

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



सत्यमेव जयते

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Features :

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

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India faces economic challenges from new United States tariffs

Source: The post India faces economic challenges from new United States tariffs has been created, based on the article “**With tariffs, India’s growth rate needs a careful watch**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 9th August 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

Context: The United States has imposed **two major trade measures** against India: a **25% reciprocal tariff** on exports from August 7 and an **additional 25% penal levy** from August 29 for continuing crude oil imports from Russia. Together, these could **reduce India’s exports, weaken growth, and widen the current account deficit (CAD)**.

For detailed information on **India must respond to American tariff hike with strategy** [read this article here](#)

India–U.S. Trade Context and Policy Actions

1. India’s Trade Surplus with the U.S.: India had a **\$41.18 billion** merchandise trade surplus with the U.S. in 2024–25, which is **rising steadily**. The U.S. seeks to narrow this gap by targeting India’s **exports and imports**.

2. Impact on Crude Imports: The penal levy also acts as a **non-tariff barrier** on Russian crude, pushing India towards costlier imports from the U.S. or other suppliers, **raising import costs**.

3. Free Trade Concerns: Such unilateral actions are **against free and fair trade principles**, showing the use of trade measures as **policy enforcement tools**.

Impact of Reciprocal Tariffs

1. Effect on Exports and Trade Balance: Assuming **import elasticity of -1**, India’s exports to the U.S. may **fall by 25%**. For 2024–25, this could **widen the trade deficit by 0.56% of GDP to 7.84%**.

2. Effect on GDP Growth: Real GDP growth could fall from **6.5% to 5.9%**. The **CAD may rise from 0.6% to 1.15%**.

3. Impact in 2025–26: Since four months are already over, GDP decline may be about **0.4%** and CAD rise proportionately less.

Caveats and Mitigating Factors

1. Ongoing Trade Agreements: A trade deal with the **UK** and talks with the **EU** may **improve the CAD**, though the impact is unquantified.

2. Tariffs on Other Exporters: U.S. tariffs on other countries could **reduce competition** for Indian exports.

3. Exchange Rate Depreciation: The **rupee fell to over ₹87.5** per U.S. dollar after tariff announcements, possibly offsetting some export losses.

4. Residual Impact: Even with these positives, **GDP growth may still be 0.5% lower** than the base 6.5% forecast, and CAD could widen similarly.

Strategic Policy Responses

1. Negotiation Leverage: India can use ongoing trade talks to **negotiate with the U.S.**, without compromising on sensitive areas like **agriculture** and **MSMEs**.

2. Diversifying Exports: Expanding into **new markets** is essential but **difficult in the short term**.

3. Lowering Import Tariffs: High import tariffs raise input costs for exporters. Cutting them could improve export competitiveness.

Impact of Penal Levy

1. Economic Impact: The penal levy's effects are similar to reciprocal tariffs but **slightly reduced** due to some commodity exemptions. Combined, they could **reduce GDP growth by over 0.6 percentage points** in 2025–26.

2. Diplomatic Efforts: India should **highlight the discriminatory nature** of the levy, noting other countries import more from Russia. The **three-week negotiation window** should be used effectively.

3. Long-Term Risks: Tariffs as policy tools undermine the **multilateral trade system**. India should **work with global partners** to restore balanced trade rules.

Question for practice:

Examine the economic implications of recent U.S. trade measures on India's growth and current account deficit.

India's Industrial Accidents Show Neglect of Worker Safety

Source: The post India's Industrial Accidents Show Neglect of Worker Safety has been created, based on the article "**Industrial accidents, the human cost of indifference**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Disaster management

Context: Industrial accidents in India continue to claim thousands of lives every year, with recent disasters in Telangana and Tamil Nadu exposing systemic neglect. These tragedies, largely preventable, highlight regulatory gaps, corporate apathy, and a national indifference towards worker safety.

For detailed information on **Issues with safety inspections in industrial areas in India** [read this article here](#)

Scale and Nature of the Crisis

1. Alarming Fatality Rates: Government and RTI data reveal at least **6,500 worker deaths in five years**, averaging nearly three daily fatalities. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have recorded over 200 major accident deaths in a decade, with unregistered sector fatalities likely much higher.

2. Hidden Toll of Informal Sector: Many small and informal units operate unnoticed, with deaths often unreported. Behind each statistic lies human suffering—families devastated, breadwinners lost, and communities pushed into hardship.

3. Frequent Chemical Accidents: A **2022 CSE study** found over 130 major chemical accidents between 2020–22, killing 218 and injuring over 300, mostly in small and medium enterprises operating below regulatory scrutiny.

Common Causes and Negligence

1. Lack of Basic Fire Safety: Many factories lack **No-Objection Certificates**, firefighting systems, alarms, or functional extinguishers. Safety measures are often absent or ignored.

2. Unsafe Work Practices: High-risk jobs proceed without permit-to-work systems, hazard identification, or job safety analysis. Migrant and contract workers, often unaware of safety signage, are left untrained.

3. Blocked Exits and Poor Infrastructure: Fire exits are locked, blocked, or hidden under storage materials, turning accidents into mass-casualty events.

4. **Weak Enforcement:** Audits often become box-ticking exercises. Convictions for lapses are rare and penalties negligible, allowing unsafe practices to persist.

Failure to Prioritise Safety

1. **Corporate Attitudes:** Even large firms prioritise operational efficiency over safety culture. Unlike Germany or Japan, India treats safety as a compliance burden rather than a value.

2. **State-Level Trends:** Gujarat reported over 60 major industrial fires and gas leaks in 2021 alone. DGFASLI data shows a serious industrial accident in registered factories every two days.

3. **Cycle of Inaction:** After each tragedy comes outrage, compensation, and committees—followed by silence. Root causes remain unaddressed, ensuring repetition.

Social and Structural Bias

1. **Disposability of Workers:** Contract and migrant labourers are treated as expendable. Their deaths draw little attention compared to high-profile corporate accidents.

2. **Class Inequality in Safety Response:** Accidents in poorer workplaces receive minimal scrutiny compared to those in elite offices or IT parks, reflecting a troubling class bias.

Need for Systemic Reform

1. **Rejecting 'Act of God' Excuse:** Accidents are not divine acts but man-made failures. Countries like **South Korea and Singapore** have corporate manslaughter laws holding executives criminally accountable—India needs similar measures.

2. **Call for Action:** Reforms must include stronger labour safety boards, digitised risk reporting, and whistleblower protection. Safety should be recognised as a **right, not a privilege**.

3. **The Central Question:** India has the means to prevent such tragedies. What remains in doubt is whether there is enough public, corporate, and political will to act.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors responsible for recurring industrial accidents in India.

Lowering age of consent may harm vulnerable minor girls

Source: The post Lowering age of consent may harm vulnerable minor girls has been created, based on the article “The faultlines of consent” published in “**Indian Express**” on 9th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Vulnerable sections of population

Context: The Supreme Court is hearing **the Nipun Saxena and Anr vs Union of India PIL** to decide whether the **age of consent under the POCSO Act, 2012 should be lowered from 18**. The debate raises concerns about vulnerable minors, exploitation, and the realities of adolescent relationships in India.

For detailed information on **Age of consent** [read this article here](#)

Legal Framework and Current Debate

1. **POCSO Act Provisions:** Under the POCSO Act, any sexual activity with a person under 18 is a crime. The law treats all such cases as abuse, irrespective of perceived consent.

2. Supreme Court Review: A Bench led by Justices Vikram Nath, Sanjay Karol, and Sandeep Mehta will examine whether the age of consent should be reduced. The review is prompted by recurring disputes in adolescent relationship cases.

Realities Behind “Consensual” Cases

- 1. Marginalised Victims:** Many cases involve girls from disadvantaged backgrounds fleeing abusive homes, discrimination, or forced marriage threats. Victims can be as young as 12, often paired with older men.
- 2. Cycle of Institutionalisation:** After elopement, police register cases, arrest the man, and place the girl in a shelter until 18. She faces a grim choice between staying confined or returning to an abusive family.
- 3. Judicial Leniency and Bias:** Some courts label these situations “Romeo-Juliet love” and acquit or reduce punishment despite significant age gaps, overlooking the coercive conditions behind elopement.

Case Studies and Judicial Responses

- 1. Calcutta High Court Controversy:** In one case, a 14-year-old claimed to marry a 25-year-old and wanted to stay with him. The High Court treated it as “non-exploitative,” ignoring her home conditions.
- 2. Supreme Court Intervention:** The apex court restored the conviction, citing systemic failure to protect her, but avoided a jail term to prevent further harm.

Data and Trends in Abuse and Child Marriage

- 1. Rising POCSO Cases:** NCRB data shows cases rose from 8,541 in 2012 to 53,874 in 2021 due to mandatory reporting. In Mumbai (2021), 54% of victims’ partners were romantically linked or had promised marriage.
- 2. Child Marriage Drivers:** India saw 1.6 million child marriages in 2022 but only 900 registered cases. Poverty, lack of education, and fear of violence, not tradition, now drive early marriages.

Challenges in Defining Consent

- 1. Complexity of Consent:** Consent can be genuine, reluctant, manipulated, or withdrawn. Minors often cannot grasp its legal or emotional implications, and judicial interpretations vary.
- 2. Defence in Trials:** “Consent” is frequently cited in rape cases, making its assessment crucial yet inconsistent.

Policy Considerations and Risks

- 1. Advocacy for Lowering Age:** Some activists suggest reducing the age to 16, excluding coercion and authority-based relationships, to protect girls’ autonomy.
- 2. Counterarguments:** Critics question why not lower it further if autonomy is the basis, and stress that without nuanced safeguards, vulnerable girls may face greater harm.
- 3. Implementation Gaps:** Justice Abhay S. Oka emphasised the need for informed choice, proper care, and protection, warning that blanket legal changes could worsen invisibility and exploitation.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the implications of lowering the age of consent under the POCSO Act on the protection and autonomy of minor girls in India.

Rising flash flood risks threaten fragile Himalayan regions

Source: The post Rising flash flood risks threaten fragile Himalayan regions has been created, based on the article “Rain, landslides, flash floods: an uncertain mix” published in “**Indian Express**” on 9th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclones, etc.

Context: The **August 5 flash flood** in **Dharali village**, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, killed **at least four people** and left many missing. The disaster, with **widespread destruction** and hundreds homeless, has renewed concern about **extreme weather threats** in India’s hill states and the **growing unpredictability** of such events.

Impact and Immediate Circumstances

1. Human and Material Loss: The flood swept away homes, damaged infrastructure, and stranded people. **Four deaths** have been confirmed, and several remain missing. **Hundreds** are left without shelter.

2. Wider Regional Pattern: In the last month, **Himachal Pradesh** saw similar disasters, with **dozens killed** and **thousands affected**, showing a rising trend of extreme weather in hill states.

Possible Triggers of the Dharali Flood

1. Rainfall Data: On August 5, **Uttarkashi** received **32 mm of rain** — double the normal for that day but not extreme. In the preceding days, rainfall there was **less than in other districts** like Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar.

2. Glacial Lake Breach Hypothesis: A senior glaciologist suggested a possible **breach in an upstream glacial lake**. **Ice-breaks** can trigger floods, as seen elsewhere, but this remains **unconfirmed**.

3. No Cloudburst Evidence: The **India Meteorological Department** defines a cloudburst as **100 mm rain in about an hour** over a 10 km x 10 km area. There was **no record** or indication of such an event in Uttarkashi.

Understanding Flash Flood Causes

1. Multiple Contributing Factors: Flash floods usually result from **heavy rain, landslides or mudslides**, and steep slopes causing run-offs into rivers. Not all intense rains or landslides cause floods, and debris may not always reach a river.

2. Role of Glacial Breaks: In **Chamoli (2021)**, **3–4 million cubic metres of water** were suddenly released after a glacier collapse. A similar event in Uttarkashi is under investigation.

3. Fragile Geological Conditions: The **young Himalayan mountains**, with unconsolidated rocks and weak formations, are **highly prone** to landslides and floods. **Saturated soils** and erosion can make even low-intensity rain dangerous.

Special Vulnerabilities of the Himalayas

1. Geological Youth: Compared to the **older Aravalis**, the Himalayas are less stable and more disaster-prone.

2. Seismic Risks: Frequent **earthquakes** increase instability, making rainfall impacts worse.

3. Human-Induced Stress: **Large-scale construction, riverbank activity, and heavy traffic** worsen ecological fragility.

Challenges in Prediction and Mitigation

- 1. Limits of Forecasting:** Heavy rain and landslides can be predicted, but it is **difficult to forecast** if they will cause a flash flood. Dharali showed even **moderate rainfall** can cause devastation.
- 2. Need for Preventive Action:** Measures include **avoiding construction near rivers, relocating villages, and safe disposal of boulders and debris** to prevent river blockages.
- 3. Importance of Preparedness:** Unpredictability demands **robust planning, early warning improvements, and strict land-use controls** to lower risks.

Question for practice:

Discuss the factors contributing to flash flood risks in the Himalayas.

India's struggle to balance ties with major global powers

Source: The post India's struggle to balance ties with major global powers has been created, based on the article "US-Russia-China dynamics are a nightmare for India" published in "Live Mint" on 11th August 2025

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

Context: India's security environment depends heavily on the state of US–Russia–China relations. With a direct threat from China, India seeks strong ties with both the US and Russia, but shifting great-power dynamics have often complicated this goal.

India's Ideal Geopolitical Scenario

- 1. Balanced Relations with Great Powers:** India would benefit most if it maintained strong ties with both the US and Russia, while the two also shared amicable relations. This would allow defence partnerships with both without mutual suspicion.
- 2. Strategic Autonomy Goal:** Such a balance would ensure India's independence in security decisions and access to advanced defence technology from both sides. However, India cannot influence US–Russia ties directly.

Cold War Choices and Lessons

- 1. Alignment with the Soviet Union:** During the Cold War, India leaned towards the Soviet Union, despite wishing to avoid alignment. This was due to geopolitical and strategic considerations.
- 2. Mixed Outcomes:** In 1962, the Soviet Union remained neutral in the India–China war to preserve ties with Beijing, disappointing New Delhi. In 1971, amid the Sino-Soviet split, Moscow signed a quasi-military alliance with India, deterring China.
- 3. Key Insight:** India learned that a great-power partner fully committed to balancing China was crucial for security.

Post-Cold War Shifts and New Threats

- 1. Changing Global Order:** After 1991, the US emerged as the sole great power. By the early 2000s, China's rise as a military, economic, and technological giant became India's primary threat. Russia, weakened, grew reliant on Beijing.

2. **India's Strengths and Gaps:** India's growing economy and nuclear arsenal improved its security position. However, the widening power gap with China meant India still needed a strong partner to deter Chinese aggression.

India-US Strategic Partnership

1. **Shared Concerns over China:** As China became America's main competitor, India and the US found common ground in countering its influence, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.
2. **Divergence on Russia:** India valued Russia for critical defence assets, such as leasing nuclear-powered submarines, while the US viewed Russia mainly as an adversary.

Ukraine War and Strategic Disruption

1. **Hopes for Indo-Pacific Focus:** India expected the US to shift military resources from Europe to the Indo-Pacific, enabling a favourable strategic setting for India's security and defence cooperation with both powers.
2. **Shift Back to Confronting Russia:** Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine derailed this possibility. While US documents still mention China, its strategy has pivoted to targeting Russia.
3. **Trump's Return and India's Dilemma:** Initial hopes that Donald Trump would reorient US policy faded. By August 2025, he was punishing India for its Russia ties, leaving India with a hostile China, a weakened Russia, and an antagonistic US stance—a scenario far from ideal.

Question for practice:

Examine how shifts in US–Russia–China relations have shaped India's strategic options since the Cold War.

Char Dham pilgrimage growth fuels disasters in fragile Uttarakhand

Source: The post Char Dham pilgrimage growth fuels disasters in fragile Uttarakhand has been created, based on the article “**India may need to take a hard decision on pilgrimage spots**” published in “**Live Mint**” on 11th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Disaster management

Context: The Char Dham Yatra, one of India's largest annual pilgrimages, attracts massive crowds but faces growing threats from flash floods, landslides, and environmental degradation. A warming climate and unchecked development in Uttarakhand's fragile Himalayan terrain have intensified disaster risks, prompting urgent concerns over safety and sustainability.

For detailed information on **NGT panel on key pilgrimage sites in Uttarakhand's Char Dham trail** [read this article here](#)

Growing Popularity and Sacred Importance

1. **Rapid Rise in Pilgrimage Scale:** The Char Dham Yatra connects four sacred Hindu shrines in the Himalayas. Once remote, it now draws more visitors than global icons like the Statue of Liberty, boosted by road and rail access.
2. **Religious and Geographical Significance:** The shrines are tied to tributaries of the Ganga river, originating from glaciers in Gangotri. These glaciers have reportedly shrunk by about 40% since preindustrial times.
3. **Political and Economic Drivers:** Post-1962 Sino-Indian War, infrastructure was built to improve border access. State patronage, including frequent visits by Prime Minister Modi and a \$9.8 billion connectivity plan, has further boosted tourism.

Increasing Frequency of Disasters

1. **Recurring Catastrophic Events:** Disasters have repeatedly struck the pilgrimage route—over 6,000 died in Kedarnath floods (2013), and over 200 died near Badrinath (2021). Cloudbursts and landslides continue to cause deaths and destruction.
2. **High Disaster Burden:** Despite having less than 1% of India's population, Uttarakhand accounts for about 10% of national disaster relief spending.
3. **Climate Change Impact:** Faster glacier melt and heavier rainfall due to a warming climate contribute to flash floods and landslides.

Role of Unchecked Development

1. **Infrastructure Expansion Risks:** Roads, railways, hotels, and shops lead to deforestation and dumping of debris into rivers, accelerating water flow and flood risks.
2. **Deforestation and Soil Destabilization:** Uttarakhand lost 0.8% forest cover in a decade. Poor slope cutting without stabilization makes the land prone to landslides.
3. **Extent of Vulnerability:** Nearly a quarter of the state is classified as high to very high disaster risk, according to recent studies.

Military and Tourism Pressures

1. **Strategic Infrastructure Goals:** Highways are justified for military access to border zones. Budget constraints may lead to compromised engineering, raising disaster risk.
2. **Tourism Revenue Incentives:** Illegal constructions flourish as tourist spending grows, with weak enforcement often linked to corruption.

Possible Solutions and Governance Challenges

1. **Monitoring and Regulation:** Satellite monitoring could curb illegal building if corruption is addressed.
2. **Visitor Limit Policies:** International examples like Machu Picchu and Mount Fuji show that capping visitors can protect fragile sites.
3. **Political Reluctance:** Restricting religious tourism may face political resistance, yet limiting pilgrim numbers could be essential for safety.

Question for practice:

Examine how climate change and unregulated development have combined to increase disaster vulnerability along the Char Dham Yatra route, and suggest measures to ensure both pilgrimage safety and environmental sustainability.

Strengthening diagnostic services to achieve universal health coverage

Source: The post Strengthening diagnostic services to achieve universal health coverage has been created, based on the article “Reaching out to patients” published in “Indian Express” on 11th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health,

Context: Accurate diagnosis is essential for effective treatment. India's pledge to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) under the National Health Policy 2017 and the UN SDGs highlights the need for affordable, accessible diagnostic services. The article discusses current gaps, technological advances, and policy steps to strengthen public healthcare diagnostics.

For detailed information on **Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India** [read this article here](#)

Central Role of Diagnosis in Healthcare

1. Basis for Effective Treatment: Diagnosis, built on medical history, clinical examination, and laboratory tests, directs therapy and forecasts disease progression.

Without timely tests, treatment may be delayed or misdirected.

2. Financial and Coverage Implications: Outpatient care forms over 60% of out-of-pocket spending, mostly on drugs, diagnostics, and transport.

Health insurance rarely covers these costs, limiting financial protection.

3. Public Facility Gaps: Absence of local diagnostic services in public centres particularly affects rural areas and urban poor, lowering service coverage.

Bridging the Access Gap

1. Private Sector Reach and Limitations: Private diagnostics offer variety but remain out of reach for large rural and low-income urban populations.

Mobile clinics and point-of-care devices help but cannot replace local public facilities.

2. Need for Close-to-Home Services: UHC objectives demand diagnostics at Ayushman Aarogya Mandirs and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to ensure equitable access.

3. Adapting to Health Transitions: India faces both rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and heart disease and stubborn infectious diseases such as TB and malaria. Diagnostics must respond to both.

Harnessing Technology for Precision and Reach

1. Advances in Diagnostic Tools: Molecular diagnostics, imaging, and tele-diagnostics improve accuracy and bring expert opinion to remote areas.

Semi-auto analysers are now available at PHCs; district hospitals have enhanced imaging.

2. Cost-Effective Use of Tests: Choosing tests requires balancing cost, accuracy, and clinical benefit. Evidence-based diagnostic algorithms should guide sequencing and simultaneous testing decisions.

3. Policy Role of ICMR: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) leads in updating the National List of Essential Diagnostics (NLED) to match epidemiological and technological changes.

Expanding Diagnostic Services Across Levels

1. Strengthening Primary and Sub-Centre Services: New services include HbA1C testing for diabetes, rapid tests for genetic and infectious diseases, and dengue sample collection at sub-centres.

2. Improved TB Detection: Molecular TB testing starts at sub-centres, with in-house facilities at higher centres, addressing high TB burden and late detection.

3. Responding to Climate Change: Expanded mosquito-borne disease testing is vital as transmission seasons and regions widen.

Building Capacity for Sustainable Improvement

1. Training Human Resources: Supplying equipment must be matched with trained lab technicians and skilled frontline workers to conduct and interpret tests.

2. Role of Artificial Intelligence: AI can help interpret results accurately, reducing errors from false positives and negatives.

3. Integrating Technical and Clinical Skills: Care providers must understand statistical measures like sensitivity, specificity, and predictive values to make correct clinical decisions.

Question for practice:

Examine the role of accessible diagnostic services in achieving universal health coverage in India.

India's agricultural exports grow despite global challenges

Source: The post India's agricultural exports grow despite global challenges has been created, based on the article "India's rising farm exports" published in "Indian Express" on 11th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Agriculture

Context: India's overall exports in 2024-25 showed marginal growth, but agricultural exports surged despite potential global trade disruptions, including US tariffs. Strong farm performance contrasts with flat merchandise exports, driven by easing restrictions, favourable weather, and global supply shortages in key commodities.

Overall Export Performance

1. Marginal Growth in Merchandise Exports: India exported goods worth \$437.4 billion in 2024-25, a slight 0.1% rise from the previous year. The April-June 2025 period saw a 1.7% year-on-year increase to \$112 billion.

2. Minister's Confidence Despite Trade Threats: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal expressed optimism for higher exports in 2025-26, even with potential setbacks from US President Trump's proposed 50% tariff on Indian goods.

Agricultural Export Growth

1. Consistent Upward Trend: Agricultural exports rose 6.4% to \$51.9 billion in 2024-25, with April-June 2025 showing 5.8% growth over the previous year. They could reach \$55 billion in 2025-26, surpassing the 2022-23 record of \$53.2 billion.

2. Historical Patterns and Price Influence: From 2003-04 to 2013-14, farm exports jumped from \$7.5 billion to \$43.3 billion, dipped until 2020-21, then peaked at \$53.2 billion in 2022-23, aided by high global agri-commodity prices.

3. Impact of Government Restrictions: The 2023-24 drought and export bans on wheat, rice, sugar, and onions reduced shipments. Improved monsoons in 2024-25 allowed gradual easing of restrictions, especially benefiting commodities like sugar.

Drivers of Current Performance

- 1. Strong Growth Across Key Commodities:** Marine products, non-basmati rice, buffalo meat, coffee, tobacco, and fruits & vegetables posted impressive growth in early 2025-26.
- 2. Global Supply Shortages:** Indian coffee exports rose due to poor harvests in Brazil and Vietnam. Tobacco exports benefited from shortfalls in Brazil and Zimbabwe.
- 3. Risks from US Tariffs:** The US, a major buyer of marine products, coffee, and other goods, plans a 50% tariff from August 27. This could depress prices and reduce Indian export competitiveness, especially if Brazil diverts surplus coffee to global markets.

Agricultural Trade Balance

- 1. Positive but Shrinking Surplus:** In 2024-25, agricultural exports (\$51.9 billion) exceeded imports (\$38.5 billion), yielding a \$13.4 billion surplus, down from \$27.7 billion in 2013-14 due to faster import growth.
- 2. Concentrated Import Basket:** Over two-thirds of imports were vegetable oils, pulses, and fresh fruits. Tree nuts, mainly from the US, formed a significant share.
- 3. Import Trends in Key Commodities:** Pulses imports hit a record 7.3 million tonnes in 2024-25 after duty cuts due to drought but declined this year with better harvests. Vegetable oil imports continue rising, and declining domestic cotton and natural rubber output has increased dependence on imports.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the recent surge in India's agricultural exports and assess the potential impact of US tariff measures on this growth.

Supreme Court order weakens protection for domestic violence victims

Source: The post Supreme Court order weakens protection for domestic violence victims has been created, based on the article "A Court ruling with no room for gender justice" published in "The Hindu" on 12th August 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Context: In *Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal* (July 2024), the Supreme Court upheld a suspension of arrest or coercive action under Section 498-A IPC for two months after a complaint. This decision, based on questionable premises, risks weakening protections against domestic cruelty and undermines gender equality.

Legislative Background and Purpose of Section 498-A

- 1. Addressing Domestic Violence:** Section 498-A IPC, introduced in 1983, penalises cruelty against a wife by her husband or his relatives with up to three years' imprisonment and a fine. Cruelty includes dowry harassment, driving a woman to suicide, or causing harm to life or health.
- 2. Socio-Cultural Context:** The law was enacted amidst rising dowry deaths and severe domestic violence. Parliament's intent was to cover all forms of cruelty in marriage, complementing other laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- 3. Policy-Maker's Deliberation:** The legislation followed detailed parliamentary study, recognising systemic gender inequality and the need for strong legal redress.

Judicial Directions and Supreme Court Endorsement

1. Allahabad High Court's Blanket Protection: The High Court directed that no arrest or coercive action occur for two months after filing a complaint, with cases referred to family welfare committees.

2. Supreme Court's Approval: The Supreme Court endorsed this approach without detailed examination of broader socio-political consequences or fully hearing the State government.

3. Consequences for Complainants: The ruling delays arrests even in severe cases, risks complainant safety, legitimises police inaction in marital cruelty complaints, and discourages reporting.

Limits of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Criminal Offences

1. Appropriate Contexts for Mediation: Conciliation may be suitable for divorce or custody disputes, given their emotional and sensitive nature.

2. Inapplicability in Serious Violence Cases: Where allegations involve violence under penal law, mediation cannot substitute criminal investigation and prosecution.

The 'Misuse' Narrative

1. Judicial Observations on Misuse: Past judgments, including *Preeti Gupta* (2010), *Sushil Kumar Sharma* (2005), and *Arnesh Kumar* (2014), referred to misuse concerns and imposed arrest restrictions.

2. Lack of Empirical Evidence: Despite such claims, no concrete nationwide data proves systemic misuse. Courts deal with individual disputes, which do not justify overriding legislative intent.

3. Conviction Rates Misinterpreted: An 18% conviction rate in 2022 is higher than for several offences. Low rates stem from investigative flaws, social pressures, evidentiary challenges, and the high criminal burden of proof—not necessarily false complaints.

Data and Ground Realities

1. NCRB and NFHS Findings: NCRB recorded 1,34,506 cases under Section 498-A in 2022. NFHS-5 shows significant under-reporting of violence in many States.

2. Rising Cases Reflect Awareness: Reports, like one by Humsafar, attribute increased cases to growing legal awareness among women, not widespread misuse.

3. Potential for Misuse in Any Law: All laws carry misuse risks, but allegations' veracity should be tested through proper investigation, not pre-emptive suspension.

Implications for Justice and Legal Consistency

1. Undermining Victim Protection: Suspending the law selectively leaves victims more vulnerable and reduces access to timely justice.

2. Impact on Criminal Law Uniformity: Applying stricter tests to specific provisions disrupts the uniform application of criminal law.

3. Contradicting Settled Principles: The Court earlier affirmed that misuse is no ground to invalidate a law (*Sushil Kumar Sharma*, 2005). The current approach undermines this precedent, narrowing the justice window for victims of cruelty.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Supreme Court's two-month suspension of arrests under Section 498-A affects victim safety, police investigation, and uniformity of criminal law.

Strengthening community engagement in Indian health governance

Source: The post **Supreme Court order weakens protection for domestic violence victims** has been created, based on the article **"Reviving civic engagement in health governance"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 12th August 2025

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

Context: The *Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam* scheme in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka's *Gruha Arogya* scheme aim to deliver healthcare at people's doorsteps, especially for **non-communicable diseases**. While these initiatives expand access, they raise concerns about how far **citizens can engage with and influence health governance** at different levels.

Evolving Nature of Health Governance

- 1. From Government-led to Multi-actor Systems:** Health governance now includes **civil society, professional associations, hospital bodies, and trade unions**. It works through both formal and informal processes, where **power dynamics affect participation**.
- 2. Importance of Public Engagement:** Citizen involvement **affirms dignity, counters epistemic injustice, and strengthens democracy**. It ensures that people influence health decisions affecting them.
- 3. Benefits for Service Delivery:** Engaging communities **improves accountability**, reduces elite dominance, builds trust with providers, and **enhances health outcomes**.

Institutional Mechanisms for Participation

- 1. National Rural Health Mission Platforms:** The **NHM (2005)** created Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs) and Rogi Kalyan Samitis for inclusive participation, especially of **women and marginalised groups**, with **untied funds** for local initiatives.
- 2. Urban Participation Structures:** Urban equivalents include **Mahila Arogya Samitis**, Ward Committees, and NGO-led bodies.
- 3. Challenges in Implementation:** In some areas, **committees are absent**; in others, they face **unclear roles, rare meetings, underused funds, poor coordination, and social hierarchies**.

Barriers to Effective Engagement

- 1. Perception of Citizens as Passive:** Policymakers often see people as **recipients, not co-creators**. Performance is judged by **target numbers**, ignoring ground realities.
- 2. Language and Framing Issues:** Terms like **"beneficiaries"** reduce citizens to **objects of intervention** rather than **rights-holders**.
- 3. Medicalised and Hierarchical Governance:** Leadership is **dominated by doctors** trained in biomedical models. Promotions are often based on **seniority**, not public health expertise, creating a **disconnect from community needs**.

4. Resistance to Participation: Concerns include **extra workload**, **accountability pressure**, **dominance by medical or capitalist interests**, and **unequal influence** in governance spaces.

Alternative Avenues for Citizen Voice

1. Non-institutional Channels: Where formal platforms fail, citizens turn to **protests, media campaigns, and legal action**.

2. Unmet Demand for Inclusion: These actions reflect a **strong need for voice and accountability**.

Path to Meaningful Community Engagement

1. Mindset Transformation: Participation should be valued **as much as outcomes**. People must be seen as **partners, not instruments**.

2. Empowering Communities: Spread **health rights awareness**, engage **marginalised groups**, build **civic education early**, and provide **tools for decision-making**.

3. Sensitising Health Actors: Avoid blaming poor awareness for low service use. Address **structural health inequities** with communities.

4. Strengthening Platforms: Existing mechanisms must be **activated, improved, and made inclusive** for lasting change.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of meaningful community engagement in health governance in India and the challenges that hinder its effective implementation.

Supreme Court to hear CCI and Google Android case

Source: The post **Supreme Court to hear CCI and Google Android case** has been created, based on the article “**What will be the impact of Google antitrust case?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 12th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance- consumer rights in India.

Context: On August 8, the Supreme Court admitted appeals from Google, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), and the Alliance Digital India Foundation (ADIF). The case is about Google's alleged abuse of dominance in the Android market. The hearings in November will decide rules for fair competition, consumer rights, and platform control in India.

CCI's Findings Against Google

1. Start of the Probe: In 2020, complaints from app developers and industry bodies triggered the CCI investigation. They said Google used its strong position in Android to promote its own services and limit rivals.

2. Mandatory Google Play Billing System: Google required all in-app purchases on the Play Store to use the Google Play Billing System (GPBS). This meant developers had to pay commissions between 15% and 30%. They could not use their own payment systems. Google's own app, YouTube, was exempt. The CCI said this gave YouTube an unfair cost advantage.

3. Pre-Installation of Google Apps: Under Android licensing, device makers had to pre-install Google apps like Search, Chrome, and YouTube to get Play Store access. The CCI said this bundling reduced consumer choice and blocked innovation from competitors.

4. Penalties and Orders: The CCI fined Google ₹936.44 crore. It ordered changes such as separating GPBS from Play Store access, ensuring clear billing data rules, and stopping the use of such data to benefit Google's own services.

Google's Defence

1. Android as Open Source: Google said Android is free and open-source. Device makers can use it without the Play Store and without Google's proprietary apps.

2. User Experience and Security: Google argued that pre-installed apps save users time and improve convenience. GPBS ensured safe and reliable transactions, prevented fraud, and reduced payment failures.

3. Standard Pricing and Support: The commission rates were in line with global industry norms. Google said the fees supported infrastructure, global reach, and regular security updates.

4. Market Still Healthy: The exemption for YouTube was due to its business model. Google pointed to the growth of Indian apps like PhonePe, Paytm, and Hotstar as proof of competition.

NCLAT's Judgment

1. Partial Agreement with CCI: In March, NCLAT said GPBS rules and app bundling were misuse of market dominance.

2. Fine Reduction: The fine was cut from ₹936.44 crore to ₹216.69 crore. The tribunal said the original fine was too high.

3. Change in Directions: Some of the CCI's remedies were removed for being too broad or lacking strong evidence.

4. Review Decision: In May 2025, two remedies were restored. Google must be transparent about billing data policies. It also cannot use such data to benefit its own services.

5. Multiple Appeals: Google wanted all charges dropped. The CCI wanted its full orders restored. ADIF said the tribunal was too soft on Google.

Impact of the Case

1. For Consumers: A ruling for the CCI could mean more choice, lower prices, and stronger privacy protections.

2. For Smartphone Makers: The verdict could allow more freedom to pre-install other apps and use different Android versions. This could help smaller Indian brands compete.

3. For Developers: Local startups could get more payment options, better visibility, and fairer competition.

4. For Google: A loss could affect its large Indian market and trigger similar regulatory actions worldwide.

Road Ahead

1. Supreme Court Focus: The Court will look at the meaning of "abuse of dominance" under Indian law and how platform markets work.

2. Long-Term Effect: The ruling will affect how over 95% of Indian smartphone users access apps and make payments.

3. Possible Results: A strong win for the CCI could make India a global leader in strict digital market rules. A Google win would maintain the present system.

Question for practice:

Discuss the implications of the Supreme Court case between CCI and Google on competition and consumer rights in India.

India navigates US tariffs and Russian oil pressures pragmatically

Source: The post India navigates US tariffs and Russian oil pressures pragmatically has been created, based on the article “**Russian oil: Sifting politics from economics**” published in “**Businessline**” on 12th August 2025

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

Context: The upcoming August 15 meeting between Russian and US leaders in Alaska could have major implications for the global oil market. India, a top fossil fuel consumer with strong ties to Russia, faces heightened pressure after a US tariff decision linked to its Russian oil imports.

US Tariffs and India's Position

1. Executive Order and Tariff Decision: On August 6, the US announced a 25% tariff on Indian imports, effective August 27, over India's continued purchase of Russian oil. The order also outlined possible similar measures against other importers.

2. Link to Russia-Ukraine Conflict: The tariff was framed as part of addressing the national emergency caused by Russia's actions in Ukraine. The US linked India's oil imports directly to this geopolitical issue.

3. Criticism of the Move: Experts criticised the tariff as unfair and lacking understanding of global oil market complexities, noting it ignored India's diverse sourcing strategy.

India's Oil Import Landscape

1. Diverse Supply Sources: India imports oil from 40 countries, including Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the US, and Nigeria. Purchases are based on economic viability rather than political considerations.

2. India's Share in Russian Exports: From Dec 2022 to July 2025, Russia exported 47% of its crude to China, 38% to India, and 6% each to the EU and Turkey, showing India is not alone in buying Russian oil.

3. Separation of Politics and Economics: So far, India has kept political disputes separate from energy trade decisions to safeguard national interests.

Strategic and Policy Options

1. LNG Imports from the US: Experts suggested increasing LNG imports from the US, reducing Russian oil purchases to around 20%, and exploring the shorter Alaska route to ease US pressure and advance energy transition goals.

2. Building Strategic Petroleum Reserves: Experts stressed expanding SPR capacity. Currently, three reserves provide only 10 days of backup for India's 5.5 million barrels/day demand. Two more are under construction but will not fully resolve supply risks.

3. **Long-Term Agreements and Risk Mitigation:** Identifying low-risk suppliers and securing long-term deals could reduce last-minute market pressures.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Limited Immediate Solutions:** Experts observed that practical options are few, apart from diplomatic engagement and maintaining diverse crude sources, making US tariffs especially damaging.
2. **Dependency on Imports:** India imports 88% of its oil needs, making it vulnerable to external shocks despite diversification.

Government's Energy Strategy

1. **Multi-Dimensional Approach:** The Petroleum Minister outlined strategies including diversifying crude imports, boosting domestic output, developing alternative fuels, expanding refining capacity to 310 MMTPA by 2028, and growing petrochemicals into a \$300 billion industry by 2030.
2. **Balancing Rhetoric and Economics:** Long-term success depends on separating political narratives from economic logic while sustaining reforms to navigate global energy volatility.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges and strategies of India in managing energy security amid US tariffs on its Russian oil imports.

India needs stronger contract enforcement for economic growth

Source: The post India needs stronger contract enforcement for economic growth has been created, based on the article “**Efficient contract enforcement would brighten India's prospects**” published in “**Live Mint**” on 13th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Government-dispute resolution

Context: Efficient contract enforcement is vital for competitiveness. In India, **delays and uncertainty cost 1.5-2% of GDP annually**, with greater **opportunity losses** from deferred investments. Early reforms improved timelines, but progress has slowed, leaving India **poorly ranked globally**.

Economic Impact and International Models

1. **Heavy Economic Costs:** Procedural delays act as a **hidden tax** on enterprises. **Opportunity costs are two to three times higher** than direct GDP losses due to postponed investments.
2. **Lessons from Leading Economies:** Countries like **the US and China** strengthened dispute resolution systems to boost investment and growth.
3. **The US Approach:** The **Federal Arbitration Act**, expert judges, and **specialized commercial divisions** in states like New York and Delaware ensure efficient enforcement. Structured case management and judicial expertise support quick resolution.
4. **Cross-Border Dispute Handling:** The US follows the **New York Convention** and maintains **specialized commercial courts** for international disputes, enabling strong investor confidence.

India's Reform Experience

1. Gains from 2014–2018: The **Commercial Courts Act**, amendments to the **Arbitration and Conciliation Act**, and creation of the **Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration** reduced average enforcement time in Delhi and Mumbai from **1,445 days to 626**.

2. Post-2019 Slowdown: Few reforms, like the **Mediation Act**, have been enacted. India's global ranking on contract enforcement remains low.

3. Persisting Structural Issues: Design gaps in courts and lack of a **consistent pro-arbitration stance** hinder sustained improvement.

Core Challenges

1. Appeal-Driven Litigation: **Wide grounds for appeal**, absence of a “loser pays” rule, and weak court scrutiny encourage **frivolous challenges**.

2. Government as a Major Litigant: **PSUs and government bodies** are frequent litigants, often contesting awards and delaying resolution.

3. Weak Arbitration Infrastructure: Dependence on ad-hoc arbitration and lack of **credible domestic institutions** push companies to costly foreign forums, excluding **MSMEs** from efficient resolution.

Reforming Arbitration and Courts

1. Strengthening Domestic Institutions: Governments should fund and support **independent arbitration bodies**, improve caseload handling, and enhance credibility.

2. Narrowing Appeal Grounds: Legislation should **restrict public policy appeals** and limit judicial interference.

3. Pro-Arbitration Judicial Stance: Ensure award finality, apply penalties for frivolous appeals, and make domestic seats **mandatory for government contracts** with pre-appeal screening.

4. Making Commercial Courts Effective: Raise **monetary thresholds**, focus on **high-value complex cases**, appoint trained judges with longer tenure, build digital systems, and **benchmark performance** for accountability.

Cross-Border Dispute Resolution

1. Weakening Treaty Network: India has cut **Bilateral Investment Treaties** from over 68 to fewer than a dozen, weakening investor protection.

2. Reform Opportunities: New trade agreements should enable **time-bound dispute resolution**, fast-track award enforcement, and better investor safeguards.

Conclusion

Legal certainty is as critical as tariff stability. Judiciary, executive, and legislature must work together to ensure **timely, reliable, and investor-friendly contract enforcement** for sustained growth

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges and reform measures needed to strengthen contract enforcement and dispute resolution mechanisms in India.

US Russia Alaska peace talks and India's strategic concerns

Source: The post US Russia Alaska peace talks and India's strategic concerns has been created, based on the article "The challenge in Alaska" published in "Indian Express" on 13th August 2025

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

Context: The Alaska peace talks between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin mark a key shift in US-Russia ties after years of hostility. Talks on Ukraine and broader relations may reshape Eurasian security. India, facing US tariffs over Russian oil imports, has a direct stake in the outcome.

Historical and Political Backdrop

1. Past Engagements and Deteriorating Ties: Putin's last US visit was in 2015. Later meetings occurred in Helsinki (2018) and Geneva (2021). Relations have worsened since the late 2000s due to NATO's eastward expansion, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the 2022 Ukraine invasion.

2. Political Risks for Trump: Hosting Putin is bold given two decades of US hostility, suspicions about Trump's Russia ties, and Democratic impeachment attempts during his first term.

Trump's Strategic Approach

1. Breaking from Entrenched Policy: Trump seeks to move away from the traditional US stance toward Russia. Freed from first-term constraints, he appears determined to pursue a new relationship.

2. The "Peace President" Claim: He asserts the invasion would not have happened under him and promises to end wars quickly. This aligns with the MAGA rejection of "endless wars" and emphasis on domestic rebuilding.

3. Peace-for-Profit Logic: Trump links peace to economic gain. Ideas include turning Gaza into a resort, securing mineral rights in Ukraine, trading with Russia, and selling Pakistani oil to India.

Peace-for-Business Proposals

1. Commercially Linked De-escalation: Plans include structured oil and LNG flows, protection for energy infrastructure, and penalties for renewed hostilities. Arctic cooperation is also considered.

2. Strategic Resource Trade: Proposals explore controlled trade in critical minerals and rare earths.

3. Implementation Barriers: Resistance in Congress and Europe, Ukraine's opposition, and complex war-ending negotiations pose serious hurdles.

Core Issues in the Peace Talks

1. Ceasefire and Territorial Disputes: A verifiable halt to fighting is debated. Russia wants recognition of its control over Crimea and occupied regions; Ukraine rejects land-for-peace deals.

2. Security and NATO Expansion: Moscow demands limits on NATO membership and Western military aid to Ukraine. Kyiv insists on sovereign choice of security partners.

3. Sanctions Relief and Enforcement: Russia wants quick sanctions removal; the West seeks concessions first. Effective monitoring and dispute resolution are essential for any deal.

Divergent Stakeholder Interests

1. US, Russia, and Ukraine Goals: Trump wants a quick win. Moscow seeks a lasting role in European security and to halt NATO expansion. Ukraine demands full sovereignty.

2. European and Chinese Concerns: Europe is split between “ceasefire first” and Ukraine’s inclusion in talks. Leaders fear a “Yalta-style” deal. Beijing worries a US-Russia thaw could shift US focus toward China.

India’s Position and Lessons

1. Strategic Implications: A US-Russia reconciliation may help India, but tariffs show risks of being collateral damage.

2. Historical Experience: During past détente, Russia prioritised US and European ties over India. Delhi must maintain independent relations with all powers and avoid entanglement in great power conflicts.

Question for practice:

Examine the strategic, political, and economic implications of the Alaska peace talks between the United States and Russia for global security and India’s foreign policy.

Supreme Court order on street dogs raises legal concerns

Source: The post Supreme Court order on street dogs raises legal concerns has been created, based on the article “A CONVENIENT SMOKESCREEN” published in “Indian Express” on 13th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: On August 11, the Supreme Court ordered that all street dogs in Delhi be moved to shelters within eight weeks, after reports of fatal attacks on infants. While addressing safety concerns, the order raises legal, procedural, and governance issues, and risks undermining established animal welfare frameworks.

For detailed information on **Judicial Views on Killing Stray Dogs** [read this article here](#)

Judicial Intervention and Legal Concerns

1. Background and Trigger: The Court acted suo motu after a news report about fatal dog attacks. It highlighted risks posed by unvaccinated dogs to children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.

2. Contradiction with Laws: The order violates the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, and the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, which prohibit relocation and instead require scientific birth control programmes. Ignoring these laws makes the decision arbitrary and sets a harmful precedent.

3. Departure from Judicial Consistency: The Supreme Court had already resolved this matter in *Animal Welfare Board of India vs People for Elimination of Stray Troubles* (2024). Revisiting it without new facts undermines the principle of stare decisis, reducing faith in the finality of judgments and diverting resources from actual implementation.

Procedural and Constitutional Issues

1. Ignoring Stakeholders: Parties with legal standing were denied participation, and suggestions of the amicus curiae were disregarded. This breaches the principle of *audi alteram partem* (hear the other side).

2. Lack of Evidence and Reasoning: The decision is unscientific, impractical, and does not consider public health, safety, or financial implications. It lacks transparency and accountable reasoning.

3. Conflict with Fundamental Duties: Article 51A(g) requires citizens to have compassion for living creatures. Threatening punitive action against those opposing relocation risks punishing individuals for fulfilling this constitutional duty.

Failures Driving Human-Canine Conflict

1. Local Governance Gaps: Many municipal bodies fail to implement humane animal birth control and anti-rabies vaccination. Rabid dogs are not humanely euthanised promptly, increasing risks.

2. Poor Waste Management: Inadequate solid waste disposal sustains stray dog populations, worsening conflict.

3. Policy Focus Misplaced: Targeting street dogs is a distraction from the failure of authorities to perform their legal duties in population control and public health measures.

Path to Sustainable Solutions

1. Addressing Root Causes: The problem cannot be solved through relocation orders alone. Strengthening birth control, vaccination drives, and waste management is essential.

2. Ensuring Balanced Intervention: Judicial actions should be lawful, evidence-based, and coordinated with executive agencies to avoid polarisation and politicisation.

Question for practice:

Discuss the legal and governance challenges in addressing human-canine conflict in India.

India needs urgent action to bridge organ donation gap

Source: The post India needs urgent action to bridge organ donation gap has been created, based on the article “Clear the myths, recognise organ donation as a lifeline” published in “The Hindu” on 13th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: Organ transplantation is a medical breakthrough, yet India faces an alarming shortage of donor organs. Despite progress, myths, misconceptions, and low awareness cause **over half a million preventable deaths each year**. The article explains barriers, awareness strategies, and policy actions needed to meet the demand.

For detailed information on **Organ donation in India** [read this article](#)

The Current State of Organ Transplantation in India

1. Low Donation Rate Despite Growth: The number of transplants rose from **4,990 in 2013 to 18,378 in 2023**, but only **1,099 were from deceased donors**. India's donation rate is **0.8 per million**, far below **over 45 per million in Spain and the US**. This gap costs countless lives every year.

2. Preventable Fatalities: A lack of organs is not due to medical limits but social and systemic obstacles. Losing a life because of this shortage is a **preventable tragedy** that demands urgent attention.

Myths and Misconceptions Hindering Donations

1. Concerns About Body Integrity and Rituals: Families fear organ donation will **disfigure the body** or disrupt funeral rites. In reality, retrieval is done with **utmost respect**, preserving appearance for ceremonies. Religious leaders across faiths support donation as an act of **compassion**.

2. Mistrust in Brain Death Procedures: Some believe doctors might **prematurely declare brain death** to take organs. The **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994** ensures strict medical criteria, **multidisciplinary expert boards**, repeated assessments, and detailed legal documentation.

3. Wrong Assumptions About Age and Health: Many assume only young accident victims can donate. However, organs and tissues such as **kidneys, liver segments, lungs, corneas, bone, skin, and heart valves** can be donated by older individuals or those dying of natural causes.

Strategies to Increase Awareness and Participation

1. Media and Personal Stories: Television, social media, and sharing real donor and recipient experiences can **inspire action** and counter myths, especially among youth.

2. Community and Educational Efforts: Workshops led by trained counsellors address concerns about rituals, protocols, and eligibility. Including organ donation education in **schools and colleges** builds a lifelong culture of giving.

3. Healthcare Professional Engagement: Doctors, nurses, and transplant coordinators need training to hold **compassionate and informed** discussions with families. Dedicated coordination teams can guide decision-making with clarity.

Policy and System Reforms

1. Exploring Presumed Consent: Countries like **Spain and Croatia** use a system where every adult is a donor unless they opt out. India could adopt this, with **ethical oversight** and strong family support mechanisms.

2. Building Public Confidence: Grievance redress systems and transparent processes are vital to maintain trust in the donation framework.

A National Call to Action

1. Shared Duty and Urgency: Organ donation is a **noble legacy**. Every eligible adult should register, and families should honour this choice.

2. Sustained Commitment: Through awareness drives, reforms, and community engagement, **no Indian should die for lack of an organ**. On **World Organ Donation Day**, the nation must pledge to embrace this cause as a **collective responsibility**.

Question for practice:

Examine the key barriers and solutions to increasing organ donation in India.

Preserving academic freedom is vital for higher education

Source: The post Preserving academic freedom is vital for higher education has been created, based on the article “**The ceding of academic freedom in universities**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 14th August 2025

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

Context: Academic freedom is vital for higher education, enabling questioning, debate, and independent thought. It fosters knowledge creation, innovation, and societal progress. The article examines how such freedom is essential, how it is threatened in India and elsewhere, and why autonomy with accountability must be preserved. For detailed information on **Universities are losing their freedom and academic purpose** [read this article here](#)

The Essence of Academic Freedom

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1. Freedom to Question and Learn: Universities must allow students and faculty to question existing knowledge and explore ideas freely. Learning begins with understanding and progresses through critique and resistance to unquestioned authority.

2. Institutional Independence in Teaching: Decisions about what is taught should rest with universities, free from external interference. Restricting speakers or discussions on campus stifles learning and harms social and economic progress.

3. Research Autonomy and Creativity: Universities and faculty should set research priorities. Funding decisions must be peer-reviewed and free from bias. Dissent and unconventional thinking are crucial for advancing knowledge, particularly in fundamental research, which requires time, resources, and freedom.

The Disturbing Reality in India

1. State Control over Curriculum and Readings: Curricula are rigid and centrally regulated. Reading lists are prescribed externally, sometimes excluding certain works. Unorthodox research, especially in social sciences and humanities, is suppressed.

2. Funding and Research Constraints: Government departments and councils control research funding. This limits fundamental research, contributing to the absence of Nobel laureates from Indian universities.

3. Curbs on Expression and Campus Discourse: Discussions critical of the ruling party are restricted, with administrative or legal actions taken against participants. Social media posts can also trigger penalties.

4. Restrictions on Academic Participation Abroad: Faculty in central universities must sign undertakings not to engage in anti-government activities abroad, with disciplinary action for violations. Private universities are increasingly adopting similar controls due to political pressure.

Autonomy and Accountability

1. Universities' Role Beyond Education: Universities contribute to science, technology, innovation, and policy. Faculty act as public intellectuals, informing society and fostering political accountability.

2. Autonomy with Checks and Balances: Government funding does not justify control. Public universities must be accountable to students and society through strong governance structures, not political interference.

3. Role of Rankings: University rankings, despite flaws, provide a mechanism for public accountability and informed choice for students and parents.

4. Need for Regulatory Reform: Universities require full administrative, financial, and academic autonomy. Reforming restrictive acts and freeing institutions from the University Grants Commission's control is essential for fostering diversity and excellence.

Global Patterns of Control

1. Democracies Limiting Freedoms: Countries like Argentina, Hungary, and Türkiye impose controls despite being democracies.

2. Authoritarian and One-Party States: Dictatorships in Africa and Asia, and one-party states like China, Russia, and Vietnam, heavily restrict academic freedom. China maintains strict speech controls but ensures high-quality academic appointments.

3. Shifts in the United States: Even in the U.S., long a bastion of academic freedom, research funding cuts and restrictions under the Trump administration threaten its global leadership in education and innovation.

Why Governments Seek Control

1. Fear of Criticism and Dissent: Governments often fear questions from autonomous universities, seeking ideological conformity instead.

2. Dependence on State Funding: Universities reliant on government grants may compromise autonomy. Individual academics may self-censor due to fear, incentives, or rewards.

3. Consequences of Lost Freedom: Without academic freedom, teaching, research, creativity, and critical thinking suffer. Ultimately, society, the economy, and democracy are the losers.

Question for practice:

Discuss the importance of academic freedom in higher education.

India seeks to expand role in global drone market

Source: The post India seeks to expand role in global drone market has been created, based on the article “A war game-changer in a battle for influence in Asia” published in “The Hindu” on 14th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology. And Security challenges.

Context: The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict showed how drones are changing wars. In 2024, Operation Sindoor confirmed this shift for India and Pakistan. Drones moved from reconnaissance roles to precision strike platforms. This change has pushed India to modernise its unmanned aerial systems.

For detailed information on **Drone Revolution Changing the Face of Rural India** [read this article here](#)

Transformation in Warfare and India's Drone Needs

1. From Reconnaissance to Precision Strikes: In Operation Sindoor, drones played a decisive role. They were not only gathering intelligence but also hitting targets with precision.

2. Varied Terrain and Border Challenges: India's borders with China and Pakistan include high-altitude regions. These areas need long-range UAVs that can carry heavy payloads. Smaller, cheaper systems are also needed for specific strike missions.

3. Current Inventory Limitations: India uses Israeli Harop and Heron drones. These are older models. India also operates older imports and some domestic drones. Many of these do not meet current operational demands.

Procurement Trends and Global Supply Considerations

1. Recent Acquisitions from the U.S.: In 2024, India ordered 31 MQ-9B Reaper drones from the U.S. This will help maritime surveillance and strengthen U.S. ties. However, this does not meet all of India's needs.

2. Shifting from Full Imports to Component Sourcing: India may not buy full U.S. systems in the future. Instead, it may focus on buying key parts like engines and payloads.

3. Global Competitors and U.S. Shortcomings: The U.S. is losing ground to China and Türkiye in drone exports. In 2023, it had only 8% of the global market. Strict MTCR rules slowed its exports, though reforms may improve this.

Strategic Gaps and Opportunities for India

1. Limited Supplier Options: India cannot depend on China or Türkiye for defence technology. Israel is busy with its own conflicts. India is turning to Israel and Europe for cooperation.

2. Scope for Regional Supply Role: India's needs match those of many Indo-Pacific nations. If India develops drones for itself, these could also meet their needs.

4. Preventing Rival Influence: By supplying drones to the region, India can reduce Türkiye's influence.

The China Factor in Regional Security

1. Maritime Domain Awareness Needs: Countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan face Chinese maritime pressure. They need drones to track "gray-zone" activities.

2. Protection of Sovereignty and Resources: Such systems protect fisheries, energy zones, and borders from Chinese intrusion.

3. Strategic Partnerships Potential: India can work with these countries to improve their surveillance and defence capabilities.

Building India's Domestic UAV Ecosystem

1. Overcoming Institutional Hurdles: India's defence sector is slowed by bureaucracy and public sector control.

2. Leveraging Joint Ventures: Partnerships with Israel and Europe can improve technology and production skills.

3. Technology-Sharing in the Indo-Pacific: Sharing drone technology with friendly nations can boost trust and regional security.

Question for practice:

Examine the opportunities and challenges for India in developing and exporting drones in the Indo-Pacific region.

African nations challenge China's long dominance in mining sector

Source: The post African nations challenge China's long dominance in mining sector has been created, based on the article "Africa is challenging China's mining hegemony" published in "The Hindu" on 14th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Context: China's long-standing dominance in Africa's mining sector is facing growing resistance. Increased government scrutiny, civil society activism, and demands for value-added development are challenging the old extraction-focused model. African nations are now asserting sovereignty, renegotiating contracts, and enforcing policies to ensure fairer benefits from their mineral wealth.

For detailed information on **Partnerships with Africa can help secure India's Critical Mineral Mission** [read this article here](#)

Shifting Dynamics in Africa-China Mining Relations

1. Growing Demand for Fair Partnerships: African governments and civil society groups are pushing for equitable deals. The earlier exchange of raw resources for infrastructure is seen as inadequate. Nations now seek accountability, transparency, and economic sovereignty.

2. Critical Mineral Wealth and Control: The DRC holds 80% of the world's cobalt reserves, vital for rechargeable batteries. China controls most of this output through deals like Sicomin. However, the Congolese people have received limited benefits compared to the resources extracted.

Rising Challenges to Chinese Investments

1. Economic Discontent and Contract Reviews: Tax exemptions to Chinese companies cost the DRC about \$132 million in 2024. This loss has sparked public anger and calls to review the Sicomin deal. Market-linked payments risk reducing infrastructure gains during commodity downturns.

2. Government Action and Canceled Deals: The DRC is renegotiating Chinese contracts, aiming to increase its stake in joint ventures from 32% to 70%. Opposition from state miner Gecomin halted the sale of Chemaf Resources to China's Norin Mining.

3. Corruption and Unfulfilled Promises: Namibia's Xinfeng Investments faces bribery allegations over a lithium mine acquisition. Despite large exports of raw ore to China, promised processing facilities remain unbuilt, and workers report unsafe conditions.

Environmental and Social Backlash

1. Regulatory Pushback on Mining Projects: In Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, coal mining applications by a Chinese firm were blocked for environmental reasons. Zambia faced a major acid spill from a Chinese-owned copper mine contaminating the Kafue River.

2. Local Resistance to Large-Scale Projects: In Cameroon, NGOs oppose the Lobé-Kribi Iron Ore Project over environmental, health, and cultural risks. Communities criticize inadequate consultation and lack of benefit-sharing.

Policy Shifts Toward Value Addition

1. Export Bans to Encourage Processing: Zimbabwe banned unprocessed lithium exports in 2022, followed by Namibia in 2023. These measures aim to compel investors to establish local processing plants and retain more value domestically.

2. Need for Broader Economic Strategies: Export bans alone are insufficient. Without local capacity building and inclusive policies, resource exploitation could persist in new forms, benefiting elites rather than communities.

Emerging Future of Africa-China Mining Relations

1. Declining Certainty of Chinese Dominance: While China remains Africa's largest mining partner, its dominance is no longer assured. African nations are challenging opaque contracts, enforcing environmental protections, and demanding local value addition.

2. Path to Economic Transformation: If these trends continue, African countries could shift from raw material exporters to integral players in the global green economy, reshaping the mineral supply chain and reducing dependency on China.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors driving Africa's pushback against China's mining dominance.

Government plans to revise income limits for student scholarships

Source: The post Government plans to revise income limits for student scholarships has been created, based on the article "How can SC/ST scholarships be expanded?" published in "The Hindu" on 14th August 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context: The Union government is reviewing the **parental income limit** for post and pre-matric scholarships for marginalised castes and tribes for **FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31**. The aim is to **expand access** by revising the current ₹2.5 lakh annual cap, following recommendations from parliamentary panels.

Proposed Revisions to Income Limits

1. Increase for ST Scholarships: The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** plans to raise the **parental income limit** for post and pre-matric ST scholarships from ₹2.5 lakh to ₹4.5 lakh. This applies to students from grades IX onwards, and in some cases, grades I-X.

2. Possible Changes for SC, OBC, and DNT Scholarships: The **Social Justice Ministry** is considering revising income limits for SC, OBC, and DNT students in both school and college scholarship schemes. The goal is to improve access across all sections.

Structure and Coverage of Current Schemes

1. Central Sponsorship Model: Scholarships for SCs, STs, and OBCs operate under a **centrally sponsored scheme**. The **Union and State governments** share costs in a **60:40 ratio**, with a **90:10 ratio** for northeast States.

2. Post and Pre-Matric Criteria: **Post-matric scholarships** are for students after Class X. **Pre-matric schemes** cover Class IX-X, but for SCs in hazardous occupations, coverage is from Class I-X. **Current eligibility** requires parental income below ₹2.5 lakh.

Budgetary Allocation

1. Social Justice Ministry Share: In **FY 2025-26**, centrally sponsored scholarship schemes for SCs, OBCs, EBCs, and DNTs formed **66.7%** of the **₹13,611 crore** Social Justice Department budget.

2. Tribal Affairs Ministry Share: For the same fiscal year, schemes for ST students accounted for **18.6%** of the **₹14,925.81 crore** allocation of the Tribal Affairs Ministry.

Declining Beneficiary Numbers

1. Reductions for SC Beneficiaries: From **2020-21 to 2024-25**, pre-matric SC scholarship beneficiaries dropped by **30.63%**, and post-matric beneficiaries by **4.22%**.

2. Drops Among OBC, EBC, and DNT Groups: Between 2021-22 and 2023-24, pre-matric beneficiaries fell from 58.62 lakh to about 20.25 lakh. Post-matric numbers declined from 43.34 lakh to 38.42 lakh.

3. ST Beneficiary Declines: In the same period, ST pre-matric recipients dropped by 4.63 lakh, and post-matric recipients by 3.52 lakh.

Parliamentary Panel Recommendations

1. Call for Higher Income Limits: The **Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of OBCs** urged **doubling** the current income limit for OBC pre and post-matric scholarships. It also suggested a “suitable rise” for top-class scholarships.

2. Expanding Pre-Matric Coverage: The panel recommended extending OBC pre-matric scholarships from **Class V onwards**, instead of starting at Class IX.

3. ST Scholarship Revisions: Another committee reviewing **Tribal Affairs** and **Social Justice** ministries recommended raising parental income limits for ST scholarships.

Rationale for Changes

1. Barriers Due to Low Income Limits: Committees observed that the ₹2.5 lakh cap excludes many deserving families, limiting access despite available funds.

2. Goal of Wider Access: Raising income limits can **increase coverage**, helping more students from marginalised groups and potentially **reversing the decline** in beneficiaries.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons and recommendations for revising income limits of scholarships for marginalised communities.