integrated talent corridor, benefitting professionals and students alike.

2. Broader Migration Agreements

This coordination could also strengthen India's migration agreements with Germany, France, and Portugal. Integrating these agreements into a broader framework could significantly enhance diaspora mobility and education opportunities across Europe.

India must proactively modernise its infrastructure, reform export policies, and strategically engage in global governance to fully capitalise on these evolving U.K.-EU relations.

Question for practice:

Examine how the recent U.K.-EU reset could influence India's trade, diplomacy, and diaspora mobility.

India considers nuclear law amendments for greater private participation

Source: The post India considers nuclear law amendments for greater private participation has been created, based on the article "Should India amend its nuclear energy laws?" published in "The Hindu" on 6th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructure: Energy

Context: India is considering amendments to its nuclear laws—primarily the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act (CLNDA), 2010, and the Atomic Energy Act (AEA), 1962—to allow private sector participation. This step aligns with India's ambition to boost nuclear capacity significantly from 8 GW to 100 GW by 2047, aiming for clean energy expansion.

For detailed information on **India's plan to amend nuclear liability laws** [read this article here](#)

Need for Amendments

- 1. Goals and Capacity Expansion:** India's target of reaching 100 GW of nuclear energy capacity requires expanding beyond existing domestic capabilities. Achieving this long-term goal would need foreign involvement in addition to strengthening local infrastructure.
- 2. Investment Roadblocks:** Current Indian laws prevent foreign companies from participating in the nuclear sector. This legal barrier discourages necessary investments and stifles the envisioned growth in nuclear capacity.
- 3. Foreign Companies and Liability Issues:** Companies from countries like France, Japan, and the U.S. have expressed concerns over the liability framework, saying it prevents their entry. Russia's Rosatom was indemnified by India under earlier contractual arrangements, which are no longer legally permissible under current law.

Critical Perspectives

- 1. Questioning Investment Rationale:** The assumption that legal amendments alone would unlock foreign investments is contested. Major nuclear suppliers have not significantly expanded capacity domestically, which raises doubts about their ability or interest in large-scale investment in India.
- 2. Economic Considerations:** Investment decisions are primarily guided by profitability. There is no clear trend suggesting that changes in liability laws would automatically trigger large-scale investments, especially when supplier countries themselves are not aggressively expanding nuclear infrastructure.

Liability and Accountability Concerns

- 1. Past Legislative Debates:** Previous proposals to amend liability provisions faced criticism on the grounds that they allowed multinationals to escape responsibility, especially in light of past industrial disasters like the Bhopal gas tragedy.
- 2. Impact on Indian Industry** The liability framework has also affected domestic suppliers. After the CLNDA came into force, suppliers began refusing to provide components. In response, public sector operators like NPCIL offered indemnity through contracts—a legally untested and controversial solution.

Technology Transfer and Strategic Concerns

- 1. Technology Transfer Realities:** Technology transfer by private firms depends on commercial interest and regulatory allowances by supplier governments. Even past collaborations with Russia did not involve full transfer of critical technologies.
- 2. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** Newer companies producing SMRs show greater willingness for technology transfer due to market access motivations. However, high capital costs and unproven scalability of factory-based production models limit near-term potential.

Future Viability and Economic Risks

- 1. Economic Risks of SMRs:** The main challenge with SMRs is not their technical design but their high development and installation costs. The assumption that SMRs will reduce costs through assembly-line manufacturing remains untested.

2. Uncertain Market Dynamics: India's previous efforts to attract foreign technology in sectors like defense saw limited success despite liberalised FDI policies. Similarly, hopes of SMR-based transformation may remain speculative unless economic and technological conditions improve.

International Liability Standards

1. Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC): The CSC focuses on quick victim compensation and limits liability to operators unless contractually agreed or in cases of gross misconduct. This aims to avoid lengthy legal processes and ensure timely relief.

2. Sovereign Responsibilities: Governments are ultimately responsible for compensating victims of nuclear accidents. Insurance pools and CSC mechanisms provide a structured fund to enable immediate disbursement in case of incidents.

Question for practice:

Discuss the rationale and implications of amending India's existing nuclear liability laws to facilitate private and foreign participation in nuclear energy expansion.

AI Growth Moves Faster Than Global Privacy Laws

Source: The post AI Growth Moves Faster Than Global Privacy Laws has been created, based on the article "AI's unchecked ascent: How big tech is outpacing the regulatory rulebook" published in "The Hindu" on 6th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper

Context: Artificial Intelligence is advancing rapidly, led by firms like Google, Meta, and OpenAI. As these companies deploy more powerful tools, global concerns grow about data privacy and regulatory control. This article explores how current legal systems struggle to keep up with the pace of AI expansion.

For detailed information on **Is the current regulatory system equipped to deal with AI?** [read this article here](#)

Data as the Fuel of AI Expansion

1. Rapid AI Advancement: Companies such as OpenAI, Meta, Google, Anthropic, and Microsoft are constantly unveiling more capable AI models. Their growth relies heavily on vast data pools, sourced from both public platforms and personal user activity.

2. Extensive Data Collection: These tech firms collect data from internet scraping and individual users. This data powers AI models offered to the public, often through tiered services. Users are often unaware of the extent of this data extraction.

3. Scrutiny and Regulatory Pressure: Firms have faced legal challenges and public backlash over their practices. They have been fined and questioned by courts, regulators, and citizens across major global markets.

High-Profile Lawsuits and Settlements

1. Google's Legal Troubles: In *Brown et al vs Google LLC* (2020), users claimed the company tracked them in "incognito" mode. Google agreed to a settlement worth up to \$7.8 billion and committed to deleting large volumes of stored data.

2. More Privacy Breaches: In a separate case, Google paid \$1.4 billion to settle allegations by the Texas Attorney General for illegally tracking user locations and biometric data without consent.

3. Meta's Data Violations: Meta was also accused of misusing users' biometric data. It settled the matter for \$1.4 billion, all while expanding its business in Texas. Both companies denied wrongdoing in their settlements.

4. OpenAI's Copyright Battles: OpenAI is facing lawsuits for scraping personal and copyrighted data without permission to train ChatGPT. Plaintiffs include The New York Times, Ziff Davis, and Indian publishers.

Legal Strategy and Regulatory Gaps

1. Avoiding Legal Precedents: By settling cases out of court and denying liability, tech companies avoid rulings that could set legal standards against them or the wider industry.

2. Uninterrupted AI Expansion: Despite mounting litigation, companies continue refining and releasing AI tools at high speed. Legal challenges have not slowed development.

3. Regulatory Lag: Lawmakers and legal frameworks cannot match the speed at which AI technology is evolving. Enforcement often comes too late to shape innovation.

Global Regulatory Responses

1. Europe's Regulatory Push: The EU enforces GDPR with strict penalties and has fined Meta under the Digital Markets Act. However, the EU AI Act won't be fully effective until August 2025.

2. India's Balanced Approach: India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, combines consent-based regulation with adaptive flexibility. The country seeks to regulate and lead in AI simultaneously.

3. China's Tight Control: China enforces strict data transfer rules but strongly promotes domestic AI development. Local firms are backed to advance cutting-edge technologies.

The Regulatory Gap in Practice

1. Tech Moves Faster Than Law: Despite lawsuits and fines, AI development continues rapidly. Legal actions trail behind, rarely acting as restraints.

2. Erosion of Privacy Norms: User privacy and ethical principles are often addressed after violations occur, not before. AI development seems driven more by innovation than by regulation.

Question for practice:

Examine how global legal and regulatory systems are struggling to keep pace with the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence.

Glacier preservation needs unified water management from source

Source: The post Glacier preservation needs unified water management from source has been created, based on the article "Water management in India needs a new course" published in "The Hindu" on 7th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment

Context: The year 2025 has brought global focus on glacier preservation, marked by World Water Day's theme and the UN's declaration of the International Year of Glacier Preservation. These developments, along with the Decade of Action on Cryospheric Science, call for a unified approach to water management from glaciers to oceans.

Global Focus on Glaciers and Oceans

1. UN-Led Glacier Preservation Campaigns: World Water Day 2025 emphasized glacier preservation. March 21 also marked the first World Day for Glaciers. The UN launched a Decade of Action on Cryospheric Science (2025–34) to promote glacier protection.

2. Water Towers and Downstream Impact: The UN World Water Development Report 2025 highlights the role of mountain glaciers as “water towers.” Their rapid decline threatens sustainable development for mountain and downstream regions.

3. Ocean Science and Coastal Threats: 2025 is the midpoint of the UN Decade of Ocean Science (2021–30). Rising sea temperatures, marine pollution, and biodiversity loss are key concerns driving global ocean protection efforts.

Linking Mountains and Oceans through Water Systems

1. The Overlooked Upstream–Downstream Link: Water connects glaciers and oceans. While the hydrological cycle is natural, human activities like damming, diversion, and pollution alter freshwater flows and impact marine systems.

2. Need for Integrated Management: Traditional water management ignores upstream–downstream connections. The 2012 Manila Declaration proposed the Source-to-Sea (S2S) approach to manage land, freshwater, and marine resources as one system.

3. Global Cooperation through S2S Platform: The S2S Action Platform was launched in 2014 by SIWI to support coordinated action. Since January 2025, it is hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Source-to-Sea as a Unified Framework

1. A Single Water Continuum: The S2S approach treats freshwater and marine systems as one continuum. It challenges fragmented strategies that isolate rivers, aquifers, lakes, and oceans.

2. Reforming Project Design and Analysis: A 2012 report by the UN University recommended ending the artificial separation of water segments and applying socio-ecological system analysis to design better solutions.

3. Science for Policy Impact: These changes support better use of science in international water projects under the GEF-IW Science initiative to improve project outcomes and environmental governance.

India's Fragmented Water Management Challenges

1. Water Stress and Pollution Trends: India faces serious water stress. A NITI Aayog report (2018) warned of 600 million people at risk and a 6% GDP loss. In 2022, 311 polluted stretches across 279 rivers were reported.

2. Dependence on Groundwater: India uses 60.5% of extractable groundwater annually. States like Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan exceed 100%. Groundwater supports 85% of drinking water and 60% of irrigation needs.

3. Multi-level Governance Complexities: Water governance is divided across local, state, national, and global levels. This fragmentation limits coordination and weakens policy effectiveness.

Policy Developments and Missed Opportunities

1. National Water Policy Revisions: India's first water policy came in 1987. Reforms in 2015 and a draft in 2019 followed. States also have their own water policies.

2. Neglect of the S2S Approach: Despite reforms, the S2S model is rarely applied. Two case studies—on Delhi's nutrient management and Indo-Gangetic basin—are recent efforts in this direction.

3. Need for Systemic Shift: A shift toward the S2S framework is essential. It can integrate SDGs 6 and 14, involve all stakeholders, bridge gaps between science and policy, and support sustainable water governance.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Source-to-Sea (S2S) approach can address the challenges of fragmented water management and support sustainable water governance in India.

India must improve food safety through science and trust

Source: The post India must improve food safety through science and trust has been created, based on the article “Maintaining India’s progress in food safety standards” published in “The Hindu” on 7th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-issues of buffer stocks and food security

Context: India’s food safety journey has evolved from a narrow focus on adulteration to a more science-based framework led by FSSAI. However, gaps in research, communication, and legacy regulations remain. World Food Safety Day 2024 highlights the urgency to refine India’s systems using science and public trust.

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

From Adulteration to Risk-Based Regulation

1. Initial Legal Framework: The Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act, 1954, saw food safety in black-and-white terms—adulterated or not. It treated all contaminants the same, without assessing quantity or consumption levels.

2. Shift to Scientific Standards: The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, marked a turning point. FSSAI was created, adopting a risk-based approach inspired by the **Codex Alimentarius Commission**.

3. Standard Setting and Alignment: By 2020, India’s food safety standards had largely matched those of advanced nations. FSSAI defined **maximum residue limits (MRLs)**, additive levels, and drug residue norms.

Challenges in Risk Assessment

1. Lack of India-Specific Research: Most safety norms are based on global data, ignoring Indian dietary patterns, farming methods, or environmental factors. There’s no India-specific **Total Diet Study (TDS)**, weakening exposure assessment.

2. Fragmented Data Systems: Without a TDS, India relies on scattered data, which affects the accuracy and credibility of risk evaluations for food contaminants.

3. Public Misunderstanding of Technical Terms: Complex terms like MRLs and ADIs in ppm or ppb confuse the public. Revised safety thresholds often trigger unfounded concerns about reduced safety.

Legacy Regulations and Consumer Misconceptions

1. Case of MSG Misregulation: MSG, declared safe by JECFA since 1971, still carries an outdated warning in India despite its acceptance globally and its natural presence in common foods.

2. Public Fear from Misleading Labels: The mandatory warning creates a false impression of MSG as dangerous, though glutamates are naturally present even in breast milk, tomatoes, and mushrooms.

3. Contradiction with Global Science: India’s continued use of obsolete warnings shows reluctance to update laws based on new scientific evidence.

Strengthening Scientific Foundation

- 1. Investing in Local Research:** India must conduct local toxicological studies and a full TDS to understand total food-based exposure to chemicals and residues.
- 2. Improving Risk Communication:** Scientific messages should be simplified for the public. Misleading or outdated labels like those on MSG must be revised.
- 3. Capacity Building and Transparency:** Risk assessors need continuous training. Updating standards based on new research and maintaining openness is key.
- 4. Building Public Trust:** Consistent dialogue with consumers, industry, and other stakeholders will enhance confidence and promote informed choices.

Conclusion

India's progress in food safety is commendable but incomplete. Scientific evidence, not fear or outdated norms, must guide regulations. Clear communication and public engagement will ensure food safety rooted in trust and modern science.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's food safety system has evolved and what challenges remain in aligning it with scientific standards.

India must improve income to raise human development ranking

Source: The post India must improve income to raise human development ranking has been created, based on the article "HDI has a heavy income bias" published in "Businessline" on 7th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper

Context: India's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking improved from **133 in 2022 to 130 in 2023**, with the HDI value rising from **0.676 to 0.685**, as per the **2025 UNDP Human Development Report**. This calls for a closer look at long-term HDI progress and the role of **per capita income**.

For detailed information on **India's Performance in Human Development Index** [read this article here](#)

India's HDI Progress Over Time

1. Long term HDI growth: Between **1990 and 2023**, India's HDI increased from **0.446 to 0.685**, a **53% rise** over 33 years, with an annual growth of **1.31%**. This pace is faster than the global and South Asian averages.

2. Gains in HDI Components:

- **Gross national income (GNI) per capita** rose from **\$2,167 to \$9,048 (PPP)**.
- **Life expectancy** increased from **58.6 to 72 years**.
- **Expected years of schooling** rose from **8.2 to 13 years**.

These are significant achievements since economic reforms.

3. Comparative ranking: India lags behind **Russia (64)**, **China (75)**, **Brazil (84)**, **Sri Lanka (78)**, **Indonesia (113)**, and **Philippines (117)**. It shares its **130th rank with Bangladesh**, while staying ahead of **Nepal (145)**, **Myanmar (149)**, and **Pakistan (168)**.

Per Capita Income and HDI Challenges

- 1. Medium development status:** With an HDI of **0.685**, India falls in the **medium human development category**, approaching the **0.700 threshold** for high development. Low per capita income delays further advancement.
- 2. Component based Disparities:** HDI has three equal components: **health, education, and income**. India's **per capita income rank is 123**, lower than **life expectancy (112)** and **expected schooling (114)**. **Mean years of schooling ranks even lower at 143**.
- 3. Impact of demographics:** India's high population reduces per capita income. Had the population remained at the **2000 level**, GNI per capita would be **\$12,282**, with a rank of **114**. Population stabilisation is expected **only after 2050**, slowing HDI gains.

Limitations of HDI Aggregation

- 1. Concern over methodology:** Economist **T.N. Srinivasan** criticised HDI's structure, calling it an **arbitrarily weighted sum** of unrelated indicators, lacking true multidimensional meaning.
- 2. Income dominance in rankings:** Despite its broader scope, HDI correlates strongly with income. For all countries, the **rank correlation between GDP per capita and HDI is 0.97**. For medium HDI countries, it is **0.78**, showing income's strong influence.

Conclusion

India's HDI has improved steadily, but **low per capita income**, driven by population size, limits its ranking. Since **income strongly influences HDI**, **fast economic growth** remains essential to achieve better human development outcomes.

Question for practice:

Examine how per capita income influences India's Human Development Index ranking and overall progress.

Indian Courts Are Managing Free Speech, Not Defending It

Source: The post Indian Courts Are Managing Free Speech, Not Defending It has been created, based on the article "**Judicial sensitivity to sentiments is a sign of regression**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure And functioning of the Judiciary.

Context: Indian courts are increasingly managing free speech instead of protecting it. They prioritize civility and sentiment over constitutional liberty. This shift marks a retreat from Article 19(1)(a)'s original intent — where speech, even offensive, was a check on power. Courts now treat speech as behavior to regulate, not a right to defend.

From Constitutional Protection to Sentiment Policing

- 1. A Shift in Judicial Role:** Courts, once defenders of provocative speech, now act as guardians of public decorum. They expect deference and politeness, elevating sentiment over liberty. This weakens their counter-majoritarian role.
- 2. Redefining the Citizen-State Relationship:** In recent rulings, citizens are seen less as rights-holders and more as children needing restraint. The Allahabad High Court rejected quashing an FIR over a critical post about the Prime Minister, citing protection of constitutional authorities from disrepute.

3. Overriding Constitutional Metrics: Courts increasingly use emotional impact as a test for speech, rather than constitutional standards like incitement or public disorder. This inverts the design of Article 19.

Judicial Validation of Outrage and Apologies

1. Apologies as Precedent: Courts recommend apologies for lawful speech, treating outrage as justification. This reinforces public anger rather than guarding liberty, setting a precedent where speech must please the majority.

2. Taste and Vulgarity as Legal Tests: In *Ranveer Gautam Allahbadia*, the focus was on “vulgar” podcast language, not legality. Similarly, Kamal Haasan was told to apologize for calling Kannada a daughter of Tamil, despite no incitement or hate.

3. Scholarly Critique Under Scrutiny: Historian Ali Khan Mahmudabad faced court action for critiquing the optics of using a woman soldier to explain war. A mere claim of hurt sentiments was enough to trigger judicial investigation.

Constitutional Misreadings and Incentivized Outrage

1. Emotion as Legal Harm: Speech that provokes emotions is wrongly equated with legal harm. Article 19(2) allows restrictions only for incitement to violence or disruption, not for annoyance or hurt.

2. Encouraging Offence-Seeking: By policing language and encouraging apologies, courts create incentives for mobs and serial litigants. More outrage invites more litigation, creating a market for offence.

3. Free Speech and the Armed Forces: The Allahabad High Court refused relief to Rahul Gandhi over remarks about the Army. It claimed speech doesn't include the freedom to “defame” the military, though defamation standards require stricter scrutiny.

Weaponizing Legal Procedures Against Speech

1. Using Legal Tools to Intimidate: Courts often refuse to quash FIRs, insisting police must investigate. But the legal process itself—summons, charges—becomes punishment. Sarcasm and satire are now targeted under sedition-like laws.

2. Selective Resistance by Courts: Occasionally, courts like the Madras High Court have resisted this drift. But such resistance is rare and lacks consistent structural defense of speech.

3. Sedition and Vagueness: Laws like sedition and vague “public order” clauses enable arbitrary restrictions. Courts often uphold them instead of interpreting them narrowly to protect liberty.

Eroding the Spirit of Free Speech and Democracy

1. Freedom as a Test of Strength: Democracy thrives on dissent, not politeness. Bland speech is not liberty. The strength of a republic lies in tolerating discomfort and disagreement.

2. Chilling Effect and Silent Regression: Self-censorship is rising. From YouTubers to professors, fear of legal action silences dissent. The judiciary's current approach weakens public confidence in constitutional protection.

3. Role of Judges in a Democracy: Judges must defend rights, not curate public sentiment. Free speech needs no apology or approval. The Republic was born from protest, not politeness.

Question for practice:

Examine how Indian courts are redefining the constitutional protection of free speech in the context of public sentiment and judicial sensitivity.

RBI lowers rates to support growth and control inflation

Source: The post RBI lowers rates to support growth and control inflation has been created, based on the article “RBI’s stimulus is a bold wager on price stability” published in “Live Mint” on 9th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economic-growth and development

Context: The article analyses the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) latest policy actions aimed at reviving growth while keeping inflation under control. Faced with weak demand and global uncertainty, RBI has lowered its key rate and infused liquidity to support the economy.

RBI’s Transformation Since 1991

1. **Crisis Legacy and Market Reforms:** A new documentary recalls RBI’s 1991 role, including India’s gold pledge. Since then, RBI embraced reforms—floating the rupee, ending ad hoc borrowing, and allowing private banks.

2. **Adoption of Inflation Targeting:** In 2016, RBI adopted a flexible inflation targeting framework. Though seen as ambitious, it has largely worked, aligning RBI with global central banks.

3. **Success in Price Stability:** Retail inflation has stayed below 4% since February. RBI recently revised its 2025–26 forecast from 4% to 3.7%, showing price pressures are easing.

Policy Measures to Boost Growth

1. **Rate Cut for Credit Expansion:** RBI cut the **repo rate by 0.5 percentage points**, now at **5.5%**, returning to a ‘neutral’ stance. This move aims to ease borrowing and support GDP growth.

2. **Enhancing Liquidity:** Since January, RBI has injected **₹9.5 trillion** into the system. It also plans to reduce reserve requirements, enabling banks to lend more.

3. **Focus on Demand and Investment:** RBI wants to revive domestic consumption and investment, seen as “imperative” amid global headwinds and slower-than-expected growth.

Emerging Risks and Market Signals

1. **Bond Yield Reaction:** Surprisingly, **10-year bond yields rose**, suggesting markets may sense increased risk or inflation expectations.

2. **Inflation Risks from Excess Stimulus:** RBI’s loose policy could overheat demand and raise prices, especially if global trade costs increase.

3. **External Uncertainty:** Volatile global conditions could amplify domestic inflation and complicate monetary control, despite RBI’s efforts.

The Real Test for RBI

1. **Credibility Through Rupee Stability:** The RBI’s core aim remains an internally stable rupee. Price stability will define its long-term credibility.

2. Building Monetary Authority Reputation

By acting boldly yet responsibly, RBI seeks lasting ‘street cred’ as a central bank that can balance growth and inflation control.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Reserve Bank of India is balancing inflation control with the need to boost economic growth through recent monetary policy measures.

India's Apparel Export Ambition Needs Scaled-Up Reforms

Source: The post India's Apparel Export Ambition Needs Scaled-Up Reforms has been created, based on the article "How to tailor the garment sector for exports" published in "Indian Express" on 9th June 2025

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

Context: India's textile and apparel sector employs 45 million people and contributes 2.3% to GDP. However, *its share in global trade is just 4.2%. Apparel exports alone account for only 3% — \$15.7 billion out of \$529.3 billion — a figure that has stagnated for two decades.* This low growth demands urgent reforms.

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

Stagnation in Apparel Exports

1. Low Share and Declining Growth: Despite its workforce and legacy, India's *global apparel trade share remains modest.* Apparel exports have declined at an *annual average growth rate (AAGR) of -2%* in recent years.

2. Unrealised Potential: If the earlier AAGR of 8.5% (2004–2017) had continued, *exports could have reached \$31 billion by 2030.* Under the 2004–2023 average, they may only reach *\$21 billion*, falling far short of the *\$40 billion target.*

3. Need for Strategic Rethink: This data shows that *without bold reforms*, the 2030 goal is unrealistic. India needs *policy and structural transformation* to revive momentum.

Scale as the Central Bottleneck

1. Highly Fragmented Sector: Over *80% of India's apparel units are MSMEs.* They are *small, dispersed, and uncoordinated*, limiting their ability to fulfil large global orders or gain economies of scale.

2. Global Benchmarking: *China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh* have created *large, integrated, export-focused factories.* These setups attract global buyers, lower costs, and reduce lead times.

3. Scope for Mass Employment: The apparel sector can *generate mass formal jobs* quickly. A worker can be *trained in 60 days* to operate a sewing machine, offering a path to employment for India's youth.

Lessons from Shahi Exports

1. Remarkable Growth Story: Shahi Exports, started in 1974 with *15 women*, now has *50+ factories* across 8 states, employing *over 1,00,000 workers* (70% women) and earning *over \$1 billion annually.*

2. Pillars of Success: Its growth was powered by professional operations, in-house fabric production (80%), women's employment, and environmental sustainability.

3. Inspiration for Replication: Shahi proves Indian firms *can scale*, but this took *50 years.* To replicate this success faster, *bold and enabling policies* are essential.

Policy Reforms to Enable Scale

1. Access to Affordable Capital: India's *capital cost (9%)* is much higher than *China (3–3.5%)* and *Vietnam (4.5%).* A *25–30% capital subsidy* for units with *1,000+ machines* and *5–7-year tax holidays* can encourage investment.

2. Labour Law Flexibility: India's 52 central labour laws create rigidities. Overtime wages are *double the hourly rate* vs. ILO's 1.25 times, raising costs. Linking 25–30% of MGNREGA funds to subsidise garment labour can improve competitiveness.

3. Focus on Skilling: Schemes like SAMARTH should be scaled up for short-cycle, demand-driven skilling, especially for women. India needs job creation, not just income support.

Infrastructure and Incentive Redesign

1. Strategic Garment Hubs: At least two PM MITRA parks should be garment-focused in states like UP and MP to lower migration costs, reduce expenses, and promote inclusive growth.

2. Export-Linked Over Production-Linked Incentives: India must adopt an *Export-Linked Incentive (ELI)* model that *rewards global competitiveness*, not just higher production volumes.

Conclusion:

The garment sector is crucial for both exports and employment. Scaling it up will uplift the entire textile value chain. But time is limited. Creating 10 Shahi-type enterprises in 10 years needs swift and visionary policy execution.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India can scale up its apparel sector to increase global export share and generate mass employment.

The 2027 Census will reshape India's political and social order

Source: The post The 2027 Census will reshape India's political and social order has been created, based on the article “**The Census and the remaking of a people**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Society- Social justice

Context: The 2027 Census will not just record population data but reshape India's political and social framework. Occurring amid delayed delimitation, caste enumeration, migration shifts, and fiscal realignment, it will redefine the idea of ‘the people’ in India's democracy.

For detailed information on **Caste census will reshape India's social justice** [read this article here](#)

Census as a Political Instrument

1. Transforming Population into a Political Community: A census is more than counting individuals. It shapes a political community by categorizing people and influencing how governance and resource allocation are perceived. Census 2027 will play a crucial role in this transformation.

2. Enumerating and Influencing Realities: Although the census reflects reality, its categorization alters perception. Known trends like increased Hindi speakers in southern cities or unrecorded migration in Kerala gain political meaning once documented.

3. Political Demography and Its Importance: Demographic elements like migration, language, and fertility have political consequences. However, political demography remains a neglected field, despite its growing relevance globally and in India.

Redefining Parliamentary Representation

- 1. Delayed Census and Digital Processing:** The 2021 Census was delayed by the pandemic, but the 2027 Census will use digital methods, enabling faster data processing and quicker decisions.
- 2. Accelerated Delimitation Timeline:** Article 81 of the Constitution links delimitation to the first census after 2026. Due to the 2021 delay, the next general election in 2029 could be based on a new parliamentary map.
- 3. Uneven Growth and Power Redistribution:** Some States have grown faster in population but slower in economy, while others show the opposite. Migration flows from populous to economically stronger regions. If representation is based only on population, political power may shift from developed southern States to poorer northern regions.

Social Identity and Electoral Dynamics

- 1. Revival of Caste Census and Quota Debate:** For the first time since 1931, all castes will be counted. This could intensify demands to remove the 50% cap on quotas and reshape political alignments.
- 2. Women's Reservation and Election Reforms:** The new delimitation will reserve one-third of seats for women. The Centre also plans to hold simultaneous elections to Parliament and State Assemblies, reshaping electoral timelines.
- 3. Group Identities and National Unity:** The Constitution accommodates religious, caste, and regional identities. The 2027 Census may lead to a renegotiation of national unity built on these three pillars.

Economic Redistribution and Inter-State Tensions

- 1. Finance Commission's Timing and Impact:** The Sixteenth Finance Commission begins work in 2026 and submits its report in 2025. This timing coincides with major political realignments, adding weight to its decisions.
- 2. Revenue Sharing and Political Representation:** Past revenue-sharing models have caused grievances. As delimitation affects political power, it may also influence how funds are allocated between States.
- 3. Federal Balance in Transition:** Changes in representation and revenue sharing may alter the balance of power between regions, creating new alliances or deepening divides.

Strategic Political Implications

- 1. BJP's Demographic Strategy:** The BJP is leveraging census categories to consolidate national identity. Population-based delimitation benefits its northern bases and enables it to integrate caste and gender into broader strategies.
- 2. Congress and the Left's Response:** The Congress is engaging with the caste debate to regain relevance, while the Left must balance national ideals with regional needs.
- 3. Census as a Tool of Nation-building:** Census categories have always shaped Indian politics. The 2027 Census will influence how national identity is reimagined through caste, gender, and region.

Question for practice:

Examine how the 2027 Census may reshape India's political representation and national identity.

Recognising and Empowering Women Farmers for 2026

Source: The post Recognising and Empowering Women Farmers for 2026 has been created, based on the article "Empowering women in agriculture for food security" published in "The Hindu" on 10th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society-Social empowerment And Agriculture

Context: The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2026 the *International Year of the Woman Farmer*. This move highlights the essential role of women in agriculture and brings global attention to their challenges, particularly in land rights, financial access, and climate resilience.

Critical Role of Women in Agriculture

- 1. Global and Regional Contributions:** Women contribute to nearly half of the global food supply. In developing countries, they account for 60–80% of food production. In South Asia, they form 39% of the agricultural labour force, showing their vital role in the food system.
- 2. Disparities in Land Ownership:** In India, although 80% of economically active women work in agriculture, only 14% own agricultural land. The National Family Health Survey reports even lower female land ownership at 8.3%, reflecting stark inequality.
- 3. Barriers to Finance and Technology:** Without land titles, women struggle to access credit and financial services. Their access to agricultural information is also limited due to lower ownership of mobile phones, affecting planning and technology use. Microfinance and self-help groups help, but loans are often too small for significant investments.
- 4. Government Support Initiatives:** India promotes women farmers through the *Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana*, which enhances skills and resource access. The *Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation* offers 50% to 80% machinery subsidies. Additionally, 30% of the *National Food Security Mission* budget is earmarked for women farmers in several States and Union Territories.

Building Climate Resilience Through Empowerment

- 1. Gendered Impact of Climate Change:** Climate change increases domestic burdens and risks for women. Erratic weather threatens yields. For example, farmers in Assam's Nagaon district now grow flood-resistant varieties to reduce losses and ensure harvests.
- 2. Adaptation Through Local Solutions:** Projects like ENACT empower women to build climate-resilient farming systems. Community-level models help develop adaptable, sustainable practices based on local knowledge and needs.
- 3. Technology-Driven Advisory Systems:** ENACT connects women with experts via weekly mobile advisories in 17 villages. Climate Adaptation Information Centres support training and meetings, strengthening knowledge and preparedness.
- 4. Collaborative Networks for Scale:** The initiative involves government bodies such as Agriculture, Rural Livelihoods Missions, Meteorology, and Environment departments. Technology partners include agricultural universities that provide climate-resilient crop varieties and technical advice.

Strategies for Sustainability and Nutrition

- 1. Smart Seed Production and Crop Diversification:** Women's groups manage smart seed systems for flood-resistant and local nutritious crops. This enhances sustainability and food security.
- 2. Livelihood Diversification and Market Linkages:** Market access and income diversification reduce climate-related risks and build financial stability for rural women.
- 3. Community-Driven Planning:** Solutions rooted in community experience ensure better adoption and effective responses to environmental and economic risks.

Recommendations and Future Steps

- 1. Policy Tailored to Women's Needs:** Gender-disaggregated data should guide tools, finance systems, and policies that suit women's specific roles in agriculture.
- 2. Strengthening Women's Networks and Value Chains:** Promoting women-led value chains and self-help groups supports collective strength, financial access, and inclusive growth.
- 3. Opportunity to Drive Change in 2026:** The 2026 declaration offers a unique chance to institutionalise support for women farmers and foster sustainable, gender-equal agriculture.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the 2026 International Year of the Woman Farmer can help address the challenges faced by women in agriculture.

Hydrogen plasma method makes nickel extraction cleaner and faster

Source: The post Hydrogen plasma method makes nickel extraction cleaner and faster has been created, based on the article "**How extracting and producing nickel can be made more sustainable**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 10th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Resources And GS Paper3-Environment

Context: Nickel is crucial for clean energy applications, particularly electric vehicles (EVs), but its extraction is highly polluting. A recent study introduces a sustainable, carbon-free method using hydrogen plasma to extract nickel from low-grade ores, offering an efficient solution amid rising demand and environmental challenges.

Nickel's Role and Environmental Cost

- 1. Vital for Green Technologies:** Nickel is a key material in lithium-ion batteries used in EVs. Demand is projected to exceed six million tonnes per year by 2040, driven by clean energy transitions.
- 2. High Emissions from Current Processes:** Extracting one tonne of nickel emits over 20 tonnes of carbon dioxide. While EVs are cleaner during use, their production, especially battery components like nickel, has a heavy environmental toll.
- 3. Pollution Shift Across Sectors:** The current mining process shifts emissions from transportation to industrial sectors, undermining the sustainability goals of the green energy movement.

New Hydrogen Plasma-Based Method

- 1. Carbon-Free One-Step Process:** Researchers at the Max Planck Institute developed a one-step extraction using hydrogen plasma in an electric arc furnace. It avoids the use of carbon, producing only water as a byproduct.
- 2. Faster and Cleaner Reaction:** Hydrogen gas is transformed into high-energy plasma, which reacts quickly with nickel oxide. This results in rapid, carbon-free metal extraction using only electricity and hydrogen.

3. Efficiency and Emission Reduction

The new method can reduce carbon emissions by up to 84% and is about 18% more energy-efficient compared to conventional multi-step techniques.

Advantages for Low-Grade Laterite Ores

- 1. Utilising Abundant Resources:** Laterite ores are rich in nickel but difficult to process. Unlike rapidly depleting sulphide ores, laterites are widely available and suitable for the new method.

2. Unlocking India's Reserves: India, especially Odisha's Sukinda region, holds large deposits of laterite ores with 0.4–0.9% nickel. These are often ignored due to traditional method limitations but are viable using the new process.

3. Reducing Import Dependence: Processing low-grade ores domestically reduces reliance on high-grade imports and supports India's push for mineral self-sufficiency.

Wider Sustainability and Policy Implications

1. Alignment with India's Climate Goals: The method supports India's industrialisation while adhering to its net-zero emissions target by 2070. It enhances the value of domestic mineral assets.

2. Avoiding Emission Displacement: Sustainable extraction ensures emissions are not merely shifted across sectors, but actually reduced — a key to true environmental progress.

3. Enabling Green Infrastructure: By ensuring clean raw material supply chains, the method underpins the broader transition to renewable energy, EVs, and eco-friendly infrastructure.

Challenges to Industrial Adoption

1. Scalability Issues: Experts caution that large-scale implementation requires high initial investment, reliable renewable energy, and ore-specific adaptations.

2. Need for Further Study: The process demands additional research into thermodynamic kinetics and continuous oxygen species supply at the furnace interface.

3. Strong Potential Despite Barriers: Though industrial application poses challenges, the method offers a promising, low-emission alternative to conventional nickel extraction.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the hydrogen plasma method offers a sustainable alternative to traditional nickel extraction and its significance for countries like India.

India Pakistan conflict remains unresolved despite global diplomatic efforts

Source: The post India Pakistan conflict remains unresolved despite global diplomatic efforts has been created, based on the article "The hazards of going global on India-Pakistan issues" published in "The Hindu" on 11th June 2025

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

Context: Operation Sindoor and the events that followed exposed the failure of both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in resolving the India-Pakistan conflict over Jammu and Kashmir. The legacy of Cold War politics, UN literature, and Pakistan's rigid position have complicated any sincere attempt at resolution.

Constraints of International Frameworks

1. Outdated UN References and Misleading Maps: India's claim over Jammu and Kashmir clashes with outdated UN maps and documents. These maps often show disclaimers like "dotted line" for the Line of Control, suggesting that the final status is unresolved. Such representations make countries hesitant to endorse India's territorial position.

2. Simla Agreement and Non-committal Responses: While India highlights the Simla Agreement as the basis for a bilateral solution, most countries avoid firm stances. They prefer non-intervention, often stating that a peaceful settlement between India and Pakistan would be ideal.

3. Conceptual Gridlock and Diplomatic Smokescreens: Pakistan uses historical resolutions and ideas—such as self-determination, terrorism, and peaceful dispute resolution—to confuse the global narrative. These longstanding yet outdated concepts make it harder for new approaches to emerge.

India's Complicated Stand on Terrorism

1. Early Proposal for Global Convention: India had proposed a Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism at the UN over three decades ago. It was dismissed as a move targeting Pakistan. The global difficulty in defining terrorism—due to political considerations—undermined the initiative.

2. Post-9/11 Shift and Lost Momentum: After 9/11, terrorism became a global priority. However, international focus shifted to U.S. military operations in Afghanistan rather than creating a unified legal definition. Though the Taliban was removed initially, they returned after decades of war.

3. Questions Over India's Surgical Strikes: India's retaliatory strikes on terror camps raise legal questions. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, countries can defend themselves. Yet the legality of such actions depends on whether they are proportionate and comply with humanitarian law.

The UN Security Council's Stance

1. Existing Framework and Monitoring: The Security Council has issued resolutions obliging member states to combat terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee monitors these measures. However, India's appeals to treat terror attacks as acts of war find limited global support.

2. Legal and Human Rights Considerations: India's actions must align with international law and human rights. Any disproportionate response could face criticism. The current global consensus is to avoid redefining military responses to terrorism.

3. Emphasis on Broad Cooperation: The Security Council advocates a "whole-of-society" approach to fight extremism. India often raises concerns, but there is no clear endorsement of its strategy.

Legacy of Hyphenation and Its Impact

1. UN Handling of Kashmir Issue: India's 1947 referral to the UN was treated as a dispute under Article VI instead of aggression under Chapter VII. This led to broad interpretations and "hyphenation" of India with Pakistan on most issues.

2. Nuclear Context and Rising Risks: With both countries now nuclear-armed, Kashmir is seen as a nuclear flashpoint. India maintains a "no first use" policy, while Pakistan adopts a more aggressive stance.

3. Diplomatic Futility and Strategic Necessity: India limits talks to terrorism and PoK, but diplomacy yields little. Pakistan internationalises the issue, while India's efforts get entangled in global narratives. India's best option is to ensure security through appropriate military action.

Question for practice:

Examine why international diplomatic efforts have failed to resolve the India-Pakistan conflict over Jammu and Kashmir despite repeated initiatives.

Türkiye expands regional influence by blending Islamism and pragmatism

Source: The post Türkiye expands regional influence by blending Islamism and pragmatism has been created, based on the article "Erdogan's neo-Ottoman foreign policy" published in "The Hindu" on 11th June 2025

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

Context: Türkiye, under President Erdogan, blends Islamist-leaning policies with NATO commitments. This strategy has expanded its role across West Asia and the Caucasus. However, economic instability and authoritarian trends pose serious domestic challenges.

Historical Backdrop and Policy Shifts

1. From Ataturk to NATO Partnership: The Republic of Türkiye, established in 1923, embraced secularism and peaceful diplomacy. After WWII, Türkiye joined the Western bloc and became a key NATO ally due to its strategic location across the Black Sea, Mediterranean, and West Asia.

2. Erdogan's Initial Focus on Stability: The AKP came to power in 2002 after prolonged political and economic instability. Erdogan prioritized economic reforms and Western integration. He built strong ties with the U.S. and sought EU membership, projecting Türkiye as a loyal ally.

3. Foreign Policy Shift Post-Arab Spring: The Arab Spring in the early 2010s marked a change. Erdogan saw protests as a path to revive regional influence by backing Islamist movements and aligning with popular uprisings in the Arab world.

Ideological Roots and Regional Ambitions

1. Ottoman Legacy of Islamic Unity: Sultan Hamid II's doctrine of Ittihad-i Islam aimed to unite Muslims against Western powers. This legacy influenced Türkiye's modern Islamists, who advocated closer ties with Muslim nations and resistance to Western dominance.

2. Islamist Rise through AKP: Erdogan, a former leader in the Virtue Party, founded the AKP after Islamist parties were banned. His 2002 victory brought Islamists to power and gradually aligned foreign policy with Erbakan's vision of Islamic solidarity.

3. Support for Islamist Movements: Türkiye backed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, anti-Assad forces in Syria, and Islamist factions in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi, aiming to expand its regional reach through ideological partners.

Blending Islamism with Strategic Caution

1. Maintaining NATO and Western Ties: Despite ideological shifts, Türkiye remained a NATO member and host to U.S. military bases. Erdogan avoided rupturing Western ties while asserting regional influence.

2. Calculated Moves in Conflict Zones: In Syria, Türkiye protected HTS and created buffer zones, balancing pressure from Russia. In Libya, it supported the Tripoli-based Islamist government while managing competing interests.

3. Smart Diplomacy and Defense Deals: Türkiye supported Azerbaijan in the 2023 war against Armenia using Turkish drones. It also sold drones to Ukraine, avoided Russian sanctions, and bought S400s from Russia. Erdogan backed Sweden and Finland's NATO entry to ease U.S. tensions.

Expanding Strategic Reach

1. Stronger Presence in West Asia: Türkiye's military base in Qatar and its stance near the Israeli border reflect growing presence in the Gulf. HTS's 2024 takeover of Damascus enhanced its profile in Syria.

2. Role in the Caucasus and South Asia: Türkiye helped Azerbaijan defeat Armenia, a Russian ally. While Türkiye supports Pakistan, its role in South Asia remains marginal.

3. Balancing Multiple Rivalries: Though ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE have improved, trust is limited. Türkiye continues to balance Russian and Western concerns in the Caucasus and Black Sea.

Internal Pressures and Strategic Risks

1. Economic Decline and Centralization: Türkiye faces hyperinflation, currency depreciation, and rising unrest. Erdogan has centralized power, turned the system into an executive presidency, and suppressed opposition.

2. Growing Authoritarianism: Key opposition figures like Istanbul's mayor have been arrested. Erdogan cannot run in 2028 under the current Constitution, creating political uncertainty.

3. Uncertain Strategic Payoff: Despite tactical wins abroad, instability in Syria and Libya, fragile Gulf ties, and domestic vulnerabilities challenge Türkiye's long-term regional ambitions.

Question for practice:

Discuss how Türkiye balances its Islamist foreign policy with its commitments as a NATO member.

Revenue estimates fall short again raising fiscal concerns

Source: The post Revenue estimates fall short again raising fiscal concerns has been created, based on the article "Perils of overestimates" published in "Business Standard" on 11th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economic-Government Budgeting.

Context: The provisional actuals for the 2024–25 Union Budget highlight a return to revenue overestimation. This reversal comes after four years of accurate forecasts and raises concerns about fiscal management and potential economic slowdown.

Recurring Challenge of Revenue Overestimation

1. A Troubled First Budget (2019–20): In 2019–20, actual net tax revenue was 13.6% lower than the Revised Estimate (RE). Non-tax revenue also fell by over 5%. With only marginal change in expenditure, the fiscal deficit widened to 4.6% of GDP, against the RE figure of 3.8%.

2. Forecasting Improved (2020–21 to 2023–24): Over the next four years, the finance ministry showed commendable restraint in its estimates. Actual revenues exceeded REs, with net tax collections increasing by 0.13% to over 6%. Expenditure stayed controlled, keeping the actual fiscal deficit lower than the RE.

3. Problem Resurfaces (2024–25): In 2024–25, the provisional actual net tax revenue was 2.3% lower than the RE. This ended the trend of conservative budgeting and brought back the issue of overestimation.

Personal Income-Tax Underperformance

1. Sharpest Decline Observed: The biggest drop was seen in personal income-tax collections, which were about ₹74,000 crore or 6% below the RE.

2. Rising Importance of This Segment: Over six years, personal income-tax has grown from one-fourth to nearly one-third of gross tax collections. This makes its underperformance more significant.

3. Expenditure Cutback in Response: Due to revenue shortfalls, the government reduced revenue expenditure. The Budget Estimate (BE) was ₹37.1 trillion, RE was ₹36.98 trillion, but provisional actuals dropped further to ₹36.03 trillion.

Expenditure Trends and Fiscal Balance

- 1. Capital Expenditure Increased:** While revenue spending dropped, capital expenditure rose, showing a positive shift in spending quality.
- 2. Deficit Ratio Unchanged:** The fiscal deficit remained at 4.8% of GDP, largely because the nominal GDP was revised upwards. This helped maintain the percentage despite lower revenue.

Dangers of Inaccurate Estimates

- 1. Confusing Economic Signals:** Large differences between RE and actuals send misleading messages about the fiscal situation. Ministries may be forced into last-minute spending cuts.
- 2. Risk of Distorted Budgeting Practices:** This can lead to shifting liabilities to public entities or using off-Budget borrowings, which had been phased out earlier.

Revenue Trends and Growth Insights

- 1. Estimates Reflect Activity Levels:** Overestimations in 2019–20 aligned with a slowdown. Underestimations from 2020 to 2024 matched a period of economic recovery.
- 2. Slower Growth in 2024–25:** GDP growth slowed to 6.5%, down from 9.2% in 2023–24. This may explain the weaker revenue performance.
- 3. Need for Better Projections:** With rising global uncertainty, accurate revenue forecasting is vital. Fiscal discipline must include realistic revenue and expenditure projections.

Conclusion

The return of revenue overestimation in 2024–25 must be addressed. The government should investigate the reasons, especially for falling personal income-tax collections, and work toward more accurate and credible fiscal projections.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind the return of revenue overestimation in the Union Budget 2024–25 and its implications for fiscal management and economic growth.

Velpur shows how child labour can be eliminated sustainably

Source: The post Velpur shows how child labour can be eliminated sustainably has been created, based on the article “**Recounting Velpur’s story in ending child labour**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 12th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance-Social Justice

Context: Every year, **June 12** is observed as **World Day Against Child Labour**. Despite global commitments under **SDG Target 8.7** to end child labour by 2025, progress remains limited. The transformation of **Velpur Mandal** in India offers a rare example of **community-led success** in eliminating child labour.

Global and National Overview of Child Labour

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1. **Widespread Prevalence:** There are an estimated **160 million children** in child labour worldwide—one in every ten children. **Africa, Asia, and the Pacific** together account for nearly 90% of these children. The **COVID-19 pandemic** worsened the crisis, causing school dropouts and forcing children into work due to economic hardship.

2. **India's Situation:** As per **Census 2011**, **43.53 lakh children** (ages 5–14) in India were engaged in labour. They are commonly employed in **beedi-making, carpet weaving, and firework factories**. Causes include **poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access** to education.

3. **Legal and Policy Framework:** The **Child Labour Act (1986)** and its **2016 Amendment** prohibit child labour under 14 and restrict adolescent work in hazardous sectors. The **Right to Education Act** mandates **free and compulsory education** for ages 6–14. However, enforcement is often **short-lived and inconsistent**.

The Velpur Transformation Model

1. **Starting Conditions and Action Plan:** Velpur Mandal, once infamous for child labour, launched a **community-driven campaign** in **June 2001**. Within **100 days**, by **October 2, 2001**, it was declared a **child labour-free zone**.

2. **Initial Resistance and Awareness Campaign:** The campaign faced **strong resistance**. Misinformation spread about organ trafficking, and campaigners were denied basic hospitality. Persistent efforts, **public meetings**, and open dialogue shifted public perception and won support.

3. **Debt Forgiveness and Employer Cooperation:** Children were moved to **bridge schools** under the **National Child Labour Project (NCLP)**. Employers, under social pressure, **wrote off ₹35 lakh in family debt** and distributed **stationery** to students. This marked a turning point in community commitment.

Institutional Support and Agreements

1. **Formal Collaboration:** All **sarpanchs signed MoUs** with the government under the **Andhra Pradesh Compulsory Primary Education Rules, 1982**, committing to full school enrolment. The government pledged to ensure **infrastructure and teacher availability**.

2. **Sustained Vigilance:** Villages installed boards stating, "There is no child labour in our village." The achievement has been zealously guarded for over two decades.

3. **Recognition and Endorsement:** In **2021**, the **VVGNI** honoured all contributors. In **2022**, the **Parliamentary Standing Committee** invited the campaign's lead officer for a presentation and acknowledged its **lasting success**.

Key Lessons and Significance

1. **People-Led Movements Matter:** Velpur proves that **sustainable change** comes from **community ownership**, not just top-down action.

2. **Model for Training and Replication:** The success is now part of **VVGNI training programmes**. It has been lauded by the **ILO, NHRC, and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**.

3. **Leadership and Participation:** The campaign, led by the then **District Collector**, highlights the power of **local leadership** and **collective responsibility** in solving deep-rooted social problems.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Velpur model demonstrates the role of community participation in eliminating child labour sustainably.

Household savings data misses new investment patterns today

Source: The post Household savings data misses new investment patterns today has been created, based on the article “How households are driving growth” published in “Businessline” on 12th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy

Context: The sharp fall in net household financial savings—from 7.8% in 2018–19 to 5.1% in 2023–24—has raised concern. While reasons like rising debt and purchase of physical assets are suggested, the accuracy of RBI's household savings data is under question due to possible gaps in capturing newer investment patterns.

For detailed information on **Issue with Indian household savings** [read this article here](#)

Revisiting Household Bank Deposits

1. Stable Long-Term Deposit Growth: Despite reports of falling savings, household bank deposits grew at a 14.5% CAGR from 2005 to 2024, outpacing nominal GDP. This shows households continue to generate surpluses and save significantly.

2. Major Contributors to Credit Flow: Indian families hold over 60% of bank deposits—55% of term and 81% of savings deposits. These deposits drive credit growth and support banks' interest margins.

3. Surplus Financing by Households: According to former RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra, household savings typically exceed investments and fund other sectors. Domestic savings mainly support India's growth needs, reducing reliance on external funds.

Changing Ownership in Bank Deposits

1. Household Share Remains Strong: In 2005, households held ₹10.8 lakh crore or 60.7% of total deposits. Despite some fluctuations, the share rose to 61.08% in 2024, reaching ₹132 lakh crore.

2. Government Deposit Trends: The Centre's share in bank deposits declined from 2.4% to 1.74%, showing fiscal prudence. In contrast, states increased their share from 2.5% to 5.34%.

3. Corporate Sector's Growing Share: Non-financial corporates expanded their share from 8.7% in 2005 to 17.52% in 2024. This rise reflects higher profits and gains from corporate tax cuts.

4. Deposit Growth Slowdown: From 2007–2012, household deposits grew 24% annually, driven by high repo rates and economic stress. Between 2020–2024, the growth slowed to 10.3%, below the 11.4% overall deposit growth.

Shift Towards New Investment Avenues

1. Rise in Market Participation: Post-pandemic, individuals increased investments in equities, mutual funds, and insurance. These offer better returns than traditional deposits.

2. Omissions in RBI Data: RBI does not include direct equity holdings worth ₹42.8 lakh crore, or ₹18.8 lakh crore in AIFs and PMS. Assets like REITs, InvITs, crypto, and NFTs are also excluded.

3. Need for Comprehensive Data: RBI includes only traditional assets in household savings. A SEBI paper pointed out that several market-linked products are not covered in the current data method.

Understanding the Real Household Surplus

- 1. Broader Impact of Household Investments:** Households support economic growth not only through deposits but also via investments in equity, debt, mutual funds, and pensions.
- 2. True Size of Financial Assets:** RBI estimates household financial assets at ₹254 lakh crore in 2024. Including excluded assets would significantly raise this number.
- 3. Sources of Resilient Income:** While salary growth is slow, business and farm incomes—especially among affluent households—remain strong.
- 4. Policy Support and Cultural Frugality:** Tax cuts and pay revisions are boosting incomes. Household frugality and the habit of saving before spending further support savings growth.

Question for practice:

Examine how changing investment patterns are affecting the measurement of household financial savings in India.

Fertility decline reflects gender roles and social inequality

Source: The post Fertility decline reflects gender roles and social inequality has been created, based on the article “Falling fertility calls for fast gender justice gains” published in “Live Mint” on 12th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance-Social Justice

Context: The UN's *State of World Population 2025* report highlights a significant demographic shift: India's total fertility rate (TFR) has fallen below replacement level to 1.9. This trend prompts reflection on social structures, gender norms, and reproductive rights, urging societies to prioritize gender justice and redefine traditional roles. For detailed information on **Issue of fertility rate in India** [read this article here](#)

Decline in Fertility Rates and Global Reactions

- 1. India's Falling TFR:** India's TFR has dropped to 1.9, below the replacement rate of 2.1. The National Family Health Survey (2019–2021) had earlier estimated it at 2.0, showing a continued decline. However, regional variations remain significant.
- 2. Global Fertility Trends:** The 20th-century fertility boom raised fears of population explosion, especially among Western conservatives who backed population control in Asia and Africa. These outdated fears still influence many policy circles.
- 3. Shift to Population Implosion Concerns:** Wealthy nations now worry about too few births. Their fear of being outnumbered by non-Western immigrants fuels rising xenophobia and anti-immigrant politics in the US and Europe.

The Real Crisis: Denial of Reproductive Rights

- 1. UN's Core Message:** The report reframes the debate: the real fertility crisis is not about population size but about the widespread denial of reproductive rights in both rich and poor countries.

2. Reproductive Autonomy and Social Norms: Wealth does not guarantee reproductive freedom. True autonomy involves the ability to choose whether and when to have children, which depends on gender-equitable social systems.

3. Call for Gender Justice: The report emphasizes reproductive rights as part of gender justice and social inclusion. Ensuring these rights requires dismantling entrenched patriarchal attitudes.

Gender Norms and Fertility Decisions

1. Lessons from South Korea: With a TFR of 0.8, South Korean women are rejecting motherhood and marriage due to unjust gender roles, poor financial security, and lack of childcare support.

2. The Indian Scenario: India's fertility patterns vary with income, caste, and empowerment. Many professional women manage careers by outsourcing domestic work, usually to lower-income women.

3. Unsustainability of Outsourcing: As poorer sections gain upward mobility, domestic help will become costlier. This threatens the current model and could lead India toward a similar fertility dip as seen in South Korea.

Urgency of Social Reform

1. Need for Societal Change: Economic progress alone cannot ensure gender equity. To prevent future fertility collapse, societies must evolve—starting with promoting equality at home.

2. Redefining Traditions: Old traditions that perpetuate gender inequality must be questioned. Real change requires discarding oppressive norms in favor of inclusive family structures.

Question for practice:

Examine how gender norms and social structures influence fertility trends in India and other countries.

India needs sustainable transport for urban future

Source: The post India needs sustainable transport for urban future has been created, based on the article "Urbanisation and the challenge of ideal transit solutions" published in "The Hindu" on 13th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- infrastructure

Context: India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047 relies heavily on urban transformation. With a projected shift of over 60% of the population to urban areas by the 2060s, efficient public transport systems have become essential. This article examines India's current efforts and challenges in building a sustainable urban mobility framework.

For detailed information on **Urban Mobility in India- Challenges and Way Forward** [read this article here](#)

Urban Expansion and Mobility Pressure

1. Rising Urban Population and Mobility Needs: India's urban population is expected to grow rapidly, necessitating large-scale worker mobility. This shift puts pressure on planners to create seamless transport links from homes to workplaces.

2. Slow Progress of Smart Cities: Unlike China, India's new smart cities are not progressing fast. Instead, tier 1 cities are expanding rapidly, increasing the stress on existing transport systems.

3. Challenges in Metros and Existing Cities: Existing metros are witnessing continuous expansion, making it harder to meet urban mobility needs, especially for daily commuters.

Current Policy Measures and Budget Priorities

1. Launch of PM e-Bus and e-Drive Initiatives: The PM e-Bus Sewa and e-Drive schemes aim to add 14,000 e-buses and over 1 lakh other electric vehicles. However, with only 35,000 buses currently operating against a requirement of 2 lakh, the gap remains large.

2. Focus on Metro Infrastructure Expansion: The government has increased funding for metro development in tier 1 cities, though access to public transport remains low at 37% compared to over 50% in Brazil and China.

3. Funding and Operational Issues: Metro systems rely heavily on central funding. Most have not recovered costs due to lower-than-expected ridership and high fare sensitivity among users.

Limitations of the Present Approach

1. Economic Unsustainability of Metro Systems: Cost recovery is challenging unless routes serve dense corridors. Fare increases reduce ridership, making these systems less viable.

2. Last-Mile Connectivity Problems: High costs of travel from metro stations to homes or offices discourage usage, weakening the efficiency of the metro network.

3. Limited Subsidy Capacity: Unlike wealthier countries, India cannot afford high subsidies for public transport, further constraining its affordability and reach.

Alternative Solutions and Financial Viability

1. Scope for Road-Based Transit Modes: Road-based options like e-buses, hydrogen, CNG, and biofuel vehicles are being promoted. However, budget focus on costly e-buses over cheaper modes limits flexibility.

2. Undervalued Potential of Trams and Trolleybuses: Trams and trolleybuses are overlooked, despite trams showing a 45% profit over 70 years, far better than e-buses which incur 82% losses.

3. Need for Lifecycle Cost Analysis: Future policies must include lifecycle profit-and-loss estimates to choose the most viable and sustainable public transit models.

Path Ahead for Sustainable Urban Mobility

1. Rethinking Investment Priorities: India must assess whether current investments serve long-term goals or rely on ongoing subsidies.

2. Kochi's Tram Plan as a Model: Kochi's proposed tram system could be a game-changer, showing the value of reviving older, more sustainable systems.

3. Balancing Innovation and Financial Sustainability: A smart transport future must integrate modern technology with financially viable models like trams to ensure inclusive and long-term success.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India can ensure sustainable and financially viable urban mobility in its journey toward Viksit Bharat.

Bangladesh faces uncertainty over democratic political transition

Source: The post Bangladesh faces uncertainty over democratic political transition has been created, based on the article "Is Bangladesh slipping into authoritarianism?" published in "The Hindu" on 13th June 2025

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

Context: On June 7, Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus addressed Bangladesh on the eve of Eid, promising elections in April 2026. He also announced a controversial *July Proclamation* to reform the Constitution. These developments raised concerns about democratic backsliding and political instability in the country.

For detailed information on **Current political crisis in Bangladesh** [read this article here](#)

Controversy Around the Interim Government

1. **Questioning the 'Interim 'Nature:** Unlike traditional interim governments, Prof. Yunus's administration is engaging in sweeping constitutional changes. In 1990, a caretaker government had a 90-day mandate to conduct elections. In contrast, the current setup lacks electoral legitimacy and is behaving more like a permanent authority.

2. **Efforts to Prolong Power:** Prof. Yunus had earlier promised elections by December 2025. The new date of April 2026 suggests an attempt to extend the government's tenure. Though the Army chief has pressed for year-end elections, Yunus cites internal and external threats to justify delays.

3. **Exclusion of Main Political Forces:** The Awami League remains banned. The BNP is dissatisfied with developments. With the main parties sidelined, lesser-known and fringe political actors with questionable agendas are gaining prominence.

Debate on the July Proclamation

1. **Objective and Political Impact:** The July Proclamation aims to replace the influence of the 1972 Constitution. Though it may not fully supplant it, it is intended as a guiding charter, reflecting student-led political aspirations and aligning with the interim government's vision.

2. **Shifting the National Narrative:** By promoting July as a new political milestone, the interim government appears to dilute the significance of historical months like December and August, linked to independence and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination.

3. **Uncertainty and Lack of Consensus:** There is no transparency about the authors or contents of the July Proclamation. The claim of political consensus is questionable, as major parties like the BNP remain non-committal or uncomfortable with its direction.

4. **Risk of Political Disruption:** Analysts warn that this charter could create space for radical religious groups. This vacuum, similar to Myanmar's experience, may increase political instability in Bangladesh.

Concerns Over the Humanitarian Corridor

1. **Unclear Implementation:** Prof. Yunus advocated for a humanitarian corridor to Myanmar's Rakhine province. However, it is unclear who will enforce its demilitarized status—Bangladesh or an international body.

2. **Sovereignty Issues:** The Bangladesh Army chief opposed international oversight, citing sovereignty concerns. Bangladesh, which values its independence, sees foreign military involvement as a threat.

3. **Regional Security Threats:** There is fear that aid through the corridor could reach armed groups, not just the Rohingya. This poses risks to regional security, especially for India, due to possible arms smuggling and spillover effects.

The Position and Prospects of BNP

1. **Absence of Leadership:** BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman remains abroad due to unresolved legal cases. Despite his absence for 18 years, he continues to influence party leadership through the standing committee.
2. **Challenges in Capitalizing:** Though the BNP criticized delays in elections, it has not fully leveraged the current political situation. The party remains intact despite multiple attempts to weaken it.
3. **Emergence of the King's Party:** The National Citizens Party (NCP), launched by advisers close to Prof. Yunus, is suspected by the BNP to be backed by the interim government. The BNP fears this group may be favoured in the upcoming elections.

Implications for Bangladesh's Political Future

1. **Democratic Decline:** Sweeping reforms by an unelected government raise concerns about a shift toward authoritarianism.
2. **Uncertain Electoral Path:** With continued delays and controversial policy moves, the electoral future remains unclear.
3. **Regional Repercussions:** India and others are closely monitoring the developments due to the political and security consequences in the region.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the implications of Bangladesh's interim government's actions on the country's democratic process and political stability.

Israel attacks Iran and escalates regional conflict

Source: The post Israel attacks Iran and escalates regional conflict has been created, based on the article "Endgame of a 2,611-year-old Jewish-Persian enmity" published in "The Hindu" on 14th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

Context: The June 13, 2025 Israeli military operation, "Rising Lion," targeting Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities, marks a turning point in the long-standing Jewish-Persian conflict. Both Israeli and Iranian leaders acknowledge its historical weight, sparking fears of prolonged regional instability and global economic repercussions.

For detailed information on **Iran-Israel Conflict and India's stake** [read this article here](#)

Historical and Strategic Background

1. **A Deep-Rooted Rivalry:** The conflict draws from centuries-old tensions, beginning in 586 BCE. The latest phase escalates a legacy of hostility, now centered around Iran's nuclear ambitions and Israel's determination to counter them.
2. **The "Rising Lion" Offensive:** Israel's operation was swift and massive. Over 200 jets struck more than 100 strategic Iranian targets. Among them were key nuclear sites and the assassinations of high-ranking Iranian officials and scientists.
3. **Preparedness and Proxy Wars:** This strike followed 21 months of conflict with Iranian proxies. Israel's efforts included weakening Hezbollah and Hamas, engineering regime change in Syria, and upgrading its air and ground offensive capabilities.

Global and Regional Diplomacy

1. **Western Endorsements and Legal Cover:** The IAEA condemned Iran just a day before the Israeli assault, possibly legitimizing it. The U.S., under Trump's renewed leadership, intensified pressure on Iran through sanctions and military actions, particularly against Houthis.

2. **Saudi and Oil Politics:** Saudi Arabia was pushed to break with OPEC+ curbs, aiming to financially strangle Iran. A global oil surplus was intended to block Iran's covert oil exports.

3. **Outreach to Pakistan:** Sudden U.S. diplomatic overtures to Pakistan, Iran's largest neighbor, suggest strategic alignment to contain Iran's influence from multiple directions.

Arab World and Regional Fallout

1. **Uneasy Arab Neutrality:** The Sunni Arab states remain skeptical of both Israel and Iran. Their main concern is avoiding Iranian retaliation that could disrupt oil flow through the Strait of Hormuz or trigger unrest among Shia minorities.

2. **Terrorism Resurgence Threat:** Instability from this conflict could enable a resurgence of terrorist networks like ISIS and al-Qaeda, further destabilizing the Middle East.

3. **Risk of Broader Backlash:** Even though the Israeli attack focused on strategic targets, blowback or collateral damage could inflame regional tensions or invite retaliatory strikes against Arab allies of the West.

Uncertain Outcomes and Global Risks

1. **Possible Scenarios:** If Israel achieves a quick, clean victory, Iran could be left weakened. But if Iran survives and responds, the war could escalate beyond the initial scope, undermining Israeli strategy.

2. **Iranian Nationalism and Resistance:** A prolonged assault may consolidate domestic support around the Iranian regime, rallying a previously uncommitted population under the banner of national defence.

3. **Economic Ramifications:** Widening conflict could worsen inflation, destabilize global markets, disrupt supply chains, and intensify geopolitical uncertainties—countering Trump's claims of ending “endless wars.”

Future Prospects and Strategic Lessons

1. **Complex Endgame:** Initial goals may not be realized. Like Iraq post-Desert Storm, Iran might not collapse as expected but adapt and retaliate.

2. **Risk of Escalation and Regime Change:** A prolonged war could compel U.S. involvement and lead to regime change in Iran or a redrawing of regional power dynamics.

3. **Strategic Miscalculations:** Iran's costly pursuit of nuclear deterrence, estimated at \$100 billion, may have undermined its own security. The current conflict could be proof of that unintended consequence.

Question for practice:

Examine the regional and global consequences of Israel's “Rising Lion” operation against Iran's nuclear and missile infrastructure.

India must fix deep flaws in aviation safety system

Source: The post India must fix deep flaws in aviation safety system has been created, based on the article “The rot starts at the top of the aviation ladder” published in “The Hindu” on 14th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructure

Context: The crash of Air India flight AI171 in Ahmedabad on June 12, 2025, highlights longstanding failures in India's aviation safety system. Despite repeated warnings and previous fatal accidents, systemic issues like poor accountability, political interference, and disregard for safety standards persist across aviation institutions, endangering countless lives.

Systemic Rot in Aviation Safety Oversight

- 1. Neglect by Regulatory Authorities:** India's Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Airports Authority of India (AAI), and airlines have repeatedly ignored calls to improve training and safety. These institutions function amid corruption and political manipulation, prioritizing image over actual safety.
- 2. Pattern of Zero Accountability:** Historically, pilots are solely blamed for accidents while higher authorities escape scrutiny. Successive fatal accidents—including those in 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020—have not led to structural reform. The same officials retain positions, enabling continued safety lapses.
- 3. Judicial Apathy and Institutional Failure:** Legal interventions have failed to hold officials accountable. After the 2010 Mangaluru crash, a Supreme Court Bench dismissed a petition with safety violation evidence by routing it back to MoCA, eroding public confidence in legal redress.

Failures Highlighted in the Ahmedabad Crash

- 1. Violation of ICAO Norms:** The DGCA violated global aviation protocol by publicly naming pilots involved in the crash. This move disregards International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards, which protect crew identities until official investigation findings are released.
- 2. Bureaucratic Appointments in Critical Roles:** Appointments of bureaucrats instead of aviation professionals to head DGCA and AAI continue to undermine institutional credibility and technical competency.
- 3. Weak Investigative Standards:** Accident investigations are often compromised. Officials known to align with political narratives are selected, ensuring pilots are blamed regardless of underlying causes.

Technical Clues from Visual Evidence

- 1. Bird Ingestion as a Likely Trigger:** Videos and survivor accounts suggest that birds near the runway could have been sucked into both engines, leading to a compressor stall. This could explain the low climb rate, high nose angle, and eventual stall before impact.
- 2. Runway and Surrounding Hazards:** Poor monsoon preparedness is evident. Overgrown grass near the runway may have attracted birds. Additionally, a tall building near the take-off path, which the aircraft struck, raises concerns over obstacle clearance and urban encroachment.
- 3. Possible Human Factor Errors:** The aircraft's landing gear was not retracted during flight. Investigators speculate a possible "startle effect" or inexperience during a training flight scenario, compounded by partial thrust loss, may have prevented standard post-takeoff actions.

Need for Deeper Investigative Focus

1. Foreign Object Damage as a Cause: The article suggests exploring whether debris on the runway caused damage, similar to the Air France Concorde crash in 2000, which was triggered by a metallic strip puncturing the aircraft's tyre and fuel tank.

2. Global Oversight in Ongoing Probe: With U.S. and U.K. investigation teams involved, the scope of the inquiry includes structural hazards like the building's proximity to the flight path, stressing the need to scrutinize construction clearances.

3. A Chance to Reform or Repeat: The crash should act as a final warning to overhaul India's aviation safety regime. However, given past patterns, it remains uncertain whether meaningful lessons will be drawn from this tragedy.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the systemic failures in India's aviation oversight that contributed to the Air India AI171 crash in Ahmedabad.

Monetary easing alone cannot boost growth

Source: The post Monetary easing alone cannot boost growth has been created, based on the article "**Rate cuts alone won't revive growth**" published in "**Businessline**" on 14th June 2025

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

Context: The RBI reduced the repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.5% on June 6 to stimulate growth. This move comes amid falling inflation and global uncertainties. However, the key concern is the continued weakness in consumer demand despite earlier liquidity measures.

For detailed information on **India needs monetary easing to sustain cyclical growth recovery** [read this article here](#)

RBI's Policy Shift and Limited Impact

1. Rate Cut and Policy Stance: The RBI's 50 basis point rate cut is the largest since March 2020. Its stance shifted from 'accommodative' to 'neutral,' indicating limited future cuts.

2. Liquidity Injection and Credit Uptake: Despite injecting ₹9.5 lakh crore into the system, credit growth has remained sluggish. Liquidity moved from a deficit to a ₹2.9 lakh crore surplus, but credit demand is still weak.

3. Demand as a Structural Issue: Weak consumer demand remains the central problem. Liquidity alone is insufficient to boost economic activity without reviving demand.

Aggregate Demand Trends and Limitations

1. Stable Consumption and Investment Ratios: Private consumption stands at 57% of GDP, while government consumption is around 10%. Investment levels—GCF at 35% and GFCF at 33%—show long-term stability with little dynamism.

2. Capacity Utilisation Signals Caution: OBICUS data shows capacity utilisation around 74%, pointing to limited expansion. Businesses remain cautious due to uncertain demand and slow capital spending.

3. Key Variations in Demand Components: Government and investment expenditures show higher variability than private consumption. These are more autonomous and can be used to raise demand in the short to medium term.

Challenges to Private Investment

1. **Demand Uncertainty and ROCE Concerns:** Investment hesitancy is driven by uncertain demand. Firms are unwilling to reduce their ROCE, which has risen from 27% in 2010 to 31% in 2024 and may go higher in 2025.
2. **Trends in Capex Intentions:** MoSPI data shows Capex rose 7% between 2021-22 and 2023-24. But it may decline 25% in 2025-26. Many firms plan to strengthen core assets (40.3%) or upgrade existing ones (28.4%).
3. **Sectoral Divergences:** Sectors like healthcare and manufacturing are investing more due to visible demand. Real estate and trade show reduced investment due to falling demand and structural issues.

Policy Focus for Demand Revival

1. **Boosting Spending and Confidence:** Policies like tax relief, infrastructure investment, and SME support can enhance consumer confidence and demand.
2. **Addressing Structural Gaps:** Solving unemployment and inequality can raise disposable income. Improving ease of doing business can encourage private investment and job growth.

Way forward

1. **Beyond Monetary Tools:** The repo rate cut is positive but insufficient alone. Structural and demand-side measures are essential to make monetary easing effective.
2. **Boosting Long-Term Capacity:** A focus on investment, especially in infrastructure, can unlock multiplier effects and foster sustainable growth.
3. **Consumer Demand at the Core:** True recovery hinges on boosting demand through coordinated monetary, fiscal, and structural reforms.

Question for practice:

Discuss how weak consumer demand and investment uncertainty limit the effectiveness of monetary policy in reviving economic growth.

India must fix its broken aviation investigations

Source: The post India must fix its broken aviation investigations has been created, based on the article “**India needs a sincere aircraft accident investigation**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 16th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructure

Context: The June 12, 2025 Ahmedabad crash has reignited debate on India's aviation safety and investigation framework. Despite rapid sectoral growth, investigations remain opaque and compromised. The article questions the independence of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) and demands reform for transparent, accountable, and preventive aviation safety mechanisms.

For detailed information on **Aviation Safety** [read this article here](#)

Structural Flaws in India's Aviation Oversight

1. **Lack of Independent Investigation Authority:** The AAIB, though presented as autonomous, is effectively a wing of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). This setup causes a conflict of interest, as MoCA oversees both operations and investigations, unlike the railway sector where independent authorities investigate accidents.
2. **Oversight Mechanism Is Misaligned:** MoCA controls policy, airline regulation, and investigative appointments. This consolidation limits the independence required for unbiased accident assessments. Such integration erodes public trust in investigation outcomes.

3. Firefighting Instead of Prevention: Recent incidents—including helicopter crashes, flying school accidents, weather-related turbulence, and security lapses—highlight systemic issues. The current approach reacts to events rather than preemptively addressing risk, revealing a broken safety management culture.

Lessons Ignored and Reports Buried

1. 1997 Seth Committee Warnings Unheeded: The J.K. Seth Report exposed flaws such as fragmented oversight, lack of training, and regulatory capture. Though comprehensive, it was sidelined, revealing the system's unwillingness to confront uncomfortable truths.

2. Contradictory and Sanitised Reports: Past accident investigations show internal contradictions or suppressed facts. The 1993 IC491 crash, 2001 cloud-cover misreporting, and the 2018 IX611 suspected overloading case all demonstrate selective truth-telling and data withholding.

3. Convenient Blame on Pilots: Investigations often conclude pilot error to simplify liability. This serves legal and insurance interests by deflecting blame from other responsible actors—airlines, maintenance units, and ATC—making pilots scapegoats, even posthumously.

Misuse of AAIB Reports and Legal Overreach

1. Safety Reports Treated as Legal Evidence: AAIB findings, meant to aid safety learning, are used in law enforcement without technical validation. Police and courts misinterpret “probable cause” as conclusive guilt, despite lacking aviation expertise.

2. Judiciary and Police Overstep Boundaries: Instead of deeper investigation, blame is often assigned based on visible errors. This focus on fast closure bypasses systemic analysis and obstructs real safety improvements.

3. Rule 19(3) Penalises Pilots Unfairly: The Aircraft Rules allow pilot punishment for errors, contradicting the global norm of a “no-blame” culture. Without proving gross negligence, such provisions erode morale and transparency.

Truth Suppressed for Institutional Protection

1. Systemic Evasion of Accountability: The MoCA's centralised control shields institutions and blocks reform. Families receive incomplete or contradictory reports, and public trust is eroded by the lack of transparency and delayed justice.

2. Global Image vs. Ground Reality: While international reports cite zero fatal accidents, the 2020 Kozhikode crash, with 21 deaths, remains a glaring contradiction. Investigative recommendations remain unimplemented, indicating that safety data is being used to mask inaction.

3. Failure to Learn from Tragedy: Despite repeated failures, structural reform remains elusive. The silence after each crash speaks louder than the recommendations that follow. Institutional courage to admit and correct errors is lacking.

Roadmap for Reform and Accountability

1. Reorganise Regulatory Bodies: Move AAIB and DGCA out of MoCA control and make them report to Parliament. This ensures true autonomy and credible investigations.

2. Restrict Misuse of Findings: Legally bar the use of AAIB reports in criminal cases unless independently vetted. This will restore the original preventive purpose of investigations.

3. Revise Legal Provisions and Create Oversight: Amend Rule 19(3) to safeguard honest pilots. Appoint an independent ombudsman to audit past investigations and ensure fair handling.

4. Reclaiming Truth and Trust: India must prioritise truth over image. Honest investigation is not just a technical need—it is a moral obligation. That, and not managed silence, should be India's tribute to lives lost.

Question for practice:

Examine how the lack of independence in India's aviation investigation system affects the credibility and effectiveness of aircraft accident inquiries.

Madhya Pradesh High Court addresses FIR standards and procedures

Source: The post Madhya Pradesh High Court addresses FIR standards and procedures has been created, based on the article "An FIR and an angry High Court" published in "The Hindu" on 16th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Judiciary

Context: On May 14, the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed the police to file an FIR against Minister Vijay Shah for allegedly inflammatory remarks against Army officer Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. The Court criticized the FIR's lack of detail and decided to monitor the investigation for fairness.

Judicial Action and FIR Order

1. FIR Against Cabinet Minister: The High Court directed registration of an FIR against Shah under Sections 152, 196(1)(b), and 197(1)(c) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. These sections deal with threats to national unity and group enmity.

2. Court's Concern About FIR Quality: Though the FIR was filed at Manpur police station in Indore (Rural), the Court found it deficient in describing actions linked to the listed offences. It warned that such an FIR could be quashed later.

3. Monitoring to Ensure Legal Process: The Court instructed that its May 14 order be read as part of the FIR and decided to oversee the investigation to prevent external influence and ensure lawful conduct.

Legal Standards for FIR Drafting

1. FIR Must Capture Offence Details: Section 171(1) of the BNS mandates that information about a cognisable offence, whether oral or electronic, must be recorded. Essential details of the offence must be included in the FIR.

2. Common Practice of Reproducing Complaints: Police often copy the written complaint into the FIR. Even when the initial complaint lacks elements of a cognisable offence, the FIR typically includes the complaint and any inquiry results.

3. Legal Basis for Bail and Protection: Listing clear elements of the offence helps the accused seek bail and claim other legal safeguards. This transparency supports due process.

4. Consequences of Incomplete FIRs: Courts have quashed FIRs that lacked required offence elements. In *Vinod Dua v. Union of India* (2021), the FIR was dismissed for failing to show any offence. In *Arnab Goswami v. Maharashtra* (2020), bail was granted due to lack of prima facie evidence.

Limits and Grounds for FIR Quashing

1. Inherent Powers of High Courts: Under Section 528 of the BNS, High Courts may quash FIRs to prevent misuse of judicial process or ensure justice. These powers must be used cautiously.

2. **Guidelines from Bhajan Lal Case:** As per *State of Haryana v. Bhajan Lal* (1992), FIRs can be quashed if they lack essential offence ingredients or relate to non-cognisable offences without proper judicial order.

3. **Other Grounds for Dismissal:** Courts may quash FIRs if evidence disproves allegations, if claims are improbable, or if legal bars apply. Maliciously filed FIRs also qualify.

Case Evaluation and Material Sufficiency

1. **FIR with Court Order Attached:** The FIR includes the Court's May 14 order and video links. If challenged, the order forms part of the evidence.

2. **Assessment of FIR Completeness:** Though it lacks direct quotes from the speech, the FIR is not deficient when read with the attached order.

3. **Prematurity of Harsh Criticism:** The High Court's remarks on police conduct may be premature, as the FIR, combined with the court order, broadly meets legal standards.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Madhya Pradesh High Court addressed the deficiencies in the FIR against Minister Vijay Shah and the legal standards it applied to ensure proper investigation.

India navigates crisis as Israel Iran conflict escalates

Source: The post India navigates crisis as Israel Iran conflict escalates has been created, based on the article "**West Asia's upheaval intensifies India's challenges of geopolitics**" published in "**Live Mints**" on 16th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: On June 13, Israel launched a large-scale attack on Iran, targeting nuclear facilities, military sites, and residential zones. Iran retaliated with over 200 missiles. This escalation has shifted a fragile diplomatic standoff into a full-scale regional crisis, affecting global security and India's economic interests.

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

Escalation of Israel-Iran Conflict

1. **Israel's Aggressive Action:** Israel launched a direct attack targeting Iranian nuclear facilities, military bases, and residential areas. It aimed to eliminate military leaders and nuclear scientists. Israel cited the threat of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, though US experts said Iran's enrichment was not yet weapons-grade.

2. **Iran's Missile Response:** Iran responded with over 200 ballistic missiles, striking more than 150 Israeli targets, including nuclear and residential zones. This marked a significant escalation from previous proxy methods of conflict.

3. **Widespread Damage and Fear:** The conflict has already claimed 130 lives, damaged critical infrastructure, and caused widespread fear. What was once a tense diplomatic situation has become an outright military confrontation, raising global alarm.

Global Reactions and Alignments

1. **United States 'Position:** President Donald Trump's statement made clear the US gave tacit support to Israel. The US, with its military power, now faces a difficult choice between backing Israel and advocating peace.

2. **Gulf and Regional Responses:** Gulf states condemned Israel's strike. However, rivals like Saudi Arabia and the UAE may find Iran's weakened position advantageous in their own regional rivalry with Tehran.

3. China and Russia's Calculations: China stayed silent, balancing energy ties with Iran and tech cooperation with Israel. Russia called for a UN resolution but knew the US would veto it. Its condemnation lacked strength.

4. Mixed Multilateral Reactions: The SCO, where India is a member, condemned Israel. India, however, distanced itself from the SCO's statement, indicating a deliberate attempt to avoid taking sides.

India's Strategic Dilemma

1. Energy and People at Risk: About 60% of India's crude oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz. Eight million Indian citizens live in the Gulf. A threat to the strait puts India's energy and diaspora at risk.

2. Rising Economic Pressures: A spike in oil prices above \$100 can worsen inflation, increase the current account and fiscal deficits, and pressure the rupee. Weak FDI inflows, already low last year, may decline further.

3. Balancing Competing Interests: India must juggle its Chabahar and energy ties with Iran and its defence and tech partnership with Israel. Staying silent on Israeli aggression risks undermining India's moral and diplomatic credibility.

Economic and Diplomatic Navigation

1. Preserving Strategic Autonomy: India, caught in past global conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza, continues to follow a path of quiet diplomacy to maintain its strategic autonomy and global image.

2. Timely Economic Interventions: The RBI's recent big rate cut and liquidity injection, though surprising earlier, now appear prescient. These moves may help cushion the domestic economy from external shocks.

3. Investment Concerns: Private sector investment-to-GDP ratio has remained at 10% for a decade. A new survey suggests a fall in capex intent, increasing reliance on public capital expenditure for growth support.

Long-Term Strategic Responses

1. Revamping FDI Strategy: To reach 2% of GDP in net FDI, India needs fresh thinking. The article suggests allowing Chinese investment in non-sensitive areas like EVs, infrastructure, and renewables. Indian supply chains can benefit.

2. Diversifying Energy and Exports: India must reduce its energy dependence on West Asia and broaden its export markets beyond the West. Services exports need a wider global base.

3. Focus on Human Capital: India must invest heavily in skilling, research, and human capital development to support economic resilience and global competitiveness in an uncertain world.

Conclusion

The Middle East crisis poses serious threats to India's economy and diplomacy. Yet, it may also open space for India to assert itself as a stronger, balanced, and independent global power.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Israel-Iran conflict affects India's strategic and economic interests.

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.

South Asia must strengthen trade for stability

Source: The post South Asia must strengthen trade for stability has been created, based on the article “**The sorry state of South Asian economic integration**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 24th June 2025

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

Context: Two key events—the **reciprocal tariffs imposed by the Trump administration** and the **terror attack in Pahalgam**—have exposed South Asia's vulnerability at the intersection of economy and security. These incidents underline the pressing need for a **unified regional strategy** to address interconnected economic and security challenges.

Interdependence of Economy and Security

- 1. Economic Strength and Security Are Linked:** Stability in trade supports peace, while conflict and unrest damage economic progress. A secure region encourages investment and trade, creating a virtuous cycle of growth and peace.
- 2. Border Tensions Disrupt Progress:** Territorial disputes in South Asia obstruct the development of **economic partnerships**, slowing integration and regional cooperation.
- 3. Need for Unified Vision:** Security and economic issues must be tackled together. Isolated measures fail to deliver long-term stability or prosperity.

South Asia's Limited Regional Integration

- 1. Weak Intra-Regional Trade Performance:** Under SAFTA, **intra-regional trade** remains just 5–7% of South Asia's total trade—the **lowest globally**. In contrast, the EU reaches 45%, ASEAN 22%, and NAFTA 25%.
- 2. Large Gap Between Current and Potential Trade:** SAARC nations trade **\$23 billion**, while estimates suggest they could reach **\$67 billion**. UNESCAP predicted a **\$172 billion trade potential by 2020**, revealing that **86% of capacity remains unused**.
- 3. Underperformance Despite Large Population:** With **25% of the global population**, South Asia has a **GDP of \$5 trillion**. The EU, with only 5.8% of the population, has **\$18 trillion GDP**; NAFTA stands at **\$24.8 trillion**, showing South Asia's unfulfilled potential.

Barriers to Intra-Regional Trade

- 1. Declining Bilateral Ties:** Trade between **India and Pakistan** dropped from **\$2.41 billion in 2018 to \$1.2 billion in 2024**. Pakistani exports to India fell from **\$547.5 million in 2019 to \$480,000 in 2024**, largely due to tensions and insurgency.
- 2. Worsening Trade Deficit:** The **trade-to-GDP ratio** declined from **47.30% in 2022 to 42.94% in 2024**. South Asia's **trade deficit** widened from **\$204.1 billion in 2015 to \$339 billion in 2022**, even though total trade rose to **\$1,335 billion**.
- 3. High Cost of Trading with Neighbours:** Intra-SAARC trade costs **114% of the value of goods**, higher than trade with distant partners. For instance, it's **20% cheaper to trade with Brazil than with Pakistan**, despite Brazil being **22 times farther**. By contrast, ASEAN countries trade at **76% of goods' value**, encouraging deeper integration.

Structural and Political Challenges

1. **Ineffective Trade Mechanisms:** Despite SAFTA, **poor governance and political hurdles** raise trade costs, making regional commerce unattractive.
2. **Lack of Policy Coordination:** There is no shared roadmap for harnessing **two-thirds of untapped potential** in goods, services, and investments across the region.
3. **Trust Deficits and Conflicts:** Regional tensions, **minority issues**, and **terrorism** continue to block cooperation. SAARC's goal to end distrust remains unfulfilled.

The Way Forward for Regional Growth

1. **Reduce Barriers for Mutual Gain:** Lowering trade costs and simplifying procedures can encourage the **creation of regional value chains**.
2. **Decouple Economics from Politics:** Regional trade must advance independently of **bilateral tensions**. Shared growth should guide the integration agenda.
3. **Leverage Complementary Strengths:** Identifying **mutually beneficial sectors** can unlock economic opportunity and enhance **regional stability**.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind South Asia's low level of intra-regional trade despite having significant economic potential.

Thirstwaves are reshaping climate and crop patterns

Source: The post Thirstwaves are reshaping climate and crop patterns has been created, based on the article "Rising evaporative demand spotlights India's data and research gap" published in "The Hindu" on 24th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article explores *thirstwaves*, a newly identified climate phenomenon caused by rising atmospheric evaporative demand. These events are becoming more frequent and intense, especially during crop-growing seasons, raising concerns for agriculture and water availability in a warming world.

Thirstwaves and Evaporative Demand

1. **Definition and Origin:** Thirstwaves refer to **three or more consecutive days of high evaporative demand**. The term was introduced by researchers **Meetpal Kukal and Mike Hobbins**. Their study showed that **such events are increasing across the U.S.**
2. **Climatic Drivers:** Unlike heatwaves, **thirstwaves are influenced by temperature, humidity, solar radiation, and wind speed**. Global warming intensifies these combined factors, making the air **more moisture-demanding**.
3. **Agricultural Consequences:** Evaporative demand controls **water loss from plants**, even when irrigation is adequate. **Higher demand leads to increased moisture loss**, leaving **crops and soil drier**, impacting crop health.

Measuring Evaporative Demand

1. **Standardised Short-Crop Evapotranspiration:** This metric estimates water loss from a **well-watered grass surface**. It simplifies the complex interaction by assuming **constant vegetation**, making water use depend **only on weather conditions**.

2. Indicators of Rising Demand: An increase in this measure means **rising temperatures, lower humidity, faster winds, and more solar radiation**. It is a **core concept** for irrigation planning.

3. Historical Findings in India: A 1997 study found **declining potential evapotranspiration in India** over 30 years due to **high humidity**, despite rising temperatures. However, **future warming is expected to override this effect**, leading to **higher evaporative demand**.

Recent Regional Observations

1. Changes in India's Sub-Basins: A 2022 study found **increased evapotranspiration in northern India, the Western and Eastern Himalayas**, possibly from **more vegetation or agricultural expansion**.

2. Data Limitations: There is **no detailed data on extreme thirstwaves in India**. Differences in **crop and ecosystem sensitivity to demand remain understudied**, creating a research gap.

3. Need for Research: Kukal is **collaborating with Indian scholars** to study thirstwaves in South Asia, where **societies are more climate-vulnerable**. Their research could influence **global food and water security strategies**.

Policy and Adaptation Implications

1. Unexpected Impact Zones: The **worst thirstwaves occurred in areas without the highest demand**, suggesting that **current climate risk assessments may miss key regions**.

2. Global South Risks: **South Asia's agricultural dependence and climate exposure** make it particularly vulnerable. Kukal's work aims to improve **regional readiness and resilience**.

3. Urgency of Awareness: Experts emphasize the **need for monitoring, awareness, and policy focus**. Educating **farmers and water managers** on thirstwaves is crucial for **future preparedness**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how rising evaporative demand and increasing thirstwaves impact agriculture and climate preparedness.

Health insurance in India needs urgent reforms

Source: The post Health insurance in India needs urgent reforms has been created, based on the article "**Health insurance must be inclusive**" published in "**Bussinessline**" on 24th June 2025

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

Context: Health insurance contributed **₹1.18 lakh crore** in FY 2024–25, making up **36% of general insurance premiums**. The sector has come under scrutiny for **high claims ratios, pricing issues, and uneven access**, prompting a need for reform and analysis.

For detailed information on **India Needs to Prioritize Preventive Healthcare for a Healthier Future** [read this article here](#)

Coverage Distribution and Premium Imbalance

1. Disparity in Coverage and Premium Share: Retail health insurance covers only **5.58 crore lives** but generates **₹41,501 crore** (39%) in premiums. Group health covers **25.59 crore lives** with **₹55,666 crore** (52%) and government schemes cover **26.11 crore lives** with just **₹10,513 crore** (9.8%). **Average premiums** reflect this divide — **₹7,437** (individual), **₹2,175** (group), and **₹402** (government).

2. High Loss Ratios Across Segments: The overall **incurred loss ratio** was **88.15%**, with **group health** at **94%**, **government schemes** at **115.28%**, and **individual** at **75%**. These indicate **sustainability challenges**, especially for public-funded programs.

3. Insurer-Wise Claims Experience: **Public sector insurers** had a **103%** incurred claims ratio, while **private** stood at **89%**, and **standalone health insurers** at **65%**, reflecting differences in **risk strategy** and **pricing models**.

Geographic and Provider Concentration

1. Urban-Centric Premium Collection: Nearly 64% of premiums come from just five regions: Maharashtra (29.5%), Karnataka (11%), Tamil Nadu (10%), Gujarat (7%), and Delhi (6.5%), showing limited geographical spread.

2. Private Sector Dominance in Care Delivery: Private healthcare accounts for **65% of hospitalisations** in urban and **54% in rural** areas. It also delivers **74% of outpatient** care in cities and **67% in villages**, indicating **dependency on private services**.

3. High Costs for Serious Illnesses: Private care is significantly costlier — up to **6.8x** higher for cardiac cases and **5.2x** for respiratory illnesses. This worsens financial stress and raises premium costs.

Key Systemic Issues

1. Incomplete and Denied Claims: Only **71.31% of claims** (₹83,493 crore) were paid in FY24. **22.22%** (₹26,037 crore) were unpaid — with **₹15,100 crore disallowed** under policy terms and **₹10,937 crore repudiated**. **₹7,584 crore** remained **pending**.

2. Need for Better Oversight: There are large variations in settlement practices among insurers. IRDAI review, policy standardisation, and Board-level monitoring are needed for transparency and fairness.

3. Provider Pricing Disparities: Treatment costs vary widely, even within the same **hospital groups** across cities. This complicates **premium calculations** and requires a **uniform regulatory framework**.

Reform Recommendations and Structural Changes

1. Promote Standard Policies: The **Arogya Sanjeevani policy**, with **uniform terms**, should be scaled up to **minimise dispute** and bring **pricing consistency**.

2. Establish a Healthcare Regulator: A national regulator is needed to handle **pricing transparency**, **medical inflation**, and **advanced technologies** in health coverage.

3. Strengthen Tier-2/3 Infrastructure: Public health expansion can be financed via **health bonds** issued by **municipal authorities or hospitals**, eligible for insurer investments.

4. GST Relief for Seniors: Reducing the **18% GST** on health insurance to **zero for senior citizens** will make coverage more affordable.

5. Process and Outreach Reforms: Insurers must adopt **digital tools**, improve **claims efficiency**, monitor **fraud**, and cut **intermediation costs** by promoting **direct sales**.

Public Sector Impact and Future Strategy

1. Welfare Gains from PMJAY : The PMJAY scheme offers ₹5 lakh coverage per family and has reduced out-of-pocket spending by ₹1.25 lakh crore. Over 73.98 crore Ayushman Bharat accounts and 1.75 lakh wellness centres show strong inclusivity gains.

2. Need for Integrated Reform: The **General Insurance Council's awareness campaign** is welcome, but systemic welfare benefits require a **comprehensive, integrated approach**, not isolated reforms.

Question for practice:

Examine how pricing and claims settlement issues affect the effectiveness of health insurance as a welfare tool in India.

Gender equality builds inclusive and safer cities

Source: The post Gender equality builds inclusive and safer cities has been created, based on the article "**The need for gender equity in urban bureaucracy**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th June 2025

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

Context: India's urban population will exceed **800 million by 2050**, making it the world's largest contributor to urban growth. As cities expand, ensuring **gender equity in governance and services** is essential for inclusive development and democratic progress.

For detailed information on **India's Progress in Advancing Gender Equality** [read this article here](#)

Expanding Political Representation of Women

1. Constitutional Mandates for Inclusion: The **73rd and 74th Amendments** reserve **33% seats for women** in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Governments. **17 States and one Union Territory** have increased this to **50%**.

2. Strong Presence in Local Politics: Women now account for **over 46% of elected representatives** (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2024). Their growing role as mayors and councillors marks political progress.

3. Lack of Administrative Representation: Despite this, the **urban bureaucracy remains male-dominated**, affecting the effective translation of gender-sensitive policies.

Gender Gap in Urban Bureaucracy

1. Low Participation in Administrative Cadres: As of 2022, only **20% of IAS officers** were women (IndiaSpend). Their presence is even lower in planning, engineering, and transport.

2. Underrepresentation in Policing: Only **11.7% of police personnel** are women (BPR&D, 2023), and many are in desk jobs, limiting their community-level impact.

3. Overlooked Gendered Needs in Planning: Women depend more on **public transport** and **neighbourhood infrastructure**. A study found **84% of women** in Delhi and Mumbai used shared transport compared to **63% of men**. Yet, planning prioritises mega-projects over local safety needs.

4. Proven Impact of Women Officials: Studies by ICRIER and UN Women show that women in governance focus more on **health, safety, and water**. Their presence improves **public trust** through empathetic enforcement.

Underutilised Potential of Gender Budgeting

1. Introduction and Efforts in India: India adopted **Gender Budgeting** in **2005-06**. Delhi promoted **women-only buses and lighting**. Tamil Nadu applied it across **64 departments**, while Kerala integrated it into the **People's Plan Campaign**.

2. Challenges in Implementation: Reports by UN Women and NIPFP highlight **weak monitoring** and **limited capacity**, especially in smaller cities. GRB often ignores basics like **childcare and pedestrian safety**.

3. International Best Practices: Philippines mandates 5% local budget for gender programmes, **Rwanda ties GRB to national planning**, **Uganda** requires **gender equity certificates**, **Mexico links GRB to outcomes**, **South Africa** pilots **participatory planning**.

Moving Beyond Quotas to Structural Reform

1. Need for Institutional Changes: Inclusive cities need reforms in **recruitment, retention, and promotion**. **Quotas and scholarships** in planning and engineering are necessary to break structural barriers.

2. Global Lessons on Inclusive Governance:

Rwanda raised maternal health spending, **Brazil** prioritised sanitation, **South Korea** used gender audits for transit, **Tunisia** implemented parity laws, **Philippines** funded shelters through gender budgeting.

3. Why It Matters: **Gender-balanced bureaucracies** are essential for creating **safe, responsive, and equitable cities**.

A Vision for Equitable Cities

1. Cities Beyond Growth: As India eyes a **\$5 trillion economy**, its cities must also become **spaces of inclusion and equity**.

2. Institutionalising Inclusive Governance: Mandatory **audits, participatory budgeting, and linked evaluations** should guide urban planning. GRB must be mainstreamed in all **Urban Local Governments**.

3. Empowering Women as Decision-Makers: Representation must lead to **agency**. Models like **Kudumbashree** provide effective templates. Cities must be **designed with women**, not just for them.

Question for practice:

Discuss how gender imbalance in urban bureaucracy affects inclusive city planning in India.

Indian Government Redefines Public Sector Strategy

Source: The post Indian Government Redefines Public Sector Strategy has been created, based on the article "**Shifting gear**" published in "**Business Standard**" on 25th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper3-Investment models**

Context: The Indian government's approach to Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) has changed significantly over the past decade. Initial hopes of privatisation gave way to a strategy focused on using PSUs to drive capital expenditure and economic growth. This shift has had wide-ranging implications for disinvestment, revenue generation, and fiscal planning.

Disinvestment Trends and Early Expectations

1. Initial Optimism in Disinvestment Policy: The Indian government began with a strong push for disinvestment. **Receipts rose from 0.2% of GDP in 2014–15 to 0.6% in 2017–18**, raising hopes for accelerated privatisation.

2. Sharp Decline in Receipts Post-2018: After 2017–18, disinvestment receipts **fell to 0.03% of GDP by 2024–25**. The decline was sharper than the earlier rise, reflecting a reversal in approach.

3. Limited Progress in Privatisation: Despite plans in 2021 to privatise several PSUs, only **three — Air India, Neelachal Ispat, and Ferro Scrap Nigam — were privatised** in the last ten years. Some PSUs, like Rashtriya Ispat Nigam, received new equity instead.

4. Shift Toward Value Creation Narrative: The government repositioned PSUs as **instruments of value creation**, moving away from the earlier disinvestment model which aimed to reduce government ownership in businesses.

Financial Engagement with PSUs

1. Drop in PSU-Linked Revenue: Combined receipts from disinvestment and dividends **fell from 0.45% to 0.25% of GDP** over the decade, indicating limited financial returns from PSUs.

2. Rising Capital Allocations: Equity and loan support to PSUs **rose from 0.54% of GDP in 2014–15 to 1.66% in 2024–25**. This growth far exceeded that seen during the UPA government.

3. Support Integrated into Capex Strategy: This funding became a central part of the government's capital expenditure plan, which **doubled from 1.6% to 3.1% of GDP** over ten years.

4. PSUs Used for Economic Recovery: Higher PSU investment enabled the government to maintain a robust capex push, particularly during the **post-Covid growth phase**.

Changing Composition of Capital Expenditure

1. PSU Share in Capex Rose Sharply: In 2014–15, PSU-related equity and loans made up **34% of total capex** (₹67,512 crore of ₹1.96 trillion). By 2024–25, the share rose to **54%** (₹5.48 trillion of ₹10.2 trillion).

2. Strategic Realignment of Growth Model: Instead of selling PSUs, the government used them as **instruments for capital formation and infrastructure development**.

3. Sustainability Concerns: Future expansion may face limits unless **new funding options** are explored, as dependence on PSU capitalisation may not be sustainable long-term.

Fiscal Adjustments and State Support

1. Correction in Revenue Estimate: A previous report wrongly stated a 6% drop in income tax collection. The actual fall in 2024–25 was only **1.7% below the revised estimate**.

2. Shortfall from Negative IGST Receipts: A **2.3% fall in net tax revenue** was largely due to negative IGST collections of ₹32,995.3 crore, caused by **excess settlements with states**.

3. No Recovery from States: The government allowed states to retain this amount, providing them with **fiscal space** for investments without cutting devolution.

4. Savings from Underutilised Allocations: Expenditure was lower due to savings of ₹25,000 crore (unclaimed grants), ₹20,000 crore (interest payments), ₹18,000 crore (scheme savings), and ₹8,000 crore (unused MSME funds).

Broader Implications of PSU Strategy

1. **Capex Growth Without Revenue Gains:** The government increased capital spending without matching revenue growth, relying on **PSU support rather than disinvestment**.
2. **PSUs Central to Growth Revival:** This strategy was crucial to post-pandemic recovery, despite low direct returns.
3. **Need for New Financing Tools:** Sustaining future growth will require **broadening funding sources** or strengthening PSU balance sheets further.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Indian government's changing approach to Public Sector Undertakings has influenced its capital expenditure strategy over the past decade.

Modern despotism is quietly replacing true democracy

Source: The post Modern despotism is quietly replacing true democracy has been created, based on the article “Fifty years after Emergency, the new threats to democracy” published in “Indian Express” on 25th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context: The global rise of a new type of despotism is triggered by increasing instability, including geopolitical rivalries, economic disruptions, and citizen unrest. This modern despotism, seen across diverse countries, challenges the foundations and promises of democratic governance by cleverly manipulating public support rather than relying solely on repression.

Understanding Modern Despotism

1. **Defining Despotism Clearly:** Despotism is often confused with authoritarianism or autocracy, but it uniquely relies on **voluntary servitude** rather than force alone. Despots manipulate populations skillfully, generating loyalty through sophisticated political and social strategies.
2. **Methods of Control:** Modern despots use **seduction, deception, and calibrated violence**. Their dominance depends significantly on rigged elections, patronage, financial incentives, legal manipulation, and a constant portrayal as protectors of the people against imagined threats.
3. **Social Base of Despotism:** Despotism effectively cultivates support among various societal segments, including **middle classes, workers, and poorer populations**, ensuring widespread subservience.

Global Spread and Contagion

1. **Despotism as a Contagious Phenomenon:** This form of rule is contagious, spreading through mutual admiration and alliances between despotic leaders globally. These relationships reinforce despotic practices, normalizing authoritarian behavior internationally.
2. **Exemplifying Global Alliances:** Donald Trump's 2025 West Asia tour illustrates despotic camaraderie. Trump received elaborate welcomes in Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar, underscored by extravagant ceremonies, lucrative business deals, defense contracts, nuclear energy collaborations, and luxury gifts, symbolizing solidarity among despots.

Consequences for Democracy

1. **Undermining Democratic Freedoms:** Despotism threatens fundamental democratic principles by eroding accountability and transparency. Such flamboyant demonstrations of power and unity among despots signal a clear risk to the values underpinning democratic societies.

2. Reasserting Democratic Values: True democracy involves more than free elections; it safeguards against abuses of power. Democracy insists no authority is permanent or beyond scrutiny, serving as a vital mechanism for preventing societal harm by holding power accountable.

Historical Lessons and Relevance

1. Learning from the Past: Historical resistance to authoritarian rule, such as opposition to Indira Gandhi's Emergency (1975-77), exemplifies democracy's protective role. Democracy acts as an early-warning system, alerting citizens to potential threats from unchecked power.

2. Democracy as Reality Check: Democracy ensures power remains grounded and transparent. It counters the illusions and excesses of despotic rule by continually challenging the misuse of authority, thus preserving societal integrity and individual dignity.

Question for practice:

Examine how modern despotism uses democratic tools and public support to undermine the principles of democracy.

Germany leads as America retreats from global security roles

Source: The post Germany leads as America retreats from global security roles has been created, based on the article "Eurasian powers must find political answers to security problems" published in "Indian Express" on 26th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: Amid disruptive U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump, especially in Iran and Europe, the NATO summit in The Hague signals major geopolitical shifts. The weakening of U.S. security guarantees is pushing key powers—especially Germany and others in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific—to pursue strategic autonomy.

Shifting Geopolitical Dynamics Under Trump

1. Trump's Disruptive Global Actions: Trump bombed Iran's nuclear sites and brokered a fragile ceasefire between Tehran and Tel Aviv. At the NATO summit, he continues reshaping alliances, challenging long-standing global security frameworks.

2. Impact Extending to Eurasia and Beyond: These interventions are not limited to the Middle East. They ripple across Europe and the Indo-Pacific, signaling a deeper transformation in Eurasian geopolitics.

3. Emerging Power Centres: With Washington receding, **Germany is rising as a strategic anchor** in Europe. This shift is redefining power balances and may reshape Eurasian leadership.

Crisis and Transition in NATO

1. Alliance Under Pressure: **NATO faces growing uncertainty.** Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Trump's criticism of NATO, and persistent tensions have shaken its foundation.

2. Germany's Strategic Reorientation: Germany, once a pacifist power, is now evolving. After Russia's 2022 invasion, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a *Zeitenwende*—a historic turning point—with €100 billion allocated to modernise its military and a commitment to NATO's 2% defence spending target.

3. Merz Accelerates Military Leadership: Chancellor Friedrich Merz is consolidating this shift. Germany now leads NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania and will permanently deploy a combat-ready brigade. **Berlin is becoming a "security provider" for Europe.**

Evolving U.S. Posture and Its Consequences

1. **Trump's Stance on Russia:** Trump downplays the Russian threat, promotes its return to the G8, and urges Ukraine to trade territory for peace. This **undermines NATO solidarity** and alarms European capitals.
2. **Rewriting Middle East Diplomacy:** In the Middle East, Trump seeks to expand the Abraham Accords to include Saudi Arabia. Some advisers propose a *Cyrus Accords* between Israel and Iran, if Iran breaks from theocracy—referencing Cyrus the Great who freed Jews 2,500 years ago.
3. **Indo-Pacific Uncertainty:** Asian powers are also unsettled. **Leaders from Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand skipped the NATO summit**, reflecting doubts about U.S. commitment to Asia-Europe coordination.

Strategic Recalibration Across Eurasia

1. **Europe's Push for Autonomy:** With no clear U.S. commitment and pressure to spend 5% of GDP on defence, **Europe is compelled to seek strategic autonomy**. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte supports the spending push but avoids addressing U.S. disengagement.
2. **Defence Spending Is Not Enough: Money alone won't solve security problems.** Political solutions and better neighbourly relations are essential to stabilise the region.
3. **A New Eurasian Order Emerging:** From Ukraine to Iran and NATO to the Indo-Pacific, signs point to the birth of a **new geopolitical order**, demanding adaptive leadership and regional cooperation.

Implications for India and the Indo-Pacific

1. **India's Strategic Advantage:** India bridges Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Its deeper engagement with Europe, outreach in the Middle East, and strengthening ties with ASEAN, Japan, and Australia reflect a **balanced strategy**.
2. **Navigating Global Uncertainty:** Delhi's adaptable diplomacy, including ties with **Trump's America**, positions it well to handle a fragmented and uncertain world.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how Germany's evolving strategic role is reshaping the European security architecture in response to shifting U.S. foreign policy under Donald Trump.

India Can Build Its Own Global Consulting Giants

Source: The post India can build its own global consulting giants has been created, based on the article "**India's Big Four bet**" published in "**Financial Express**" on 26th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Effects of liberalisation on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Context: India is exploring a major strategic shift to develop home-grown accounting and consulting firms that can rival global giants. This move aligns with the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* vision and is driven by the government's belief that India's talent, market size, and expertise can establish globally competitive professional service firms.

Understanding Global Dominance of the Big Four

1. Post-war Expansion and Strategic Evolution: The Big Four — Deloitte, PwC, EY, and KPMG — grew alongside American and European multinationals after World War II. Initially audit-focused, they evolved into multi-disciplinary firms offering services like tax, strategy, technology, and human capital advisory.

2. Shifting Revenue Models: In India today, audits contribute less than 20% of their revenue. Most of their income comes from advisory services, government projects, and tech consulting. They transitioned from compliance watchdogs to strategic business partners.

3. Lessons from Their Journey: Their dominance was built on trust, scale, and diversified services. These elements now serve as reference points for Indian firms aiming to achieve global recognition.

Missed Opportunities and New Openings

1. Overlooked During IT and Pharma Boom: When Indian IT and pharma firms globalised two decades ago, they sought international validation through the Big Four. Indian firms, even for domestic work, were sidelined, highlighting a lost opportunity for local professional services.

2. Global Indian Firms Now Feasible: The question has shifted from *if* Indian firms can globalise to *how fast* they can seize this opportunity. The global credibility of Indian business must now extend to Indian professional service providers.

3. A Proof of Concept: One Indian tax and regulatory firm has successfully expanded to the UAE, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia, serving major global multinationals. Its success shows that trust, niche focus, and outreach can fuel rapid international growth.

Replicating India's IT Sector Success

1. Learning from TCS, Infosys, and Wipro: These firms began as low-cost service providers and rose to become global consulting leaders. Their transformation holds key insights for professional service firms today.

2. Three Pillars of IT Success

- **Quality Benchmarking:** Surpassed global standards, earning Fortune 500 trust.
- **Strategic Scaling:** Used global delivery centres and acquisitions.
- **Branding:** Gained recognition via thought leadership and global forums like Davos.

3. Applying the Blueprint: These same strategies — quality, scale, and visibility — can empower Indian consulting firms to compete globally.

Key Actions for Indian Consulting Firms

1. Adopt Global Standards and Technologies: Indian firms must invest in AI audits, ESG frameworks, and predictive analytics. Strong training and international governance practices will build trust and credibility.

2. Achieve Scale through Strategic Moves: Fragmentation and small-scale mindsets limit growth. Indian firms need consolidation, partnerships, and shared leadership to achieve resilience and depth.

3. Boost Visibility with Modern Regulations: Current ICAI restrictions on advertising and signage hinder visibility. Reforms can allow ethical promotion and help Indian firms compete globally.

The Government's Enabling Role

1. Institutional Support is Crucial: Like the 1990s IT push, India now needs government-driven initiatives to boost consulting firms, including financial, logistical, and regulatory support.

2. Policy Suggestions

- *Subsidies:* For overseas market entry and infrastructure.
- *Preferential Access:* Government projects should favour capable domestic firms.
- *Regulatory Clarity:* Simplify rules on foreign ties and international mobility for Indian professionals.

3. Time to Build the Ecosystem: India already has talent and scale. A supportive ecosystem is the final step to transform Indian firms into global leaders.

A Defining Moment for India

1. Global Influence Through Indigenous Firms: The alignment of policy, ambition, and reform offers a unique moment. Indian firms can not only compete globally but also influence global norms and innovations.

2. Acting with Urgency: This opportunity must be seized decisively. The next generation of global consulting giants can carry Indian names — shaping the future of professional services worldwide.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can build globally competitive consulting firms by learning from the success of its IT sector and addressing existing regulatory and structural challenges.

Ensuring voting rights for India's migrant population

Source: The post Ensuring voting rights for India's migrant population has been created, based on the article “Enabling voting rights for migrants” published in “The Hindu ” on 26th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context: Bihar faces low voter turnout due to a large migrant population unable to vote from distant workplaces. Despite the Election Commission of India's (ECI) proposals, no mechanism has been implemented, disenfranchising many migrants during elections.

For detailed information on **Election Commission's initiative to enfranchise migrant voters is a step in the right direction** [read this article here](#)

Migration and Voter Disenfranchisement

1. Extent of Migration: In India, 28.9% of the population migrated in 2021, mostly for marriage and work. Bihar has one of the highest rates of work-related migration. This trend significantly contributes to voter disenfranchisement in the state. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Bihar's voter turnout was only 56%, far below the national average of 66%.

2. Impact on Bihar: Over half of Bihar's households experience migration. Migrants often relocate to richer states in search of jobs and cannot return during elections, leading to low participation. Without tailored mechanisms to include them in the voting process, their electoral voice remains unheard.

3. Election Commission Initiatives: In 2024, the ECI proposed solutions to enable remote voting for migrants. Although public discussions were held and ideas floated, including remote voting machines, no concrete implementation followed. This has prolonged the exclusion of migrant voters.

Voting Solutions for Intra-State Migrants

- 1. Encouraging Short-Distance Travel:** Around 85% of migrants move within the same state. These intra-State migrants could return to vote if provided reasonable support. Since the distances are shorter, the challenge is more manageable.
- 2. Government Support Mechanisms:** The government can ease voting access by enforcing statutory holidays on polling day, preventing wage loss for informal workers. Additionally, organizing special bus services before and on polling day could make return travel feasible and affordable.

Challenges for Inter-State Migrants

- 1. Remote Electronic Voting Machines (RVMs):** The ECI tested RVMs in 2023. These machines could allow voting across 72 constituencies, offering a solution for migrants without permanent residence. However, political objections emerged over its feasibility, voter identification, and compliance with election codes. Logistical issues, like organizing multiple RVMs in cities hosting migrants from many constituencies, make implementation difficult.
- 2. Postal Ballot System:** The ECI could extend the postal ballot system currently used by armed forces to migrants. Though easier to implement than RVMs, it would require early registration, timely distribution, and secure collection of ballots. The scale of operation still presents significant administrative demands.

Long-Term Solutions for Permanent Migrants

- 1. Switching Voting Constituencies:** Migrants who stay in a place for at least six months should be allowed to shift their voting constituency. This would enhance their political participation and enable them to influence local governance that directly affects their lives.
- 2. Encouraging Voter Registration:** Special registration drives should focus on enrolling long-term migrants and married women who change residence. Including them in local electoral rolls would increase overall voter turnout and strengthen democratic inclusion.
- 3. Combined Approach for Effective Results:** Each solution has its merits and limitations. Migrants are a diverse group with varied needs. A multi-pronged strategy—combining RVMs, postal ballots, constituency switching, and supportive voter registration drives—offers the best chance to reduce disenfranchisement. Such an inclusive system would empower millions of migrant workers across India to participate in elections effectively.

Question for practice:

Question Discuss how a multi-pronged approach can help ensure voting rights for India's migrant population.

US shifts AI control policy but strategy remains unchanged

Source: The post US shifts AI control policy but strategy remains unchanged has been created, based on the article "Fathoming America's plan to manage AI proliferation" published in "The Hindu" on 27th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3 – science and technology – Awareness in IT, Space, Computers, and Robotics.

Context: The United States has revoked its AI Diffusion Framework, originally introduced to control AI technology exports. While this move has been welcomed, the core U.S. approach to restricting AI access—especially for rivals like China—continues in new technological forms, raising fresh global concerns about autonomy and trust.

Problems in the AI Diffusion Framework

1. Treating AI Like Nuclear Weapons: The rescinded framework bundled AI export controls and licenses, treating AI as a strategic weapon. It restricted China and Russia, favoured allies, and limited others. The logic was that controlling computational power would preserve U.S. dominance in AI development.

2. Unintended Effects on Allies: These restrictions made even allies wary of U.S. intentions. Many began exploring strategic alternatives to avoid overdependence, weakening global cooperation in AI.

3. Mischaracterising AI's Nature: The framework misunderstood AI's civilian roots and international collaboration. Unlike military tech, AI thrives on global, civilian-driven innovation. Confined development could backfire.

4. Ineffectiveness of Compute Controls: Efforts to block compute access spurred innovations to bypass such limitations. China's DeepSeek R1 used low compute but achieved high AI performance. This undermined the policy's core control mechanism.

Shift in Tactics, Not in Strategy

1. New Export Control Measures: Despite ending the framework, the U.S. has tightened export controls. In March 2025, more companies were blacklisted, and enforcement was strengthened. The goal to limit Chinese AI access remains firm.

2. Tech-Based Restrictive Innovations: Proposals include chip-level restrictions and built-in monitoring tools. U.S. lawmakers seek to mandate location tracking for chips, aiming to prevent illegal diversion to adversaries.

3. Continued Strategic Objectives: These steps show the persistence of U.S. intent. Though the framework is gone, the strategy survives through technological enforcement rather than direct trade barriers.

Consequences of Technological Enforcement

1. Privacy and Ownership Risks: Built-in surveillance features raise privacy concerns. Such invasive controls may affect legitimate users more than malicious actors, eroding trust and autonomy.

2. Alienating Allies and Users: Controls may again push partners and users to diversify away from U.S. technologies. Nations will worry about sovereignty and dependency risks.

3. Repetition of Past Mistakes: If these controls replicate the outcomes of the rescinded framework, the U.S. risks repeating strategic errors. The shift in form, not direction, may still lead to reduced global cooperation and innovation.

Future Outlook and Strategic Lessons

1. Incomplete Policy Reversal: The rescission marks a visible change but not a deep policy transformation. Core objectives—especially vis-à-vis China—still define U.S. AI strategy.

2. Risk to U.S. Leadership in AI: Persistent restrictions may isolate the U.S. ecosystem. Rather than safeguarding leadership, it could trigger parallel innovations elsewhere, diluting American influence.

3. Need for Inclusive AI Governance: The experience with the AI Diffusion Framework shows that restrictive strategies can be counterproductive. A more collaborative and balanced global approach is necessary for long-term AI stewardship.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the rescission of the AI Diffusion Framework reflects a shift in U.S. strategy toward controlling global AI technology access.

India must build strong mineral stockpile strategy

Source: The post India must build strong mineral stockpile strategy has been created, based on the article “**Stockpiling critical minerals, a must**” published in “**Businessline**” on 27th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructures

Context: The fragility of global supply chains—exposed by trade restrictions, extreme weather, and geopolitical tensions—has underscored the urgency for critical mineral stockpiling. For a resource-constrained country like India, this is essential to safeguard national security and drive its clean energy transition.

For detailed information on **Critical Mineral Mission of India- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Strategic Importance of Critical Mineral Stockpiling

1. Global Supply Chain Vulnerabilities: Geopolitical tensions, export curbs, and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the weaknesses of global supply chains. Countries like China, with integrated control over mining and processing, have used this leverage to their advantage.

2. India's Urgent Needs: India's dependence on imports for critical minerals—needed for clean energy and national security—makes stockpiling crucial. Strategic reserves can help ensure continuity amid global disruptions.

3. Lessons from Global Events: Export bans on minerals like gallium and germanium by China and global crises such as pandemics have reaffirmed the need for long-term planning through mineral reserves.

Learning from Global Best Practices

1. United States: The US maintains a National Defense Stockpile of critical materials like cobalt and rare earths. It also explores unconventional sources like seabed nodules, despite ecological challenges.

2. Australia and the EU: Australia's \$1.2 billion Critical Minerals Stockpile Plan supports domestic mining through government-backed purchases. The EU encourages member states to create national reserves and explore joint procurement models.

3. Asian Models: Japan, South Korea, and China: Japan, through JOGMEC, holds 60–180 days of reserves of key minerals. South Korea aims to cut import reliance by expanding reserves. China uses state-controlled reserves and export limits for geopolitical influence.

India's Current Approach and Gaps

1. National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM): India has launched NCMM to strengthen supply chains through exploration and partnerships. However, it lacks a concrete framework for national-level stockpiling.

2. Opportunities for Global Collaboration: India can collaborate internationally by co-developing storage, procurement, and offtake strategies. Multilateral platforms like the Quad and Minerals Security Partnership can be leveraged.

3. Need for a Comprehensive Strategy: Without structured reserves, India risks disruption in access to minerals essential for clean technology and economic resilience.

Action Plan for a Robust Stockpiling Framework

- 1. Establishing a National Stockpiling Alliance (NSA):** NSA should design flexible procurement systems and develop storage infrastructure. It must also support recyclers by assuring offtake, attracting investment in recycling.
- 2. Forging Strategic International Partnerships:** India should pursue joint ventures and shared reserves with countries like the US, Japan, and Australia. Engaging through platforms like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework will be key.
- 3. Strengthening Domestic Capacity:** Stockpiling must be integrated with initiatives to expand domestic exploration, refining, and recycling. This will enhance self-reliance and reduce long-term vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

By adapting global models and investing in partnerships, infrastructure, and domestic capacity, **India can transform mineral stockpiling into a strategic pillar** for energy security, economic stability, and geopolitical resilience.

Question for practice:

Examine how strategic mineral stockpiling can strengthen India's national security and clean energy transition.

India must balance services and manufacturing for growth

Source: The post India must balance services and manufacturing for growth has been created, based on the article "Manufacturing or services: Why place one sector over the other?" published in "Live Mint" on 27th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Indian Economy – Growth, Development and Employment

Context: India's growth strategy traditionally emphasized manufacturing, influenced by classical economic theories. However, the services sector has grown faster and more consistently, raising questions about current policy priorities and the justification for a manufacturing-centric model.

For detailed information on **Indian Development Model – India's way forward: Services or manufacturing?** [read this article here](#)

Historical Foundations of Development Theory

- 1. Agriculture to Industry to Services Transition:** Simon Kuznets observed that as per capita GDP rises, economies shift from agriculture to industry and then services. Arthur Lewis added that transferring surplus labour from agriculture to industry is the essence of development.
- 2. Debates on Resource Transfers:** Earlier theories debated how much surplus should shift from agriculture to industry. Scholars like Shultz, Mellor, and Ishikawa offered varied models, from transforming agriculture to reinvesting in it.
- 3. Sectoral Transition in India's Case:** The author's research focused on how inter-sectoral transfers affected India's long-term growth, especially the evolving balance between agriculture and other sectors.

The Shift in Developmental Debate

- 1. From Agriculture to Industry vs. Services:** Today, the central policy tension lies between industry—especially manufacturing—and the services sector. This reflects a new stage in India's structural transformation.

2. Manufacturing's Traditional Prestige: Many economists still favour manufacturing-led development, citing Europe and East Asia. However, **Europe's growth was shaped by colonial surplus** and East Asia's by **U.S. alliances**, making them less relevant for India.

3. Manufacturing in Advanced Economies: Among the 30 richest countries (excluding small island nations), **manufacturing contributes 15% or less of GDP in two-thirds. Only Ireland exceeds 29%**, making it an outlier.

The Case for Manufacturing Revisited

1. Strong Linkages and Theoretical Support: Professors Veeramani and Nagesh Kumar highlight manufacturing's **backward and forward linkages**. Kaldor's theory of **increasing returns and cumulative causation** supports its central role in development.

2. Demand Reinforcement and Scale: Kaldor, drawing from Allyn Young, showed that manufacturing lowers costs and raises demand through **interlinked sectoral growth**, aided by **Keynesian policies**.

3. Weak Long-Term Manufacturing Growth in India: Despite policy focus, India's industry has grown only **5–6% annually over 70 years**. Manufacturing's GDP share is just **17%**, with most growth from **mining, utilities, and construction**.

Services Sector Outperformance

1. Higher Growth and Employment Share: Services rose from **20.6% to 53%** of GDP, with **7–8% average decadal growth**. They also create increasing employment.

2. Better Trade Performance: India runs a **trade surplus in services**, in contrast to a **deficit in goods**.

3. Same Policy Climate, Different Outcomes: Services thrived despite the same **regulatory environment** blamed for manufacturing's underperformance.

Policy Implications and the Need for Balance

1. Expanding Policy Support Beyond Manufacturing: **'Make in India'** narrowly targets manufacturing. **Services like education, health, and finance** deserve equal support.

2. Learning from Past Success: Industry outpaced services **only during 1950–60 and 2000–10**. These periods should be **critically studied**.

3. Balanced Development Strategy Needed: To generate jobs and reduce trade deficits, **India must pursue balanced growth** between services and industry.

Question for practice:

Discuss why India needs a balanced policy approach between the manufacturing and services sectors for sustainable economic growth.

Supreme Court ruling deepens inequality among lawyers

Source: The post Supreme Court ruling deepens inequality among lawyers has been created, based on the article **"Practising equality in constitutional courts"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 28th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- **Structure, organisation and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary**

Context: The Supreme Court of India, in *Jitender @ Kalla vs State (2025)*, revised how senior advocates are designated. It revisited the *Indira Jaising* cases (2017, 2023) and asked High Courts to frame new rules. Although it seemed internal, the issue has deep implications for judicial and political democracy.

Legal Plutocracy and the Problem of Classification

- 1. Section 16 and Institutionalised Inequality:** Section 16 of the Advocates Act, 1961, created two categories—senior advocates and advocates. This legal distinction was based on ability, standing, or special knowledge. It introduced unequal treatment among equals, fostering elitism in the legal profession.
- 2. Impact on Justice and Professional Ethics:** This division disrupted the egalitarian idea of justice and encouraged commercialisation of the legal profession. It made the system resemble the U.S. model, where access to justice is skewed in favour of elite lawyers and corporate clients.
- 3. Lessons from the U.S. Model:** A 2014 Reuters report, *The Echo Chamber*, showed that in the U.S., 66 lawyers out of 17,000 influenced 43% of Supreme Court appeals from 2004 to 2012. These top lawyers mostly represented corporate firms. India risks a similar outcome if inequality within the legal system persists.

Judicial Endorsement of a Flawed System

- 1. Reforms Rejected in Indira Jaising (2017):** Justice Gogoi's judgment in *Indira Jaising* rejected challenges to Section 16 and the Supreme Court Rules. It upheld the classification system and pre-audience provisions, ignoring the charge of systemic discrimination.
- 2. Limited Changes in Jitender (2025):** The *Jitender* verdict acknowledged that the point-based system was "highly subjective." Yet, it allowed the application process to continue and advised rule changes by High Courts. The Court avoided reconsidering the core issue of classification.
- 3. Constitutional Concerns Ignored:** Critics argued that the classification lacked any link to improving the legal system and was inherently arbitrary. The Court's justification—that Supreme Court-prescribed parameters ensure fairness—failed to address the root of the problem.

Flawed Criteria and Structural Bias

- 1. Subjective Evaluation Process:** The Court admitted flaws in the criteria but kept the structure unchanged. This allows bias and arbitrariness in choosing senior advocates, with potential for exclusion based on gender, caste, or class.
- 2. Neglect of India's Legal Legacy:** India's legal profession, rooted in the freedom struggle and Nehruvian socialism, emphasised social justice. The Court cited foreign practices like those in Nigeria and Australia, while ignoring Indian constitutional values and historical context.
- 3. Elite Bias and Marginalisation:** The system promotes 'homo social morphing'—judges favour those like themselves. Women and marginalised groups are excluded. Even the Court admitted the parameters were flawed but did not order systemic correction.

Inequality in Legal Representation

- 1. Courtroom Monopolies and Exclusion:** Thousands of capable lawyers remain unseen, while a few elite lawyers dominate key cases. This leads to an undemocratic legal system that excludes diverse voices.
- 2. Weakening of Judicial Diversity:** Cases like the *Waqf (Amendment) Act* show how national matters are argued by a select few. Litigation becomes a rich man's privilege, which contradicts the constitutional promise of equality.
- 3. Court's Missed Opportunity:** Despite identifying flaws, the Court did not refer the matter to a larger Bench. It upheld a divisive system, failing to align with the constitutional ideal of fairness and equal opportunity.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court's approach to the designation of senior advocates reflects systemic inequality within the Indian legal profession.

China builds trilateral ties to corner India

Source: The post China builds trilateral ties to corner India has been created, based on the article "A China-led trilateral nexus as India's new challenge" published in "The Hindu" on 28th June 2025

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

Context: China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh recently held their first trilateral meeting, soon after a similar one with Afghanistan. These meetings reflect **China's fresh push to reshape regional dynamics**, boost Pakistan's standing, and distract India through strategic alignments amid changing regional equations.

Historical Roots of the China-Pakistan Alliance

- 1. Post-1962 Strategic Realignment:** The 1962 India-China war shaped regional geopolitics. **China aligned with Pakistan** to tie down India, while Pakistan saw China as a **reliable partner** for military and economic support.
- 2. Deep Economic and Military Dependence:** By 2024, **Pakistan owed over \$29 billion** to China. **Over 80% of Pakistan's arms** come from China. China has also **shielded Pakistan-backed terrorists** at international platforms.
- 3. China's Position in Operation Sindoor:** After India's retaliation in May 2025 for the **Pahalgam terror attack**, China called India's action "regrettable" and supported Pakistan's call for an investigation. Pakistan deployed **Chinese-supplied radars, drones, missiles, and fighter jets**.
- 4. Reaffirmation of Ties:** In the aftermath, Pakistan's foreign minister met his Chinese counterpart to reinforce their "**iron-clad friendship**." This led to more trilateral engagements with other regional countries.

Resurgence of the 'Plus One' Strategy

- 1. A Recurring Strategic Pattern:** This China-Pakistan-plus-one model is not new. In 1965, Pakistan attempted to use **East Pakistan, China, and Nepal** to isolate India from the Siliguri corridor.
- 2. Assertive Indian Responses:** India's responses to the **Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam (2025)** attacks have been forceful. India has signaled an end to tolerating **Pakistan's nuclear threats**.
- 3. Strategic Isolation of Pakistan:** India suspended the **Indus Waters Treaty**, stopped trade, restricted port access, and hit military sites. These actions weakened **Pakistan's military morale and strategic confidence**.
- 4. Countering Chinese Intrusions:** India's bold stance during **Doklam and Galwan** has surprised China. It has also strengthened ties with **like-minded global partners** to deter further aggression.

China's Waning Regional Momentum

- 1. Maldives Returns to India:** Despite initial anti-India moves, President Muizzu has **turned back to India** as China hesitates on economic commitments.
- 2. Nepal's Stalled BRI Progress:** Nepal signed the BRI framework, but **key funding issues remain unresolved**, and project implementation is slow.
- 3. Sri Lanka Reorients Toward India:** President Dissanayake has shown respect for India's concerns and **visited Delhi before Beijing**.

4. **India's Regional Diplomacy:** Despite tensions, India allowed **trilateral energy cooperation** with Nepal and Bangladesh, reflecting **pragmatic engagement**.

Strategic Targeting of Bangladesh and Afghanistan

1. **Efforts to Shift Loyalties:** After regime changes in **Afghanistan (2021)** and **Bangladesh (2024)**, China and Pakistan aim to pull these countries into their sphere.

2. **Wary of India-Taliban Ties:** India's engagement with the Taliban worries Pakistan, prompting **stronger ties with Bangladesh's new government**.

3. **Terror and Security Risks:** Bangladesh and Afghanistan's historical links with Pakistan may facilitate **new terror threats**. This would **reinvigorate Pakistan's regional relevance** and clear ground for **China's BRI ambitions**.

India's Strategic Challenge and Path Ahead

1. **China as the Primary Threat:** China remains India's **main strategic challenge**, with Pakistan playing a secondary role. Trilateral alignments are Beijing's tools to undermine India's position.

2. **Balancing Act for South Asia:** South Asian nations must **balance ties** between India and China. India needs to clearly **assert its redlines** and warn that provocations carry **severe consequences**—economically, militarily, and politically.

Question for practice:

Discuss how China is using trilateral engagements to reshape regional alignments and challenge India's strategic position.

Balanced growth requires targeted policies to reduce district inequality

Source: The post Balanced growth requires targeted policies to reduce district inequality has been created, based on the article "**Growth alone won't fix inequality**" published in "**Businessline**" on 28th June 2025

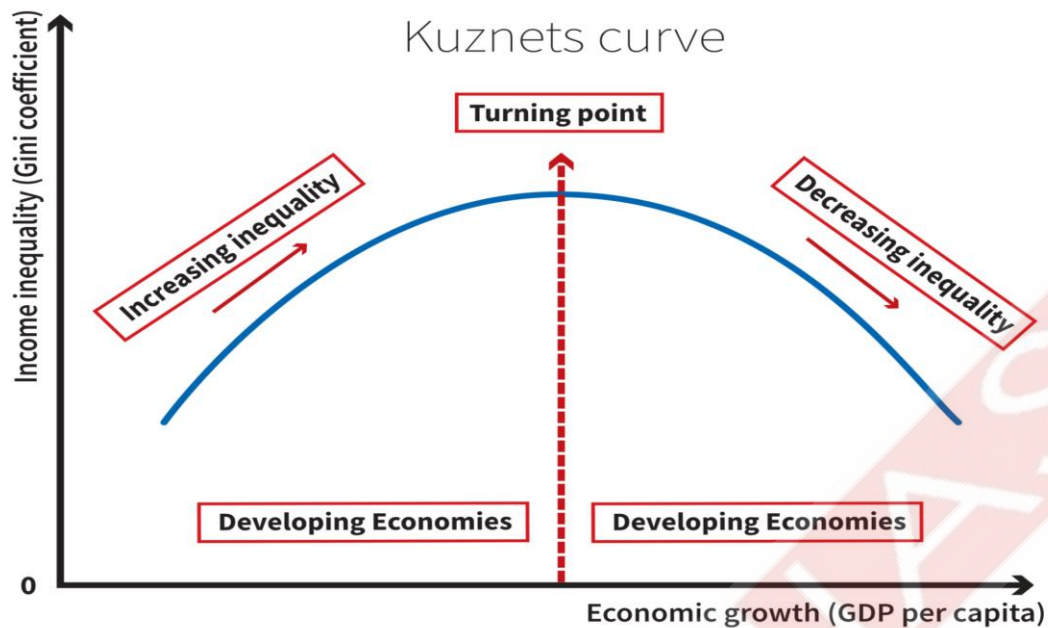
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Inclusive growth

Context: Despite India's rising GDP and expanding cities, deep regional inequalities remain unresolved. A district-level analysis using GDP and HDI data questions the assumption that growth alone reduces inequality, challenging the traditional Kuznets curve theory and highlighting the need for more region-specific development policies.

Understanding Spatial Inequality in India

1. **Concentration of Economic Output:** In several States, economic activity is highly concentrated. *Bengaluru* alone contributes nearly **38% of Karnataka's GSDP**, and *Dehradun* contributes over **31% of Uttarakhand's GSDP**, indicating skewed development in "superstar districts."

2. **Empirical Trends and the Kuznets Curve:** The study confirms that inequality tends to rise as development accelerates and later declines. Initially, opportunities are limited across regions. As urbanisation and industrialisation take hold, inequality spikes. Eventually, improvements in health, education, and infrastructure begin to reduce inequality.



3. Kerala's Balanced Development: Kerala demonstrates low spatial inequality due to long-term investments in *human capital* and *decentralised governance*. It exemplifies how development can become inclusive through public investment and balanced economic distribution.

Divergent Development Paths Across States

1. Tamil Nadu's Inclusive Industrial Strategy: Tamil Nadu has maintained balanced growth by *decentralising industries* across various districts like Tiruppur and Hosur. Welfare policies like *universal school meals* and public healthcare have broadened the reach of economic benefits.

2. Karnataka's Concentrated Tech Growth: In contrast, Karnataka's growth is driven by the tech sector in Bengaluru, with *limited spillover effects*. The lack of economic diversification across districts has led to higher regional inequality, despite a similar HDI score as Tamil Nadu.

3. Madhya Pradesh's Manufacturing Focus: Madhya Pradesh's SEZs focus on *processing and manufacturing*, sectors with limited employment spillover and weaker regional linkages. Only 7 out of 55 districts dominate its economic output, reflecting a different form of spatial concentration.

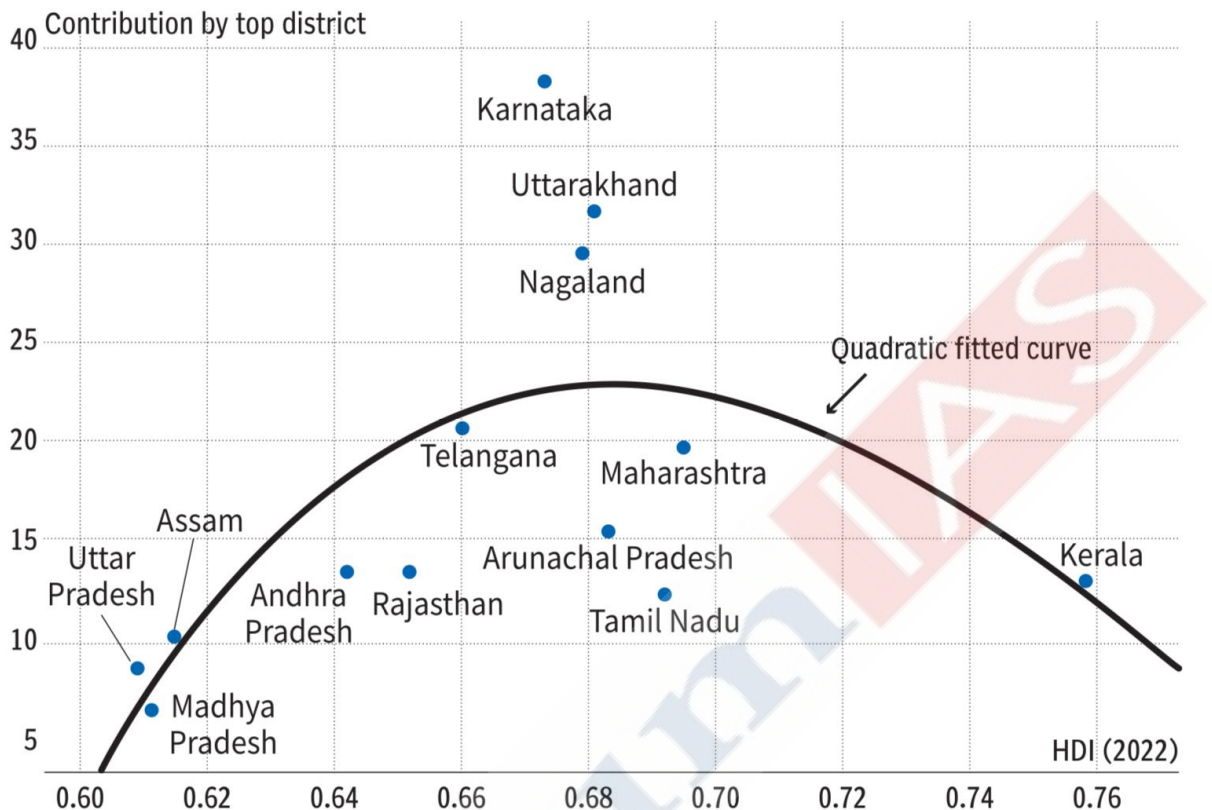
Key Findings and Policy Lessons

1. Growth Alone Is Not Enough: While *economic growth is essential*, it does not automatically reduce inequality. Market forces alone tend to reinforce existing regional advantages unless guided by strategic interventions.

2. Importance of Decentralised Governance: States like Kerala show how *local planning, public services, and participatory governance* can distribute growth more evenly, preventing dominance by a single district.

3. Need for Better Data and Policy Design: District-level GDP and disaggregated HDI data must be systematically collected to monitor inequalities. This evidence should guide *region-sensitive development strategies*.

Kuznets curve at sub-national level in India



Source: DDP: Respective States' Directorate of Economics and Statistics; HDI: Global Data Lab, United Nations

Reimagining India's Development Approach

- Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Models:** India needs *district-specific strategies* tailored to local strengths and needs. National development frameworks should move beyond focusing on State capitals and IT hubs.
- Encouraging Balanced State Policies:** States should be *incentivised to pursue inclusive growth*, investing in backward regions and diversifying economic activity across districts to avoid deepening inequality.

Question for practice:

Examine how different state-level development strategies in India influence spatial inequality across districts.

Tax access to digital space raises serious privacy concerns

Source: The post Tax access to digital space raises serious privacy concerns has been created, based on the article "Revisit digital search powers under the I-T Bill 2025" published in "The Hindu" on 30th 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 Finance Minister's proposal to amend the Income-Tax Act through the 2025 Bill allows tax authorities to access an individual's "virtual digital space" during search operations. This move, aimed at aligning enforcement with digital financial activity, raises serious concerns about **privacy, overreach, and lack of safeguards**.

Expansion of Search and Seizure Powers

- 1. From Physical to Digital Spaces:** Under Section 132, current law permits searches in physical spaces like homes and lockers. The new proposal expands this to digital spaces, representing a **significant shift** in the scope of tax investigations.
- 2. Blurred Relevance and Overreach:** This change weakens the earlier link between undisclosed assets and search locations. **Digital data often exceeds what is relevant to tax matters**, risking excessive and unrelated intrusions.
- 3. Open-ended Definition of Digital Space:** The term 'virtual digital space' includes emails, cloud drives, social media, apps, and **"any other space of similar nature."** This vague phrasing could enable **unlimited access** and affect others linked to the individual.
- 4. Operational Challenges and Privacy Intrusions:** Authorities can override device access codes, but it's unclear how this applies to encrypted platforms like WhatsApp. For professionals like **journalists**, such access could **expose sensitive sources and confidential work**.

Lack of Legal Safeguards and Judicial Oversight

- 1. Absence of Judicial Review:** The proposal offers **no requirement for prior judicial authorisation**. This disregards previous court rulings that demand substantial evidence before invading privacy.
- 2. Contravention of Existing Privacy Standards:** Courts have held that **"reason to believe"** must be backed by material evidence, not mere suspicion. The proposed change overlooks this principle.
- 3. Violation of Transparency Norms:** Like the current law, the Bill **prohibits disclosure of reasons for search**, which undermines **accountability and due process**, especially in digital contexts.

Global Best Practices and Comparisons

- 1. Canada's Constitutional Safeguards:** Canada ensures protection under Section 8 of its Charter by requiring **judicial approval, reasonable grounds, and neutral oversight** for all searches.
- 2. US Legal Protections:** In the US, the IRS's Taxpayer Bill of Rights and Supreme Court rulings require that enforcement be **minimally intrusive and legally compliant**, including a **warrant for digital data**.
- 3. India's Legal Lag:** India's proposal lacks such safeguards. It allows **unfiltered access to personal digital data** without proper checks or thresholds.

Conflict with the Right to Privacy and Proportionality

- 1. Failure to Meet Puttaswamy Standards:** The Supreme Court's *Puttaswamy* judgment laid down that privacy restrictions must be **proportionate, necessary, and legally justified**. The Bill does not meet these tests.
- 2. Risk of Unchecked Surveillance:** Without safeguards, digital enforcement becomes **surveillance**, not governance. It threatens individual rights.
- 3. Need for Legal Reform:** The Bill must be revised to **narrow definitions, mandate judicial warrants, and offer redress mechanisms**.

Conclusion

1. **Balance Privacy and Enforcement:** Digital enforcement must respect constitutional rights. **Transparency, legality, and proportionality** must guide any regulatory move.

2. **Role of the Select Committee:** The **Select Committee's review** is a crucial opportunity to ensure **checks, clarity, and protection** in the final law.

Question for practice:

Examine the implications of granting tax authorities access to an individual's virtual digital space under the proposed Income-Tax Bill, 2025.

Election Commission moves to delist inactive political parties

Source: The post Election Commission moves to delist inactive political parties has been created, based on the article "Why is the ECI de-listing political parties?" published in "The Hindu" on 30th 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 Election Commission of India (ECI) has initiated action to **de-list 345 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** that have not contested any election since 2019 and could not be located. This move addresses concerns about inactive parties misusing legal and financial privileges.

Understanding Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)

1. **Legal Foundation of Political Parties:** The right to form political parties comes under **Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution. **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act (RP Act), 1951** governs their registration. Parties must commit to the Constitution, socialism, secularism, democracy, and national unity.

2. **Registration Process and Internal Democracy:** A party must submit its constitution within **30 days of formation**. The ECI ensures it includes provisions for **internal democracy**, such as regular elections for office bearers.

3. Benefits Enjoyed by RUPPs

RUPPs receive:

- **Tax exemption** under **Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961**
- **Common election symbol**
- **Permission for 20 star campaigners** during elections

Compliance and Accountability Issues

1. **Donor Transparency and Reporting:** RUPPs must report donations above ₹20,000 annually. Donations over ₹2,000 must be through **cheques or bank transfers**. **Non-compliance removes tax benefits** under **Section 29C of the RP Act**.

2. **Low Electoral Participation:** There are **over 2,800 RUPPs**, but only about **750 contested the 2024 general elections**. The rest are often termed 'letter pad parties'.

3. **ECI's Limited Power to De-register:** In *Indian National Congress vs Institute of Social Welfare (2002)*, the Supreme Court ruled that **ECI cannot de-register** parties for non-compliance, except in cases of **fraud** or **disloyalty to the Constitution**.

Current Clean-up Measures by the ECI

1. **Delisting of Non-Existent and Inactive RUPPs:** In a **March 2024 notification (updated till May 2025)**, the ECI listed **281 de-listed and 217 inactive RUPPs**. These were found non-existent or had outdated records since **2014**.

2. **Impact of Delisting:** Such parties lose access to **common symbols and tax exemptions**.

3. **Action on 345 RUPPs:** The ECI found these parties non-functional and untraceable since **2019**, and has asked State CEOs to issue **show-cause notices** before delisting.

Need for Legislative Reforms

1. **Recommendations for De-registration Powers:** The **Law Commission (255th report, 2015)** recommended **de-registration** for parties inactive for 10 years. The ECI's **2016 electoral reform** memorandum also supported this.

2. **Ensuring Inner-Party Democracy:** Most parties lack internal democracy. Though ECI cannot directly intervene, the **Law Commission (170th and 255th reports)** proposed **RP Act amendments** to address this issue.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges faced by the Election Commission of India in regulating Registered Unrecognised Political Parties and the reforms suggested to address them.

Community forest rights can help green the Western Ghats

Source: The post Community forest rights can help green the Western Ghats has been created, based on the article **"For renewal of Western Ghats, put people at the centre"** published in **"Indian Express"** on 30th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article critiques the outdated and misleading data used by the Forest Department (FD) and Forest Survey of India (FSI) in the National Mission for a Green India. It argues for a science-based, nature-centric, and people-oriented approach to greening efforts, especially in ecologically sensitive regions like the Western Ghats.

Flawed Data and Misleading Assessments

1. **Inaccurate Bamboo Stock Estimates:** A field study in Dandeli showed that the Forest Department's Pre-Investment Survey of Forest Resources (PISFR) overestimated bamboo stocks by ten times. These inflated numbers were used to justify establishing a new paper mill, harming local ecology and livelihoods.

2. **Lack of Disaggregated Data:** Only when data were available at the **compartment level** could the actual bamboo stock be verified. The general public only gets access to **highly aggregated data**, such as at the district level, which hides local realities.

3. **Suppression of Remote Sensing Evidence:** In the early 1970s, ISRO's newly established NRSC used **Landsat imagery** to estimate forest cover. It found only **15% coverage**, while the FD claimed **23%**. The government then **ordered NRSC to stop**, and created FSI as the sole agency, which still provides **delayed and vague data**.

Failures of the Forest Department

1. **Bias Against Nature and People:** The article calls the FD **anti-science, anti-nature, and anti-people**. It highlights the 1975 case where **basket weavers** protested bamboo depletion due to the paper industry's overuse.

2. **Grasim Case and Environmental Harm:** In Kerala, the **Grasim rayon factory** dumped **toxic effluents** like mercury and lead into the Chaliyar river. The factory was given bamboo at just **Re 1/tonne**, compared to the

market rate of **Rs 1,400/tonne**, leading to destruction of **10,000 hectares** of bamboo in Wayanad. The shift to eucalyptus and acacia plantations with pesticide use worsened the ecological damage.

Need for People-Centric Alternatives

1. **Pachgaon's Success:** In Maharashtra, the village of **Pachgaon**, with **Community Forest Rights (CFR)** over 1,000 hectares, has managed forests well. Income from bamboo sales reduced harmful practices like **burning tendu leaves**. Villagers also set aside **30 hectares as a sacred grove**, supporting biodiversity and carbon capture.
2. **Improved Livelihood and Dignity:** Pachgaon now sees **less migration**, better **livelihood security**, and **stronger community pride**. Forests show healthy growth and improved carbon sequestration.

Way Forward

1. **Enforce Forest Rights Act Effectively:** The article urges proper implementation of the **Forest Rights Act** and **wider recognition of CFRs** for forest dwellers living there for generations.
2. **Democratic Decentralisation is Essential:** There must be **greater people's involvement** in forest governance. This aligns with the **Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel's** recommendation for sustainable and democratic greening.

Conclusion

A shift from outdated bureaucratic control to **transparent, community-led forest management** is vital. Science, local participation, and decentralisation hold the key to restoring the Western Ghats.

Question for practice:

Examine how community forest rights and democratic decentralisation can contribute to sustainable forest management in the Western Ghats.