

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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

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Gender data and WEE Index drive women's economic empowerment

Source: The post Gender data and WEE Index drive women's economic empowerment has been created, based on the article "**India's economic ambitions need better gender data**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2**-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for

the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections. And **GS Paper 3**-inclusive growth

Context: **Women contribute 18% to GDP**, and **196 million** employable women are outside work. **FLFPR is 41.7%**, yet **only 18%** are in formal jobs. India's **\$30 trillion by 2047** ambition needs women's economic roles to be **visible, measurable, and actionable** across governance.

Why visibility of women's work matters?

1. Economic stakes: Business-as-usual will forgo **trillions of dollars**. Inclusive growth fails if women remain invisible in policy and investment data.

2. Participation is not enough: Opportunities must be **created and counted**. Systems should record outcomes and trigger action in every department.

3. Hidden gaps stall reforms: India has many indices, but few **gender-disaggregate**. Hidden gaps stall reforms and entrench exclusion. A gender lens embedded in every dataset and decision unlocks action.

What the WEE Index does?

1. First district-level framework: Uttar Pradesh launched India's first **Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index**. It embeds a gender lens in routine measurement and decision-making.

2. Five economic levers tracked: It covers **employment; education and skilling; entrepreneurship; livelihood and mobility; safety and inclusive infrastructure**. It creates a common language for departments to align reforms.

3. Visibility to action in transport: When inequities surface, action follows. In transport, analysis of **women's low presence** among drivers and conductors **led to redesigned recruitment and basic infrastructure fixes** like women's restrooms at bus terminals.

4. From rates to structural barriers: The index maps drop-offs: school to skilling, skilling to work, entrepreneurship to credit. Women form **over 50% of skilling enrolments** but are a **fraction of entrepreneurs**, with **even more limited credit**. This highlights systemic barriers that can inform policy reform.

How to act at scale

1. Universal gender-disaggregated systems: Make gender breakdowns **normative** in every departmental MIS—from MSME to transport to housing. Build **local capacity** to use data and create **district gender action plans**.

2. Track quality, not just counts: Monitor **retention, leadership, re-entry**, and **quality of employment**, especially after **Class 12** and **post-graduation**, where female dropouts surge.

3. Rethink gender budgeting: Do not confine it to finance or welfare schemes. Apply a **gender lens to every rupee** across sectors. **You cannot budget for what you do not measure.**

4. Replicate and scale: Uttar Pradesh's pilot is a **replicable foundation**. **Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Telangana** can translate intent into **district-wise plans**, guiding **budgets, infrastructure**, and **programmatic reforms**. The **WEE Index** is a **starting block**, making visible what was invisible and moving women to the **mainstream of growth**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how gender-disaggregated data and the WEE Index can translate visibility into concrete reforms to close women's economic gaps in India.

Supreme Court makes mental health constitutionally protected

Source: The post Supreme Court makes mental health constitutionally protected has been created, based on the article "**Court's nod to mental health as right**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2-Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: In July 2025, the Supreme Court's verdict in ***Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh*** shifted a student-death probe to the CBI and affirmed **mental health as part of Article 21**. The judgment addresses India's crisis of student suicides.

What triggered the case and the Court's response?

1. Trigger and litigation path: A father alleged an incomplete probe into his 17-year-old NEET candidate daughter's death in a Visakhapatnam hostel. After the Andhra Pradesh High Court rejected his plea for a CBI inquiry, he approached the Supreme Court.

2. Court's immediate action: The Supreme Court transferred the investigation to the CBI.

3. Constitutional framing: The Court affirmed that **mental health is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21**.

4. From incident to public issue: It linked the case to India's epidemic of student suicides and treated the matter as a public injustice, not only a private bereavement.

What are the Supreme Court's observations in *Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh*?

1. Structural victimisation: Systemic neglect of mental health harms students. Coaching-centre exploitation and institutional indifference worsen the risk. When safeguards are absent, the state and institutions share responsibility.

2. **Victimology lens:** Institutions can act as de facto perpetrators. Students are not merely battling internal psychology but are subjected to shabby treatment within status-driven education systems and weak governance of mental health.

3. **From statute to Constitution:** The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 recognises care rights but is poorly implemented. Constitutionalising mental health sets a higher, enforceable benchmark for psychological integrity.

4. **Structural violence:** Drawing on the idea of structural violence (Following Johan Galtung), harm caused by social structures that deny basic needs is blameworthy like direct violence. This reframes student suicides as systemic injustice.

5. **Restorative approach:** Embedding psychological integrity in Article 21 opens space for counselling, institutional reform, and preventive accountability beyond mere retribution..

What are the impacts of this verdict?

1. **Saha Guidelines:** Schools, colleges, hostels, and coaching centres must build mental-health support systems. Until Parliament enacts a full code, these guidelines have legislative force.

2. **Time-bound compliance:** States and Union Territories must act within two months. District-level monitoring committees must be set up.

3. **Rights empowerment:** Students are rights holders with constitutional protection for mental well-being. Citizens can demand safeguards for their mental health.

4. **Shift in accountability:** The ruling moves responsibility from individual “failure” to institutional duty and state obligation, stressing prevention and safe environments.

5. **Promise and caution:** Activists and professionals see revolutionary potential. But real change needs resources, training, and faithful application. Without this, the judgment could become a missed opportunity.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court’s July 2025 verdict in Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh affirms mental health under Article 21.

National Logistics Policy

Source: The post **National Logistics Policy** has been created, based on the article “**National Logistics Policy: Transforming India’s Supply Chain Ecosystem**” published in “**PIB**” on **17th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context: Recently, DPIIT commemorated three years of NLP implementation.

The National Logistics Policy (NLP), launched on 17 September 2022, aimed to transform India’s logistics ecosystem by reducing costs, improving efficiency, and enabling seamless multimodal connectivity.

Key Objectives:

1. Reduce logistics costs to global benchmarks.
2. Improve India's ranking in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) to the top 25 by 2030.
3. Strengthen digitization, skill development, and regulatory reforms.
4. Promote sustainable and green logistics practices.

Major Achievements (2022–2025):

1. Digital Integration and Real-Time Visibility

- The **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** has enabled more than 160 crore digital transactions, linking over 30 digital systems securely.
- The **Logistics Data Bank** has tracked more than 75 million EXIM containers across 101 Inland Container Depots, providing real-time visibility and streamlining operations.

2. Performance Assessment

- The **Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) index** now includes new parameters such as digital logistics and sustainability metrics.
- As a result of these initiatives, India improved its rank to the 38th position in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index.

3. Infrastructure Development

- Large-scale **Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs)** are being developed to integrate customs clearance, cold storage, and packaging services.
- **City Logistics Plans** have been introduced to reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and logistics costs in urban areas.

4. Policy Reforms and Stakeholder Engagement

- The **E-Logs portal** has resolved more than 100 issues raised by industry associations, improving ease of doing business.
- The **Service Improvement Group (SIG)** has been established to address policy and regulatory challenges faced by stakeholders.

5. Green and Sustainable Logistics

- The **Transportation Emissions Measurement Tool (TEMT)**, aligned with ISO 14083 standards, has been developed to monitor emissions in logistics.
- Logistics providers are being encouraged to **adopt renewable energy and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices**.

6. Skill Development and Capacity Building

- More than **65,000 professionals have been trained** between 2023 and 2025 to strengthen logistics capacities.
- Over **100 universities have introduced logistics-related courses**, and new programs have been launched with GatiShakti Vishwavidyalaya.
- A **Centre of Excellence for City Logistics** has trained over 100 officials and conducted more than 250 workshops for government personnel.

7. Sectoral Policy for Efficient Logistics (SPEL)

- A **Coal Logistics Policy and Integrated Coal Logistics Plan** have been notified, while the Cement SPEL has been finalized.
- Draft plans for steel, fertilizer, and food processing sectors are under preparation to promote multimodal and cost-efficient transport.

Challenges:

- **Infrastructure gaps and need for regulatory harmonization.**
- **Limited digital literacy** among small logistics operators.
- Requirement for **better inter-agency coordination** at State and Central levels.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen multimodal integration** under PM GatiShakti.
- **Expand public-private partnerships** and innovative financing.
- **Promote gender inclusion** and digital skilling in logistics.
- Finalize pending **State policies and sectoral** plans swiftly.

Question: Discuss the significance of the National Logistics Policy (2022) in transforming India's logistics and supply chain ecosystem. What challenges remain in achieving its 2030 vision?

Safe Healthcare for Everyone

Source: The post **Safe Healthcare for Everyone** has been created, based on the article "Making health care safe for every Indian" published in "The Hindu" on 17th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -2- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context: World Patient Safety Day is observed on **17 September** every year to highlight the importance of patient safety worldwide. In India, where the burden of disease is shifting to chronic conditions requiring long-term treatment, patient safety has become a critical issue.

Key Issues in Patient Safety in India

1. **High Risk Situations:** Chronic illnesses like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease require multiple specialists and increase the chances of errors.
2. **Unsafe Practices:** Hospital-acquired infections, inappropriate medication combinations, delayed diagnoses, and preventable falls persist.
3. **Overburdened Providers:** High patient loads, long shifts, and inadequate staffing contribute to fatigue and errors.
4. **Passive Patients:** Patients hesitate to ask questions, leading to poor communication and missed safety checks.
5. **Low Accreditation:** Less than 5% of hospitals in India have full accreditation under NABH standards.

Steps Taken by India

1. **National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018-25):** Provides a roadmap from adverse-event reporting to embedding safety into clinical practice.
2. **Professional Networks:** Society of Pharmacovigilance India monitors and reports adverse drug reactions nationwide.
3. **Accreditation:** NABH sets benchmarks for infection control, patient rights, and medical management.
4. **Civil Society Initiatives:** Patient Safety & Access Initiative of India Foundation works on medical device clarity.

5. **Patient Advisory Councils:** Involving patient voices in hospital decision-making to improve communication and trust.

Challenges Remaining

1. **Implementation Gap:** Need to bridge the gap between policy and practice.
2. **Capacity Building:** Incorporating patient safety into medical and nursing education.
3. **Resource Mobilization:** Hospitals need to meet accreditation standards and co-develop technology solutions.
4. **Public Awareness:** Patients and families need to become active participants in care.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen **accreditation and standard protocols** in all hospitals.
2. Mobilize resources and co-develop **technology solutions** to catch errors early.
3. Foster a **culture of safety** through patient advisory councils and public campaigns.
4. Integrate patient safety into **medical and nursing curricula** to sustain improvements.
5. Encourage **CSR and innovation** to fund safety campaigns and improve workflows.

Question: Patient safety is a crucial but often overlooked dimension of India's health-care system. Discuss the key challenges and measures taken to improve patient safety in India.

Cooling period and FWC under Section 498A delay justice

Source: The post Cooling period and FWC under Section 498A delay justice has been created, based on the article "**Judicial experimentalism' versus the right to justice**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- criminal justice system.

Context: The Supreme Court in **Shivangi Bansal v. Sahib Bansal** endorsed **Allahabad High Court** guidelines mandating a **two-month "cooling period"** and **Family Welfare Committee (FWC)** referral in **Section 498A/BNS 85** matters. It raises concerns about delay and overreach.

What did the Supreme Court endorse?

1. **Core direction and source:** The Court approved **Mukesh Bansal v. State of U.P. (2022)** guidelines. A **two-month cooling period** follows FIR or complaint registration, with **mandatory FWC referral** before coercive action. **This is a significant procedural change.**
2. **Intended purpose:** Courts have recorded instances of **misuse of Section 498A** in FIRs and arrests. The measures aim to **temper immediate coercive steps** while the dispute is examined. **They seek balance at the threshold.**
3. **Immediate concern:** The cooling period and FWC referral **delay prompt access to justice**. They **infringe the autonomy** of criminal justice agencies in investigation and decision-making. **Victims face slowed relief.**

Which safeguards against misuse already exist?

1. **Pre-FIR scrutiny:** In **Lalita Kumari**, matrimonial disputes may undergo **preliminary inquiry** before FIR. Recent criminal law reforms also place **cruelty by husband** in preliminary enquiry. **(Built-in gatekeeping exists.)**

2. **Arrest rationalised by law:** The **2008 CrPC amendment** introduced the **principle of necessity** for arrest. In **Arnesh Kumar (2014)** case, the Supreme Court added a checklist and mandated notice for appearance, curbing unbridled arrest powers in Section 498A matters.

3. **Bail for non-compliance:** In **Satender Kumar Antil (2022)** case, the Court directed release on bail where arrests **violate Arnesh Kumar safeguards**. These **directions strengthened institutional checks** without denying genuine complainants their legal recourse

What does NCRB data show?

1. **Arrest-offence ranking:** Section 498A remained among the **top five “highest arrest” offences till 2016, and thereafter within the top 10**. This indicates an impact from statutory and institutional steps.

2. **Trends in cases and arrests:** Registered offences rose from **1,13,403 (2015)** to **1,40,019 (2022)**. Arrests fell from **1,87,067** to **1,45,095** in the same period. This suggesting calibrated restraint despite increasing complaints.

3. **Meaning of the trend:** The data suggest **better protection of the accused’s liberty while maintaining a victim’s access to justice**. Safeguards operate without diluting the reporting of offences.

Why are the FWC and cooling period contested?

1. **Lack of statutory backing:** There is **no statutory authority** to implement FWC directions or the cooling period, and their jurisdictional scope remains undefined. This **creates uncertainty in application**.

2. **Delay and prejudice:** During the cooling period, **no action proceeds, even after an FIR/complaint**. This **prolongs the victim’s hardship and defers timely response**.

3. **Judicial experimentalism and rollback:** In **Rajesh Sharma (2017)** case, similar FWC directions and a **one-month window** drew criticism as **regressive and beyond competence**. A **three-judge Bench in Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar (2018)** overturned them, restoring **prompt access and institutional primacy**.

4. **Call to revisit:** Given existing **legislative and judicial** safeguards, forwarding complaints to FWCs is **beyond legislative intent**, **erodes agency autonomy**, and **dents the victim’s pursuit of justice**. The ruling should be reconsidered.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court’s endorsement of a two-month cooling period and Family Welfare Committee referral in Section 498A/BNS 85 cases affects victim access to justice and criminal-justice autonomy.

India must strengthen GIFT City to attract global capital

Source: The post India must strengthen GIFT City to attract global capital has been created, based on the article “India’s missed financial bet” published in “**Businessline**” on 17th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -Indian economy.

Context: GIFT City has yet to match Dubai, Singapore, or Hong Kong. Despite incentives, weak linkages, policy volatility, and limited expatriate appeal persist.

For detailed information on **GIFT City** [read this article here](#)

Why has GIFT City underperformed global peers?

1. **Limited linkages and regulatory drag:** Execution is slow, and rules on exemptions, repatriation, and forex clearances shift unpredictably, unlike the stable regimes of Dubai or Singapore.
2. **Tax complexity and treaty ambiguity:** GIFT units get incentives; yet personnel, service providers, and investors face India’s broader tax regime. Ambiguity on treaty usability curbs IFSC adoption.
3. **Thin ecosystem and weak network effects:** Cayman, Luxembourg, and Dubai built dense clusters of law firms, custodians, and trustees. GIFT, with 580 registered entities (2024), still lacks global-name density.
4. **Talent, lifestyle, and perception gaps:** Professionals prefer cosmopolitan cities with global schools, culture, and connectivity. Singapore ranked third among financial centres in 2023. Dubai saw a 62 per cent rise in family office **registrations** between 2018–2023. Gandhinagar’s limited expatriate infrastructure deters relocation.

What global shifts are changing the playbook?

1. **Arbitrage is losing power:** OECD’s BEPS and the Global Minimum Tax (Pillar Two) reduce pure tax advantages.
2. **Compliance plus product innovation:** Successful hubs now compete on compliance and product innovation.
3. **India’s comparative strengths:** GIFT should highlight India’s access to a \$4 trillion economy, strong fintech potential, rupee-denominated offerings, and connectivity with South–South trade.

What are the consequences for India?

1. **Outbound bias despite inflows:** Foreign inflows rise, yet nearly 99 per cent flows outward as firms invest abroad for resources and supply chains.
2. **Eroding domestic depth:** Each year **5,000–8,000 millionaires leave India**. Their relocation weakens local capital pools and reduces long-term domestic financial capacity.
3. **Trust deficit from policy volatility:** Frequent shifts in rules on exemptions, repatriation, and forex clearances, along with ambiguity on treaty applicability, undermine credibility and slow scale-up within GIFT City.

What should India do next?

1. **Anchor capital with lifestyle ecosystems:** Capital follows comfort, certainty, and cosmopolitan living: housing, schools, healthcare, safety, entertainment can stem the exodus.
2. **Reimagine location and design:** Look beyond Gandhinagar; build a mega hub in Daman-Diu, Goa, Puducherry, Araku Valley, or Mangaluru.
3. **Enable a clearer regime:** Adopt a transparent mega tax haven framework, stronger treaty networks, and seamless operational ease.
4. **Move beyond the sandbox:** Build an ecosystem where capital feels at home, while pursuing a holistic welfare approach that safeguards both poor and rich.

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges and possible solutions for India's GIFT City to emerge as a competitive global financial hub.

EU-India partnership

Source: The post EU-India partnership has been created, based on the article "EU-India partnership set for upgrade" published in "The Hindu" on 18th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -2- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The European Union (EU) has launched a new strategic agenda to upgrade its partnership with India in trade, technology, security, defence and climate change. Recent Developments

1. The EU's High Representative Kaja Kallas released the "New Strategic EU-India Agenda" in Brussels and urged the European Parliament and Council to adopt it.
2. Focus areas: The agenda focuses on strengthening cooperation in trade, technology, security, defence industry and climate action.
3. Brussels and New Delhi are currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and are also working on an agreement to exchange classified information to deepen defence industry ties.
4. Both sides are also planning a joint roadmap for the next EU-India summit in early 2026.

Importance of the Partnership

1. The EU considers India a crucial partner in its global strategy, especially amid increasing geopolitical uncertainties.
2. Trade between India and the EU has grown by more than 90% over the last decade, demonstrating the expanding economic relationship.
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has welcomed the adoption of the new strategic agenda as an opportunity to deepen cooperation further.

Challenges Identified

1. India's ties with Russia: The EU is concerned about India's military exercises with Russia, including its participation in Zapad-2025, and its continued import of Russian oil.

2. Tariff barriers: There are tariff and non-tariff barriers in the agricultural and industrial sectors, including India's Quality Control Orders (QCOs), which the EU views as restrictive.
3. Negotiation delays: EU officials have expressed frustration at the slow pace of negotiations and want to see faster progress.
4. Divergences on Ukraine conflict: The EU has also emphasised the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, while India has maintained its strategic autonomy on the issue.

EU's Strategy to Address Challenges

1. The EU's College of Commissioners has agreed that the EU should deepen ties with India and not leave a void for other powers to fill.
2. European officials have cited the principle of "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" to ensure that all issues are resolved comprehensively before the finalisation of agreements.
3. The EU aims to conclude a trade deal with India by the end of 2024 and wants future talks to cover both tariff and non-tariff barriers comprehensively.

Question: Evaluate the recent initiatives to upgrade the India-European Union (EU) partnership and discuss the key challenges in strengthening this relationship. (Answer in 150 words)

World Ozone Day

Source: The post World Ozone Day has been created, based on the article "Healing the Skies: World Ozone Day" published in "PIB" on 18th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Context: World Ozone Day is observed every year on 16 September to create awareness about the ozone layer, which shields life on Earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation.

World Ozone Day was established by the United Nations in 1994 to mark the adoption of the 1987 Montreal Protocol, one of the most successful global environmental treaties. The 2025 theme "From Science to Global Action" underlines how scientific evidence led to coordinated international action and the gradual healing of the ozone layer.

Global Efforts to Protect the Ozone Layer

1. The Vienna Convention (1985) established cooperation between nations to protect the ozone layer.
2. The Montreal Protocol (1987) led to the global phase-out of major ozone-depleting substances (ODSs) such as CFCs, halons, and carbon tetrachloride.
3. The Kigali Amendment (2016) to the Montreal Protocol introduced the phase-down of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are potent greenhouse gases.
4. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has provided over \$160 million to support ODS phase-out in transition economies, complementing the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund.

The Importance of the Ozone Layer

1. The ozone layer located in the stratosphere 15–50 km above Earth and absorbs harmful UV-B rays and acts as a protective shield for all life forms.

2. Without the ozone layer, there would be higher risks of skin cancer, cataracts, reduced agricultural productivity, marine life disruption, and material degradation.

Causes of Ozone Depletion

1. Human-made chemicals such as CFCs, halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl bromide release chlorine and bromine atoms that destroy ozone molecules in the stratosphere.
2. Natural processes, including volcanic aerosols, can worsen ozone depletion by enhancing the effects of man-made chemicals.

Environmental and Health Effects of Ozone Depletion

1. Increased UV radiation raises risks of skin cancer, premature aging, cataracts, and weakened immune systems in humans.
2. Crops like rice, wheat, and soybeans face reduced yields due to disrupted photosynthesis.
3. Marine ecosystems are threatened as plankton and juvenile aquatic species are highly sensitive to UV radiation.
4. Domestic animals and construction materials also suffer from greater UV exposure.

India's Achievements under the Montreal Protocol

1. India phased out CFCs, carbon tetrachloride and halons for controlled use by 2010, ahead of the Montreal Protocol schedule.
2. The ODS Rules (2000) banned CFCs and halons in new equipment by 2003 and created a legal framework for enforcement.
3. India met its HCFC Phase-Out targets under the HPMP Stage-I by phasing out 341.77 Ozone Depleting Potential (ODP) tonnes.
4. Over 20,000 refrigeration and air-conditioning technicians have been trained to adopt non-ODS technologies.
5. India's Cooling Action Plan (ICAP, 2019) set global precedent, aiming to reduce cooling demand by 20–25%, energy use by 25–40%, and refrigerant demand by 25–30% by 2037–38.
6. India's National Strategy for HFC Phase-Down (2023) aligns with Kigali Amendment goals and prioritises low-GWP alternatives.

Individual Actions for Ozone Protection

1. Consumers can choose CFC-free and ozone-friendly appliances.
2. Homeowners can responsibly dispose of old air-conditioners, refrigerators and halon fire extinguishers.
3. Farmers can shift to non-methyl bromide alternatives like integrated pest management.
4. Technicians can recover and recycle refrigerants during servicing to prevent leakage.
5. Citizens can educate themselves about national and global ozone protection efforts and support policy compliance.

Question: Discuss the significance of World Ozone Day in promoting global environmental cooperation. Highlight the key achievements of India under the Montreal Protocol. (Answer in 150 words)

Monsoon floods test resilience of Himalayan states

Source: The post India must strengthen GIFT City to attract global capital has been created, based on the article "Securing valleys and slopes" published in "Indian express" on 18th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -Environment

Context: Monsoon 2025 exposed the vulnerability of Himalayan states. Severe rains, cloudbursts, landslides, and floods hit J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttarakhand, disrupting pilgrimages and crops. The crisis revived debate on technology, preparedness, and citizen roles in disaster management.

For detailed information on Rising flash flood risks threaten fragile Himalayan regions read this article [here](#)

How agencies acted on the ground?

1. Jammu & Kashmir: The Army laid Bailey bridges within hours, the Air Force launched helicopter sorties from Jammu, and NDRF specialist teams surged in. Pilgrims at Machail and Vaishno Devi were evacuated through joint action with police, CPF, and SDRF.

2. Punjab: NDMA coordinated with CWC, IMD (India Meteorological Department), and BBMB (Bhakra Beas Management Board) to regulate releases and avert breaches. A dramatic Army Aviation airlift saved CRPF personnel near Madhopur Headworks minutes before a building collapsed.

3. Himachal Pradesh: Torrential rains triggered slope failures and flash floods across Chamba, Kullu, and Lahaul-Spiti. Despite casualties, over 10,000 Manimahesh Yatra pilgrims were evacuated. Army, IAF, ITBP, and SDRF mounted difficult operations, while BRO restored roads and bridges using drone imagery for assessments.

4. Uttarakhand: The Army built a 400-foot aerial cableway, restored bridges, and deployed engineers and SAR dogs. IAF Chinooks lifted heavy equipment, with UCADA (Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority) adding civil helicopters. SDRF and ITBP used drones and satcom links for swift evacuations, supported by temporary Incident Command Posts.

What enabled speed and coordination?

1. Unified action: Soldiers, airmen, engineers, paramilitary forces, disaster professionals, officials, and volunteers worked in concert. A deputy commissioner's 36-hour trek to Dharali reflected the determination to reach isolated communities quickly.

2. Tech backbone: Drones, satellite communication, OneWeb links, Doppler radars, and IMD nowcasting supported planning and execution. Joint work by Army communicators and service providers revived networks and stabilised information flows.

3. Command posts: Temporary command posts enabled real-time tasking across agencies. Speed, coordination, and innovation characterised the operational posture.

What must improve before the next monsoon?

1. Mapping and monitoring: GSI should expand landslide mapping using soil soaking and slope gradients. NRSC (National Remote Sensing Centre) must monitor glacial lakes and debris flows round the clock, and AI using local hydro-met data can sharpen flash-flood and cloudburst forecasts.

2. Predictive surveillance: Drones should shift to predictive surveillance of slopes, rivers, and glaciers. GIS-based risk mapping is essential, with a denser Doppler radar network and more localised early-warning systems.

Where community and governance fall short?

1. Alerts to action: Despite lakhs of warnings issued through SMS and the Sachet app, too many citizens remain unaware of what to do when alerts arrive. Pilgrimage corridors like Machail and Gangotri see footfall even during red alerts.

2. Risky practices: Construction in riverbeds, slope destabilisation from unchecked development, and disregard of building norms magnify hazards. Communities need clarity on evacuation routes, shelters, and steps upon receiving alerts.

3. Training reach: The NDMA's Aapda Mitra (Friends in Disaster) programme is a good start, but it needs deeper penetration into schools, panchayats and resident welfare associations. Mock drills should become regular, meaningful community training.

How recovery should build resilience?

1. Safer infrastructure: Reconstruction must stabilise slopes, reinforce embankments, and curb illegal mining. Seismic codes and riverbank “no-build zones” require strict enforcement.

2. Institutions & civil society: A technically oriented disaster-management community is needed. Civil society's local knowledge should be integrated into district authorities to anchor resilient development.

3. Shared responsibility: Responders showed courage and skill, but government action alone is not enough. Preparedness must be treated with the seriousness of civic duties to achieve lasting resilience.

Question for practice

Examine how the Monsoon 2025 floods affected Himalayan states and assess the response, technology use, and community preparedness

Facial recognition in Anganwadis affects welfare delivery

Source: The post Facial recognition in Anganwadis affects welfare delivery has been created, based on the article “Welfare at the mercy of the machine” published in “The Hindu” on 18th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context: The article critiques mandatory Facial Recognition Software (FRS) in Anganwadis. It argues that welfare delivery is becoming a technocratic “engineer’s paradise,” displacing human judgment.

How is automation reshaping welfare delivery?

1. From cautionary fiction to present governance: American novelist Kurt Vonnegut, in his 1952 novel *Player Piano*, warned of humans subordinated to machines. A similar pattern appears as digital tools govern welfare delivery and constrain human judgment.

2. Anganwadi basics: Started in 1975, Anganwadis address child malnutrition under the Integrated Child Development Scheme. About 14.02 lakh centres, staffed by local women as workers and helpers, provide preschool services and legally mandated Take Home Rations (THR) for under-threes, pregnant, and lactating women under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

3. Poshan Tracker + FRS: Since 2021, the Poshan Tracker app records nutrition status and demands frequent updates. From July 1, women must pass face authentication to receive THR. e-KYC precedes this, linking Aadhaar and biometrics through OTP verification.

4. Safeguards vs justice: Two stated aims are preventing beneficiary impersonation and diversion by staff. This setup assumes wrongdoing, conflicting with the principle that people are innocent until proven guilty.

What breaks down on the ground?

1. OTP hurdles: Phone numbers change, phones are often not with the women, and sharing OTPs raises trust concerns. Even after e-KYC, face matches fail for reasons Anganwadi workers cannot diagnose.

2. Tech and network limits: Workers’ phones struggle with heavy processing and hang. Patchy connectivity causes delays. Repeated photo attempts frustrate beneficiaries and slow distribution.

3. Lost discretion: Workers personally know families and can vouch for identity, yet cannot override failed authentications. Authentic beneficiaries are denied rations, and workers face the backlash.

4. No consultation: The system was introduced without engaging Anganwadi staff who must operate it. Implementation burdens rise while decision-making power shrinks.

What are the real THR bottlenecks?

1. Quality and supply deficits: Rations are often poor in quality and supply is irregular. These are central obstacles to nutrition outcomes.

2. Stagnant child budget: For children, the THR budget is ₹8 per day and has not been revised since 2018. This limits adequacy and undermines program goals.

3. Contracting and centralisation issues: Concerns persist about corrupt contracting and supply by large firms. This continues despite Supreme Court directions since 2004 favouring decentralised production through self-help groups and mahila mandals.

4. Misdiagnosed problem: Women “faking” pregnancy or children faking identity are not core issues. FRS targets a peripheral risk while major gaps remain unaddressed.

What course-corrections uphold rights and dignity?

1. Publish evidence before punitive design: If large-scale fraud exists, release reports for public scrutiny. Policy should be proportionate to verified risks.

2. Prefer community monitoring: Community verification within Anganwadis is a practical, context-aware check on identity and delivery.

3. Do not criminalise the vulnerable: FRS is largely used in criminal probes and is even banned in San Francisco. Applying it to women and children treats citizens like suspects.

4. Keep care above code: Early childhood care should not wait for software to improve. Choose authenticity over mere authentication, dignity over dehumanisation, and fraternity over friction.

Question for practice:

Discuss the impact of mandatory facial recognition in Anganwadis on Take Home Rations delivery and beneficiaries’ dignity.

Measuring poverty through thali affordability

Source: The post Measuring poverty through thali affordability has been created, based on the article “Equalising primary food consumption in India” published in “The Hindu” on 19th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 - population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues And GS Paper 3-food security.

Context: A new household consumption survey in February 2024 enabled fresh poverty estimates. An April 2025 World Bank brief reported **extreme poverty at 2.3% in 2022–23**. A thali-based consumption lens reassesses deprivation by checking whether households can afford **two thalis per day**.

For detailed information on **Thali index questions India’s poverty decline** [read this article here](#)

What sparked the new poverty debate?

1. **World Bank’s very low poverty figure:** Extreme poverty fell from **16.2% (2011–12)** to **2.3% (2022–23)**. This implies near-elimination of extreme poverty.

2. **Look beyond calorie lines:** The long-used calorific line links income to calories. A broader view values energy, nourishment, and meal satisfaction, not calories alone.

3. **A consumption lens using NSS 2024:** The NSS 2024 data are used to convert each household’s food spending into an equivalent number of “thalis.” A **minimum norm of two thalis per person per day** is taken to judge adequacy of food consumption.

How does the thali metric change the picture?

1. **A natural unit of food consumption:** A thali combines carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins. It is a balanced, self-contained meal unit in South Asia.
2. **Pricing and affordability results:** Using ₹30 per home-cooked thali (rice, dal, vegetables, roti, curd, salad), in 2023–24 up to 50% of rural and up to 20% of urban residents could not afford two thalis daily.
3. **Food as budget residual:** Households must first pay for rent, transport, telephony, health, and education to stay work-ready. What remains goes to food. Therefore, the assessment relies on actual food expenditure, not total income, to capture real eating capacity.

What changes when PDS benefits are counted?

1. **Imputing PDS purchases and free grain:** Adding the value of subsidised and free supplies lowers deprivation. Those below two thalis fall to 40% in rural and 10% in urban areas.
2. **Persistent rural shortfalls:** Despite subsidies, rural deprivation remains high. A grain-centric design offers limited relief to the most food-constrained.
3. **Cereals consumption has plateaued:** Cereals intake is nearly the same for the poorest (0–5% fractile) and the richest (95–100% fractile). This shows that cereal consumption has reached its desired level across income groups, since even the richest cannot and do not consume more cereals than they already do.

How is the subsidy structure working—and where are limits?

1. **Rural leakage toward better-off groups:** Well-off rural households are getting nearly the same PDS benefit as the very poorest households, even though they don't really need it.
2. **Urban progressivity but very wide coverage:** Urban subsidies are more progressive. Yet about 80% still receive subsidised sales and free food even when able to afford more than two thalis a day.
3. **A grain-heavy design with narrow spend share:** Cereals constitute about 10% of average household expenditure. A cereals-centric system cannot by itself end broader food deprivation.

What policy shift is needed?

1. **Rebalance subsidies:** Raise support at the lower end and remove it at the upper end. The January 2024 expansion to 80 crore people and very large State entitlements do not reflect need and impose fiscal and logistical costs.
2. **Pivot PDS toward pulses/** For many, pulses are the main protein and are costly. Bottom-end per capita pulses consumption is exactly half that of the top end, indicating a clear deficit.
3. **Finance pulses by right-sizing cereals:** Lower cereal entitlements to need. This reduces Food Corporation of India stocking requirements. Savings can fund pulses, making support compact and effective.

4. **Outcome and benchmark:** Target those below a reasonable norm, **two thalis per day**. Equalising primary food consumption by raising the poorest toward the highest observed level becomes feasible and **nationally significant**.

Question for practice:

Examine how the thali-based consumption metric challenges official poverty estimates and what PDS reforms are net to reduce food deprivation.

India China relations and the unresolved border challenge

Source: The post India China relations and the unresolved border challenge has been created, based on the article “**Should India overlook boundary issues while normalising ties with China?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 19th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 - India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Context: A high-level Modi-Xi meeting at the SCO summit restarted trade and air links and stressed border calm. **It followed five years after Galwan** and months after **Operation Sindoor** against Pakistan, prompting a debate on whether normalization can proceed without a boundary settlement.

For detailed information on **India-China Relations – Significance & Challenges** [read this article here](#)

What triggered the current reset?

1. **SCO meeting outcomes:** Both leaders agreed to **resume trade and air connectivity**. They stressed **peace and tranquility** along the border as an enabler for progress elsewhere.
2. **Framing the relationship:** They reaffirmed being “**development partners, not rivals.**” Readouts differed on the border’s salience, showing **divergent priorities**.
3. **Post-Galwan context:** The decisions follow the 2020 clashes that broke earlier understandings on LAC stability. Diplomacy and military talks since then aimed to **restore 1990s-style management**.
4. **Operation Sindoor backdrop:** The meeting came after India’s operation against Pakistan, **with Chinese support to Pakistani forces** shaping perceptions.

Can ties normalise without fixing the border?

1. **1988 template and LAC peace:** In 1988, after Rajiv Gandhi’s visit, both sides pursued cooperation while managing the dispute. The core condition was maintaining calm along the LAC.
2. **China’s earlier reluctance:** While India wanted the border issue to be resolved (as part of normalising ties), China was more reluctant to do so (and wanted to set the issue aside for the time being). In the 1990s too, both countries agreed to maintain peace and tranquility (along the LAC)..
3. **Galwan’s rupture and partial repair:** Galwan **upended the arrangement**. Talks since then tried to **recreate stabilizing mechanisms**.

4. **2024 Border Patrol Agreement:** This is seen as an **icebreaker**. India views **restored patrolling rights** in Demchok and Depsang as a gain. China claims **no sovereignty change**, describing **cross-patrolled buffer zones** after earlier **non-patrolled buffers**.

What could derail the current thaw?

1. **Risk of a renewed clash:** A fresh confrontation like “**Galwan-2**” would rupture engagement. It would revive distrust, harden public opinion, and overshadow gains in trade and connectivity.

2. **Signals of hierarchy and diminished parity:** Beijing’s quest for **global primacy** and reluctance to treat India as a peer deepen asymmetry. **Wang Yi’s elevation of Pakistan** signalled priority and hierarchy, which weakens confidence in parity.

3. **Military build-up and cost imposition:** The PLA’s **rapid build-up on the Tibetan Plateau** forces India to fortify and garrison the LAC year-round. This acts as a **cost-imposition strategy** and keeps risks elevated.

4. **Low appetite for a final settlement:** Beijing shows **limited interest** in resolving the boundary. Special Representatives meet, yet three decades of scant movement—and the unanswered “why” of **Galwan 2020**—sustain uncertainty.

How do Chinese perceptions of India shape Beijing’s behaviour?

1. **Narratives explaining 2020:** Chinese sources cite the **dilution of Article 370** and fear of **supply-chain displacement** during COVID-era U.S.–China tensions. Framing India as aligning with the U.S. invites **defensive and punitive measures**.

2. **From bystander to competitor:** India’s **scale, growth momentum, and demographic dividend** changed assessments. Past condescension gave way to caution, and India is viewed as a **potential competitor**.

3. **Restrictive economic mood:** Beijing shows an impulse to **curb investments**, tighten **export controls**, and **constrain technology flows** to slow India’s catch-up. These levers reinforce a harder border posture.

4. **Effects on border conduct:** Seeing India as a rising competitor hardens negotiating stances. It also encourages **tighter tactical behaviour** along the LAC.

Can China’s South Asia designs coexist with India–China normalisation?

1. **Shift from bilaterals to trilaterals:** Beijing is **pivoting to trilateral formats**, including Pakistan–Afghanistan–China and efforts with Bangladesh and Pakistan. These platforms consolidate regional influence.

2. **Strategic intent and implications:** The aim is to **pre-empt a future Indian rivalry** by shaping outcomes without Indian consent. Such mechanisms can **circumscribe India’s options**.

3. **Spillover into the bilateral track:** Regional manoeuvres blur into bilateral dealings. They make it harder to insulate normalisation from competitive pressures.

4. **Scale of China's lead:** The **Economic Survey 2024-25** notes China's manufacturing output is **nearly 45% of the global total**, including dominance in **electric vehicles** and **critical minerals**. This **structural interdependence** supports engagement.

Question for practice:

Examine whether India can normalise ties with China without resolving the boundary issue.

Saudi-Pakistan Defence Pact and Impact on India

Source: The post **The Saudi-Pakistan pact is a dodgy insurance policy** has been created, based on the article **"Saudi-Pakistan Defence Pact and Impact on India"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **20th September 2025**.

Syllabus: GS Paper -2- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The Saudi-Pakistan defence pact was recently signed which is seen as a strategic move aimed at bolstering military cooperation between the two nations.

Strategic and Political Implications:

1. The agreement **is seen as a strategic alignment to strengthen defence cooperation**, despite both nations having historically differing perceptions on key political issues.
2. Saudi Arabia, which has **traditionally maintained cautious ties with Pakistan**, is now willing to **expand military cooperation**, partly due to Pakistan's critical role in regional security.
3. It also **aligns with Saudi Arabia's need to ensure stability in the region** while also **detering threats from Iran and other adversaries**.
4. The United States has expressed support for the pact, which also **includes provisions for defence technology sharing**.
5. The pact has **potential ramifications for the broader Middle East and South Asia**, where regional powers like Iran and India maintain a close watch on any shifts in alliances.
6. **Saudi Arabia's pivot towards Pakistan further complicates the already volatile geopolitical situation** in the region, which is fraught with ongoing conflicts and historical rivalries.

Impact on India:

1. India could **perceive this pact as a strategic shift in the region**, especially in relation to its own defense policies in the Middle East.
2. The **Saudi-Pakistan defense collaboration may increase Pakistan's military influence in the region**, particularly in areas that concern India such as Afghanistan and Kashmir.
3. Additionally, **Saudi Arabia's closer ties with Pakistan might complicate India's strategic positioning in the Middle East**, where India has historically maintained a neutral stance.

Strategic Concerns for India:

1. India **will likely monitor the military developments in the region closely**, considering the historical ties between Saudi Arabia and India, and the latter's strategic interests in the region.

2. The pact could lead to an arms race in the region, potentially **forcing India to reconsider its defense strategy**, particularly concerning its interests in the Gulf and Afghanistan.

Question: Critically examine the strategic and political implications of the Saudi-Pakistan defense pact signed in September 2025.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India

Source: The post **Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India** has been created, based on the article “**Chuck PIL chaff, stick to public interest**” published in “**Economic Times**” on 20th September 2025.

Syllabus: GS Paper- 2- Separation of Powers between various organs Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.

Context: Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India, introduced in the landmark case *Hussainara Khatoon v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar* (1979), has become an important tool for securing justice, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.

Historical Background of PIL:

1. PILs **emerged to address human rights violations**, such as the *Hussainara Khatoon* case, which highlighted inhumane prison conditions and prolonged detention of undertrials in Bihar.
2. Over the years, **PILs have been utilized to bring attention** to issues of social justice, environmental protection, and corruption, among others.
3. **From 1985 to 2019, nearly 9.23 lakh PILs** were filed, reflecting a surge in the number of cases being brought to court.
4. This **surge has put a strain on the judicial system**, causing delays in addressing more pressing and serious cases.

Judicial Scrutiny and Misuse of PILs:

1. While PILs were originally conceived to safeguard public interest, there has been an increasing trend of their misuse for personal interests or symbolic gestures.
2. The Supreme Court has occasionally dismissed frivolous PILs, such as the case seeking the reconstruction of a damaged idol at Khajuraho's Javari Temple, stressing that **PILs should focus on public issues, not personal or religious concerns**.
3. The judiciary has **been active in curbing the abuse of PILs by imposing fines** on petitioners who misuse the process.
4. In cases such as those dismissed in July 2023, the court emphasized that **the judicial system should focus on genuine public interest matters**, not distractions caused by trivial petitions.

Importance of Judicial Prudence:

1. The Supreme Court's action in the Khajuraho case serves as a reminder that PILs should only be used to address issues that impact public welfare.
2. It ensures that the judicial system remains efficient, maintains credibility, and continues to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, rather than becoming overwhelmed by unimportant cases.

Question: Discuss the evolution of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India, the challenges it faces, and measures to prevent its misuse while ensuring it serves public welfare.

Municipal bonds revival and challenges in Indian cities

Source: The post Municipal bonds revival and challenges in Indian cities has been created, based on the article “Time for urban local bodies to look at municipal bonds seriously” published in “ Businessline ” on 20th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 - devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein..

Context: Municipal bonds offer urban local bodies a route to fund infrastructure. Early issuances began in 1997, but activity stayed muted. Recent policy pushes, incentives, and green-bond momentum have revived interest and debate on feasibility, governance, and remaining bottlenecks.

For detailed information on **Financial struggles of Indian municipal corporations** [read this article here](#)

Why muni bonds, and what changed?

1. **Early attempts and lull:** Bengaluru pioneered issuances in 1997, followed by Nashik and Ahmedabad. Thereafter, the market largely stagnated.
2. **SEBI's 2015 push:** SEBI issued detailed guidelines in July 2015 to revive fundraising by urban local bodies (ULBs). Uptake still lagged.
3. **Reforms, yet limited traction:** Initiatives like AMRUT and Smart Cities urged corporations to tap markets. A decade on, success remains modest.
4. **MoHUA-US OTA support:** The US Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) partnered with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to ease fundraising, strengthening systems and know-how.

What incentives and market tools exist?

1. **AMRUT 2.0 incentives:** A first municipal bond issue qualifies for an incentive equal to **13% of the amount raised**—that is, **₹13 crore for every ₹100 crore**, with a **maximum incentive of ₹26 crore**. This support **reduces the effective borrowing cost** and makes projects financially more viable.
2. **Green bond focus and pooling:** For any **second or later** bond issue, the ULB must issue it as a **green bond**—limited to sectors like water, sanitation, renewable energy, or urban resilience. Such issues are eligible for **₹10 crore in incentives for every ₹100 crore raised**, up to a **₹20 crore cap**. Smaller ULBs can access pooled municipal bonds via state entities.
3. **Benchmarking with IBMX:** NSE Indices introduced the India Municipal Bond Index (IBMX) in February 2023 to track high-quality municipal bonds with a total return methodology.

What success shows feasibility?

1. **Demand for green and ESG:** Indore, Ghaziabad, and Pimpri-Chinchwad saw strong market responses, signalling investor appetite.

2. **Vadodara's standout issue:** Vadodara Municipal Corporation's ₹100-crore bond in 2022 was oversubscribed 10 times. AMRUT 2.0 incentives cut the effective interest cost to 4.55 percent. This made VMC's fundraising both cheap and highly successful.

3. **Governance as the differentiator:** Accrual accounting, timely audits, and project-linked use of proceeds underpinned VMC's success. VMC documented its journey in *The Green Book* to guide peers.

What hurdles persist and what must improve?

1. **Structural constraints:** Rating agency ICRA flags dependence on grants, weak and delayed disclosures, illiquidity, no secondary market, high compliance, and low credit strength.

2. **State-level gaps:** SEBI chief notes slow asset-monetisation pipelines at the state level are limiting revenue backstops, dampening muni bond uptake and project execution.

3. **Call to action:** Monsoon damage exposes fragile urban services each year. Fiscally strained municipalities should tap municipal bonds to finance resilient, project-linked infrastructure upgrades and lessen dependence on grants.

Question for practice:

Discuss how AMRUT 2.0 incentives and strong governance enabled recent municipal bond successes (like Vadodara), and what key hurdles identified by ICRA still hinder wider adoption.

Digital sovereignty is essential for protecting free speech

Source: The post Digital sovereignty is essential for protecting free speech has been created, based on the article "**Who owns digital speech?**" published in "**Financial Express**" on 22nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Context: Algorithms reward outrage and spectacle. Data sovereignty is missing. Informational vacuums fill with polarising affect. Nepal's Gen Z awakens politically inside architectures they do not govern. The debate shifts from speaking freely to the systems that circulate speech.

For detailed information on **How AI is changing what sovereignty means** [read this article here](#)

How do algorithms reshape the public sphere?

1. **Engagement over truth:** As access and debate shift to transnational platforms, engagement metrics replace truth-seeking and accountability. Algorithms privilege affect—**rage, conspiracy, despair**—because it drives attention. **Factual authority erodes.** Dissent becomes **spectacle**, not deliberation.

2. **Designed amplification:** Feeds are actively curated. Visibility depends on ranking systems users neither design nor govern. These systems **reward polarising emotion**, not reasoned argument. What circulates is what **maximises engagement**, not what clarifies reality. This **reshapes how citizens see issues and act**.

What are the four key impacts of platform monopolisation?

1. **Destabilised public sphere:** Institutions that sustained **rational-critical debate** lose ground to **engagement logics**. **Polarisation accelerates**. Politics becomes a **contest of narratives** untethered from reality.

2. **Displaced locus of power:** Sovereignty shifts from **law** to **codes, protocols, and opaque moderation**. A new **dispositif** defines discourse boundaries **beyond domestic control**.

3. **Free speech as simulacrum:** People can speak, but **algorithms decide** what is heard or buried. **Appearances of liberty** mask hierarchies of **amplification and control**.

4. **Generational consequences:** Gen Z mobilises with **digital tools** yet depends on **foreign infrastructures**. Without reclaimed **digital commons**, thought and action risk being **pre-scripted**.

Where does sovereignty erode, and why does it matter?

1. **Extraterritorial rule-by-code:** Global South data is processed under **foreign legal regimes**. **Curation, moderation, and monetisation** are determined abroad, with **limited recourse** for affected states.

2. **Structural dependencies:** Reliance on **hyperscale clouds (AWS, Azure, Google Cloud)**, **dominant social platforms (Meta, X, TikTok)**, and **proprietary mobile ecosystems (Apple iOS, Android)** creates **jurisdictional asymmetries** beyond current domestic reach.

What collective and national responses are needed?

1. **Multilateral assertion of sovereignty:** The Global South should treat **data sovereignty** as **democratic self-determination**. In the **UN Global Digital Compact**, **WTO e-commerce talks**, and regional blocs such as the **African Union** and **ASEAN**, states can insist that **informational flows fall under sovereignty** in international law.

2. **Domestic law as the decisive arena:** Global advocacy is **insufficient** without **enforceable national statutes** and **supervisory authorities** with audit, sanction, and adjudication powers.

3. **Six legal elements to secure digital sovereignty**

- **Comprehensive data protection** with rights of access, portability, and erasure, with **constitutional status**.
- **Algorithmic transparency** and **independent audits** of recommendation systems.
- **Data localisation with safeguards** to keep critical data under **national jurisdiction**.
- **Due-process rights**, including **judicially reviewable** takedown and de-platforming.

- **Independent regulators** empowered to penalise, order disclosures, and enforce compliance.
- **Cross-border transfer rules** allow flows only to jurisdictions with **reciprocity and equivalent protections**.

Conclusion

In the **Global South**, liberty cannot survive if speech is **hostage to digital monopolies**. **Digital sovereignty**, grounded in **strong national law**, is the **firewall** against **algorithmic rule**.

Question for practice:

Examine why data sovereignty is necessary to protect free speech in the algorithmic public sphere of the Global South.

Knowledge access must be free for global justice

Source: The post Knowledge access must be free for global justice has been created, based on the article “**Breaking the academic paywall**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 22nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. .

Context: India produces the fourth-highest number of PhDs, yet many students lack journal access. A Delhi High Court order in August blocking Sci-Hub and LibGen reignited concerns about affordability and the right to knowledge in resource-constrained settings.

For detailed information on **Significance of Open Access for Scientific Research** [read this article here](#)

Why do access barriers matter?

1. **Scale and affordability:** PhD students must read hundreds of sources but often receive only ₹20,000–35,000 as stipend. Paying \$20–3,000 per paper is unrealistic for many.
2. **Legal blocks intensify scarcity:** Free-access sites were blocked on copyright grounds after a plea by three major publishers controlling 40% of the market. This removed a crucial lifeline for students and researchers.
3. **Evidence of dependence:** A 2021 study showed India made 8.7% of Sci-Hub download requests—over 13 million in 2017. Nineteen percent related to medical and health sciences, reflecting significant need.

How does the publishing model exclude?

1. **Profit without producing content:** Publishers neither create the research nor review it. They benefit from unpaid academic labour funded by taxpayers or student fees.
2. **Gatekeeping public knowledge:** Multi-billion-dollar firms restrict access to scientific outputs, limiting the world’s majority from using work largely supported by public resources.

3. Narrowing what counts as knowledge

Corporate funding, patents, and IP concentrate ownership. Universities increasingly prefer candidates with high-profile publications rather than work serving underserved communities.

Why is this a justice issue for the Global South?

1. **Compounding crises:** Communities face systemic gaps, climate disasters, displacement, and violence. Overburdened services cannot meet rising needs, so timely research access becomes a lifeline, not a luxury.

2. **Localised care:** Drug-resistant TB and antimicrobial-resistant HIV demand context-specific regimens. Plans vary by cost, severity, geography, malnourishment, age, and co-morbidities. Without open knowledge, clinicians cannot adapt best practices.

3. **Unequal burdens:** Two-thirds of TB cases occur in eight Global South countries. Patients already struggle to access effective, often decades-old treatments. Blocking scientific information deepens these inequities.

4. **Excluded voices:** Grassroots insights are undervalued, and Global South researchers are under-represented in authorship. They are often confined to field roles while conceptual framing follows Global North language, miscasting local problems.

5. **Access and dignity:** Medicine evolves with changing environments and organisms. Corporate gatekeeping restricts lifesaving tools. Ensuring open pathways to knowledge is therefore about fairness, autonomy, and health justice.

What should be done?

1. **Enforce open science:** Operationalise the 2021 UNESCO open-science framework adopted by 193 countries, including India. Translate it into institutional policies that mandate transparency, sharing, and cross-border collaboration.

2. **Treat knowledge as commons:** Acknowledge that science is produced collectively and should circulate freely. Replace exclusionary ownership practices with access models that prioritise public benefit over profits.

3. **Guarantee community access and equity:** Make research conducted in the Global South available to the very communities and participants involved. Improve authorship representation so conceptual work is not confined to Global North institutions.

4. **Remove paywalls through collective pressure:** Governments, innovators, and health experts should jointly press publishers and universities to open channels for easy access. Dismantling paywalls is essential to tackle war, climate crises, drug resistance, and entrenched inequities.

Question for practice:

Examine how paywalled academic publishing affects research and healthcare outcomes in the Global South.

Indian exceptionalism ends under Trump policies

Source: The post Indian exceptionalism ends under Trump policies

has been created, based on the article “**Indian exceptionalism is over**” published in “**Business Standard**” on 22nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context: Debate on H-1B curbs revived a larger question. **Are recent US moves a targeted campaign against India?** Parallel actions, shifting waivers, and rhetoric fuel this view. A longer history of **Indian exceptionalism** also shapes today's expectations.

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

Is India Specifically Targeted?

1. Visible policy hits: Indians receive over two-thirds of H-1Bs. Indian firms benefit most. **Indian goods face a cumulative 50% tariff rate.** A new remittance tax may **burden people of Indian origin** in the US.

2. Regional signals: US ties with Pakistan seem to be improving without clear cause. **Several US officials have needled India.** These signals deepen suspicion.

3. Concurrent punitive steps: Alongside H-1B news, **Republican senators proposed 40% tariffs on Indian shrimp.** The administration **suspended the India-specific Chabahar waiver** under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act. That waiver was **granted in 2018.** The tone has clearly shifted.

4. What more could follow: Full **CAATSA** application is possible over the **S-400 purchase**, especially if India avoids major US platforms. Such steps would heighten pressure.

Or Is This Part of a Wider Pattern?

1. Others feel singled out: Turkey points to **F-35 exclusion** and denial of a **CAATSA exemption** that India once received. **Brazil faces 50% tariffs.** **South Korean engineers were deported in handcuffs.** Many nations believe they are targeted.

2. Services in the crosshairs: US ideas extend tariff logic to services. One proposal treats **outsourcing like goods imports.** Another would **tax at 25% any payment** by a US entity to a foreign person when the work benefits US consumers. **Any passage would intensify pressure.**

3. Foreigners versus India: It may be **less anti-India than anti-“foreign.”** If broad skepticism drives policy, actions affecting India could reflect a general posture, not a bespoke campaign.

How Did Indian Exceptionalism Set the Stage?

1. A high pedestal: For two decades, a **bipartisan US consensus favored India.** Rolling back those preferences hurts more precisely because there was farther to fall.

2. **Bush-Singh nuclear deal legacy:** That deal entrenched **expectations of Indian exceptionalism**. India came to expect differential treatment across domains, including trade and technology.

3. **Trade bargaining misreads:** Confident of special status, India offered a trade package **without pledging zero tariffs on US manufactures**. Others—EU, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, and several in Latin America—removed such tariffs. A **tougher US tariff stance toward India followed**.

4. **Corporate overconfidence:** Indian outsourcers operating in the US appeared to discount rising resentment over **alleged hiring bias**. **Cognizant is appealing a finding of intentional discrimination**. Cases against Wipro and TCS are progressing. The **EEOC is investigations**. US officials say staffing-firm **dominance of H-1Bs distorts** the program's purpose.

What Follows If Exceptionalism Ends?

1. **Reading the next moves:** Whether this is personal animus or broader policy will become clear in coming months. Either way, the **era of assumed indulgence has faded**.

2. **Strategic recalibration:** India must expect fewer waivers and stricter US scrutiny across goods, services, and sanctions, and adjust its trade and technology choices accordingly.

3. **Look for new partners: Look to Europe**, which **launched a new India-specific policy** resembling the earlier US consensus. This offers another path for **preferential engagement**.

Question for practice:

Examine whether recent US policies under President Trump specifically target India or reflect a broader anti-foreign approach.

China is stockpiling oil for strategic reasons

Source: The post China is stockpiling oil for strategic reasons has been created, based on the article "**Crude conspiracy: China's oil spree might have hidden aims**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 22nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2** -Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests. And **GS Paper 3**- Infrastructure (energy)

Context: China has accumulated **over 150 million barrels** of crude—**about \$10 billion** at current prices—well above use this year. In the **2nd quarter of 2025**, the **International Energy Agency** estimated that China accounted for **more than 90% of the measurable worldwide stock build**. With a large surplus expected in 2026, China's choices could shape prices and balances.

Why is China stockpiling oil?

1. **Opportunistic buying:** Planners think long-term and purchase when oil is **cheap after inflation adjustment**. On that basis, **West Texas Intermediate (WTI) is near its 20-year real price level**, making large purchases sensible despite rising EV use. Locking in low real costs now helps secure supply and improves future bargaining power.

2. Storage capacity is ready: China has built a large amount of new oil storage, including tanks and underground caverns, and **more facilities are expected to be ready by 2026**. Current estimates suggest that about half of the existing storage space is still unused. This means China can continue adding oil quickly and in large volumes without facing storage limitations.

3. A new legal mandate: Since **1 January**, a **new energy law** requires both **state-owned and private companies** to maintain **strategic oil reserves**. This shifts stockpiling from only the state to a **shared responsibility** with the commercial sector, creating a **firm legal basis** for a sustained rise in national inventories.

What strategic calculations are shaping the buildup?

1. Insurance against sanctions exposure: About **20%** of crude imports come from sanctioned suppliers—**Iran, Russia, Venezuela**. Extra stocks hedge against possible US-led disruptions. Inventories cover **about 110 days** of consumption, with informal talk of **140–180 days by 2026**.

2. Contingency for conflict: Some traders link supplemental buying to **Taiwan-related tensions**. Additional barrels would cushion a sudden geopolitical or military shock.

3. Diversifying reserves: China is using crude oil as part of its **financial reserve strategy**, just like it already does with **gold** and other **non-dollar assets**. By buying oil worth about **\$10 billion in 2025**—and possibly the same in 2026—China is reducing its dependence on **US government bonds (Treasuries)**. This shift spreads its reserves across more assets, lowering the risk of being too reliant on the US financial system..

How does this affect the market outlook?

1. Price support: In **Q2**, China drove **over 90% of the global increase in tracked inventories**, per IEA estimates. That concentration of stock build **supported prices** in 2025 and highlights China's outsized role in absorbing surplus supply.

2. Capacity, opacity, and likely path: At the **Asia-Pacific Petroleum Conference** in Singapore, traders agreed China **can store more**, but timing is uncertain. As Ilia Bouchouev put it, **"nobody has a crystal ball"** on the duration of strategic buying. Commercial logic and strategic aims align, so **continued stockpiling into 2026** appears likely, though the pace may vary.

Question for practice:

Examine the main reasons behind China's recent oil stockpiling and its likely impact on the 2026 oil market.

Traditional medicine supports people and planet wellbeing

Source: The post Traditional medicine supports people and planet wellbeing has been created, based on the article **"The growing relevance of traditional medicine"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 23rd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: Traditional medicine is moving into the mainstream as systems pivot from reactive treatment to preventive, root-cause care. With “Ayurveda for People & Planet” designated for 2025 (Ayurveda Day, September 23), the stage is set to link personal health with biodiversity, nutrition security, and sustainable livelihoods.

For detailed information on **Ayurveda-Future of Health** [read this article here](#)

What guides 2025 Ayurveda for People & Planet?

1. **Core philosophy:** Ayurveda seeks balance between body and mind, humans and nature, and consumption and conservation.
2. **Whole-of-life scope:** Its principles cover human wellness, veterinary care, and plant health.
3. **Care model:** It prioritises preventive, affordable, inclusive, and sustainable care.
4. **Occasion and theme:** The 2025 theme, “Ayurveda for People & Planet,” frames responses to lifestyle diseases and climate change.

Why does traditional medicine matter globally?

1. **High prevalence.** WHO notes practice in 170 of 194 countries (88%). It serves billions, especially in low- and middle-income nations.
2. **Market momentum.** The market may reach \$583 billion by 2025, growing 10%–20% annually.
3. **Country snapshots.** Traditional Chinese medicine is \$122.4 billion; Australia’s herbal sector \$3.97 billion; India’s AYUSH \$43.4 billion.
4. **Beyond treatment.** It supports biodiversity conservation, nutrition security, and sustainable livelihoods.

For detailed information on **National Consultative Meet on Traditional Medicine** [read this article here](#)

How India’s AYUSH sector transformed?

1. **Enterprise base:** Over 92,000 MSMEs drive production and services.
2. **Revenue expansion:** Manufacturing rose from ₹21,697 crore (2014–15) to over 21.37 lakh crore; services generated ₹1.67 lakh crore.
3. **Exports and recognition;** AYUSH and herbal products worth \$1.54 billion reach 150+ countries; Ayurveda gains formal recognition abroad.
4. **Public adoption:** Survey on AYUSH by the National Sample Survey Office (2022–23) shows 95% rural and 96% urban awareness; over half used AYUSH in the past year, with Ayurveda preferred for rejuvenation and prevention.

What powers scientific validation and outreach?

1. **Research institutions:** The All India Institute of Ayurveda, Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, National Institute of Ayurveda, and CCRAS lead studies.
2. **Focus areas:** Clinical validation, drug standardisation, and integrative models align traditional knowledge with modern practice.
3. **Global ties:** Under the International Cooperation Scheme: 25 bilateral agreements, 52 institutional partnerships, 43 AYUSH Information Cells in 39 countries, and 15 academic chairs.
4. **WHO centre and AI:** The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in India advances digital, data, and AI integration; WHO highlights AI for validation, big-data analytics, and predictive care.

For detailed information on **Global Centre for Traditional Medicine** [read this article here](#)

Way forward

1. **Convergence:** Ancient wisdom combined with modern science and technology strengthens traditional systems in global health architecture.
2. **Signal moment:** Ayurveda Day underscores the potential for balanced, sustainable futures for people and the planet.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's AYUSH sector has transformed in scale, research, and global outreach since 2014–15.

Policy must include gender minorities for justice

Source: The post Policy must include gender minorities for justice has been created, based on the article “**Trans people deserve better**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 23rd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Governance- mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context: Policy shapes daily survival for gender minorities. **Inclusive, enforceable, humane policy** is essential for dignity, safety, and equality. The call is for **representation in decision-making** and urgent reforms in education, healthcare, employment, and housing.

For detailed information on **Rights of Sexual Minorities in India** [read this article here](#)

Why policy is life, not paperwork?

1. **Lived stakes of policy: Policy is the scaffolding of lives.** Its absence denies dignity and safety. Families may abandon. Schools may exclude. Workplaces may posture inclusion while keeping people at the margins.
2. **Survival when laws lag:** Gender transition is expensive. **Resources are scarce.** Abandonment and hunger push people into unsafe situations. **Survival cannot wait for slow legal change.**
3. **Historical warnings:** Systemic exclusion hollows democracies. Denials once faced by African-Americans and by women recur today. **Each blocked opportunity erases potential**—a scientist, an artist, a leader.

Where do promises fail on the ground?

1. **Hollow quotas and gatekeeping:** Quotas exist for jobs, education, housing, and welfare. **Selective dispersal, corruption, and gatekeeping** restrict access. A quota that requires humiliation is entrapment, not empowerment.
2. **Housing as a denied stability: Rental searches meet prejudice.** Landlords hesitate. Neighbours whisper. Societies erect silent barricades. **Housing, a basic stability marker, is denied.**

3. **Hostility in public spaces:** Buses and markets become sites of ridicule. **Everyday acts demand courage.** Safety in public spaces is a right as basic as food or shelter.

4. **The price of abandonment: Family rejection and hunger** carry heavy costs. Survival choices can endanger dignity and safety, deepening marginalisation.

For detailed information on **The challenges transgender individuals face in India** [read this article here](#)

Why representation is structural, not symbolic?

1. **From “for us” to “with us”:** Policies made without gender minorities **reproduce blind spots.** Participation must replace passive receipt of benevolence.

2. **Seats that shape laws:** Absent trans voices in Parliament, Assemblies, and councils, needs stay as footnotes. Presence changes agendas, budgets, and oversight, turning commitments into enforceable duties.

3. **Institutions and culture:** Exclusion also sits inside regulatory bodies. Derogatory portrayals pass because decision tables lack trans members. Inclusion must extend to media, censor, and cultural boards so harm is checked where it begins.

What urgent reforms define equality now?

1. **Education with safeguards:** Provide **scholarships, inclusive curricula, and anti-discrimination protocols.** Bullying pushes children out of school and cuts short futures.

2. **Healthcare that enables survival:** Ensure **affordable, state-supported gender transition and mental health care.** Transitioning is survival, not cosmetic.

3. **Employment and housing with penalties:** Enforce **anti-discrimination laws, rental protections, and workplace inclusion with penalties.** Representation must reach **payrolls and property deeds.** Rights must translate into material security.

4. **National conscience and potential:** **Denying rights wastes talent and creativity.** Inclusion deepens democracy and energises culture and business. **Resilience cannot replace rights.** Policy must bridge personal courage and systemic support, **weaving gender minorities into political debate and everyday justice.**

Question for practice:

Discuss how policy failures shape daily life for gender minorities and what urgent reforms are proposed.

India's responsibilities in a deteriorating multilateral order

Source: The post India's responsibilities in a deteriorating multilateral order has been created, based on the article “UN-American” published in “**Indian Express**” on 23rd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Context: As the **UN General Assembly meets for its 80th session**, Washington's sharp turn from multilateralism under President Trump intensifies. A sovereignty-first agenda, sweeping withdrawals, and deep funding cuts shrink UN relevance, while **China expands its influence**. India faces risks and openings amid gridlock, financial strain, and stalled reforms.

For detailed information on **US Shift From Multilateralism Impacts Global Order and India's Role** [read this article here](#)

What changed in Washington?

1. **Second-term deconstruction drive:** Trump appears **more powerful and less constrained** than in 2017–21. He moves decisively to reduce the UN's salience in the global order.
2. **"Peace president" framing vs UNSC:** He **claims to have "ended seven wars" and presents himself as a peacemaker**. The narrative targets a populist base skeptical of "endless wars," while implying he outperforms the Security Council on peace and security.
3. **Sovereignty-first template since 2017:** His maiden UN speech **rejected globalism and elevated national sovereignty**. Cooperation is acceptable only without constraining domestic decision-making or prosperity.
4. **From reversals to doubling down:** After Biden rejoined key bodies, the **second term converts disruption into comprehensive policy**: repeated exits, threats, and policy blocks return with greater scope.

What is the current US policy toolkit?

1. **Project 2025 as ideological playbook:** The Heritage Foundation's manifesto urges **slashing contributions** to agencies seen as **undermining sovereignty or advancing gender and LGBT agendas**. It seeks to **reshape multilateral bodies to serve US aims** and even contemplates leaving the UN if alignment fails.
2. **Rapid withdrawals and halted pledges:** Since January 2025, the **US again left WHO, UNESCO, and the Human Rights Council**. It **ended funding to UNRWA**. It halted support for the Paris Agreement and the Loss and Damage Fund.
3. **Deep cuts to UN operations:** There is an **unprecedented cut of over 80%** in US contributions to **UN operations**, including **peacekeeping and global health**. The financial squeeze widens a governance vacuum.

How does China exploit the vacuum?

1. **Systematic placement in key roles:** Beijing campaigns to install nationals in **influential leadership, technical, and administrative** posts shaping standards, auditing, and membership decisions.
2. **Programmatic activism aligned to strategy:** It sponsors development initiatives linked to the Belt and Road and **promotes "global development," "global security," "global civilisation," and "global governance"** as pillars of leadership.
3. **Indispensable, not yet dominant:** China has **not supplanted US dominance**, but **US disengagement has made its activism indispensable in many forums**.

Why is multilateralism faltering?

1. **From high-water mark to fatigue:** The early-2000s momentum—WTO launch and Millennium Development Goals—has ebbed. **Populist nationalism, China's rise, and transatlantic divisions** erode consensus.
2. **Security Council paralysis:** US-China and US-Russia **rivalries gridlock the Council**. Even **humanitarian files stall** behind competing vetoes.
3. **Financial crisis and blocked reform:** Agencies face **shrinking voluntary contributions and budget stress**. **UNSC expansion** and wider reforms **remain stuck**.

What should India do now?

1. **Reframe aims as a middle power:** Craft **workable multilateralism** for an age of rivalry and rapid change. **Old tropes** and broad demands on the North have little traction.
2. **Prioritise few, high-impact agendas:** Focus on **select priorities** (e.g., **global AI governance**). Build **coalitions that bridge North-South** to turn ideas into rules.
3. **Match status with money and reform:** Raise India's **assessed contribution** (~\$38 million, under 1%) and expand **voluntary funding** to aligned agencies. **China pays ~\$680 million (~20%)**; the US ~\$820 million (~22%). Pursue **system-wide reform** beyond Council expansion: **trim bureaucracy, fix overlaps, and narrow mandates**.
4. **Strategic takeaway:** Trump's second-term push shows the order's **fragility**. **China has not offered a broadly accepted alternative**. To shape rules, **India must shoulder greater responsibility** and help design a **credible, balanced multilateralism**.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India should respond to US retrenchment and China's growing activism at the UN to shape a credible, balanced multilateral order.

Building an Atmanirbhar Indian Navy by 2047

Source: The post Building an Atmanirbhar Indian Navy by 2047 has been created, based on the article “**54 vessels are being built for Navy; 10 to join fleet this year**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 23rd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -Internal Security.

Context: India is executing its largest naval build. 54 vessels are under construction in Indian shipyards. This push secures maritime interests, **supports SAGAR, and counters regional challenges**. The effort aligns with Atmanirbhar Bharat and the goal of a capable, **Atmanirbhar Navy by 2047**.

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

What is the vision of an Atmanirbhar Indian Navy by 2047?

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1. **Combat-ready and future-focused:** The Navy seeks to remain a **Combat Ready, Credible, Cohesive, and Future Ready Force**. It aims to deliver effects across the spectrum of conflict through a balanced, networked, multi-domain force.

2. **Economic and trade enabler:** India's GDP could **surpass \$26 trillion by 2047**. With **95% of trade by volume and 68% by value sea-borne**, secure sea lanes and port access are essential to growth and export-led development.

3. **Atmanirbhar commitment:** An unequivocal commitment to be **Atmanirbhar by 2047** will deepen defence self-reliance, generate employment, and contribute to **Viksit Bharat**.

What are the major indigenous shipbuilding and submarine projects that will drive self-reliance in naval capabilities?

1. **Build & induction timeline:** **54 vessels** are in domestic build; several near delivery, with **up to 10 warships** to be commissioned by **December 2025**. All **54** are planned to join the fleet by **2030**.

2. **From buyer to builder:** A significant number of warships are under construction in Indian yards, confirming the **shift to a "Builder's Navy"**. The expanding programme reflects long-term maritime self-reliance.

3. **Recent milestones :** **INS Tamal, a Russian-built frigate**, was commissioned as the last major warship constructed abroad. **INS Androth, an ASW Shallow Water Craft with over 80% indigenous** content, showcases growing domestic capability.

4. **Project-75(I):** **Six AIP-equipped conventional submarines** will be **built in India** with Transfer of Technology. Progressive indigenisation covers weapons, communications, navigation, and CWCS, enabling MRO, logistics support, jobs, and export potential.

How is the Navy planning to achieve technological self-reliance across the five domains—space, air, surface, sub-surface, and cyber?

1. **Space:** Space-based **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)** is being prioritised to raise maritime domain awareness and battle-space transparency. Better sensing and continuous visibility will support faster, more accurate decisions across missions.

2. **Air:** Shore-based and integral naval aviation will handle surveillance, fleet air defence, maritime and shore strike, **anti-submarine warfare (ASW)**, special operations, **search and rescue (SAR)**, intelligence gathering, and fleet logistics/communications. Plans include **Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF)**, **Deck Based Multi-Role Helicopters**, and long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft. **Unmanned and autonomous systems with Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUMT)** will deepen reach and persistence.

3. **Surface:** Centre on **Carrier Strike Groups**, next-generation destroyers, long-range precision seaborne attack vectors, **credible land-attack**, and expeditionary platforms for rapid, flexible power projection..

4. **Sub-surface:** An optimum mix of conventional submarines and **nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs)** will strengthen sea denial and undersea dominance. **Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)** will remain the most potent and reliable component of the nuclear triad, ensuring credible strategic deterrence.

5. **Cyber: Sharp offensive and robust defensive cyber capabilities** will protect networks and platforms while disrupting adversaries. **Cyber power will act as a force multiplier**, enabling and amplifying effects across space, air, surface, and sub-surface operations.

What role do manpower, training, and recruitment reforms play in building a self-reliant and future-ready Navy?

1. **People-centric development:** Policies foster holistic professional and personal growth. Organisational excellence and individual skills are strengthened to retain motivated human capital.
2. **Realistic training:** High-quality professional training under realistic combat conditions enhances competence and readiness. This improves collective performance and mission outcomes.
3. **Modern recruitment:** A three-pronged approach builds brand image, expands outreach, and eases procedures. It aligns with aspirations of the younger generation and provides clear pathways to service.

Why is an Atmanirbhar Navy crucial for India?

1. **Regional posture:** As “**first responder**” and “**preferred security partner**” in the IOR, the Navy advances **SAGAR** by enhancing security, building partners’ capacities, and promoting cooperation. IPMDA in the IOR through IFC-IOR will share MDA for regional surveillance.
2. **Deterrence & competition:** The Navy must deter war and win decisively if required, while prevailing in daily competition. Chinese carrier developments are closely monitored, with concepts and capability plans refined against evolving threats.
3. **Carrier-led projection:** Carrier Battle Groups remain central to operations. They deliver unmatched mobility, flexibility, and a wide mission set at sea and ashore. This necessity has been underscored by the Standing Committee on Defence.
4. **Scaled force goals:** India targets over 200 warships and submarines by 2035, potentially 230 by 2037. A modern, large Navy will remain a critical instrument of national power in a complex geo-strategic environment.

Question for practice:

Discuss why an Atmanirbhar Navy by 2047 is crucial for India’s maritime security and economic growth.

H-1B fee Hike and Threat to India's IT firms

Source: The post **H-1B fee Hike and Threat to India's IT firms** has been created, based on the article “**How Trump’s H-1B fee threatens India’s IT firms and Big Tech business models**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **24th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -2- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests, Indian Diaspora

Context: The U.S. administration under President Trump has introduced a \$1,000,000 annual fee on H-1B visas, which are widely used by Indian IT firms and American Big Tech companies to hire skilled foreign workers. This policy aims to reduce the reliance on foreign workers and prioritize domestic talent but may have significant economic and innovation-related consequences.

Background of H-1B visas

- H-1B visas **account for about 65% of the U.S. IT workforce**, a sharp increase from 32% in 2003.
- **Indian IT companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and Wipro depend heavily on the H-1B visa** to send Indian professionals to the U.S. to work on client projects.
- **American technology companies including Google and Microsoft also rely on H-1B visas** to attract highly skilled global talent.

Provisions of the new policy

- The policy **imposes a very high fee of \$1,000,000 per visa**, making it prohibitively expensive for companies to sponsor foreign workers.
- It **limits the number of H-1B applications and introduces stricter criteria**, creating a highly competitive environment for visa allocation.
- The **policy reflects a preference for domestic graduates and discourages reliance on foreign workers**.

Impact on Indian IT firms

- The **high fee makes it economically unviable for Indian IT firms** to place employees in the U.S. on H-1B visas.
- **Companies may be forced to raise prices for their services** or shift delivery models to offshore locations to remain competitive.
- This could **undermine their competitiveness vis-à-vis U.S. rivals** and potentially lead to job losses in India as well.

Impact on U.S. Big Tech

- American technology companies will **face higher costs for hiring foreign workers** under the new fee structure.
- Large companies such as Google and Microsoft **may be able to absorb the higher costs, but smaller firms and start-ups could be priced out** of the market for skilled workers.
- This may **reduce innovation and concentrate talent** within a few large companies, weakening the overall technology ecosystem.

Wider implications

- The policy **may lead to the migration of technology functions** overseas to countries where costs are lower.
- **U.S.A risks losing its global edge in technological research and development** as fewer foreign experts participate in its innovation ecosystem.
- The policy could also **strain U.S.-India ties** since Indian students contribute over \$40 billion annually to the U.S. economy through education and related expenses.

Policy criticisms

- The measure is **criticized as a blunt instrument that prioritizes protectionism over innovation.**
- It could **reduce the attractiveness of U.S. higher education and job markets** for international talent.
- At a time of growing global competition, particularly from China, the policy risks transferring competitive advantages to rival nations.

Way Forward

1. Bilateral Engagement & Negotiation – India should diplomatically engage with the U.S.A to highlight the mutual benefits of skilled workforce mobility, emphasizing how Indian IT professionals contribute to American innovation and competitiveness.

2. Diversification of Markets & Delivery Models – Indian IT firms must reduce over-dependence on the U.S.A. market by expanding operations in Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa, while investing in offshore delivery and remote service models.

3. Strengthening Domestic Ecosystem – India should invest in R&D, upskilling, and innovation to build strong local technology hubs, thereby reducing vulnerability to external visa and immigration policy shocks.

Question: The recent hike in H-1B visa fees by the U.S. administration poses a significant challenge to India's IT sector and American Big Tech companies. Discuss its implications on India-U.S. economic relations and global innovation ecosystems.

BharatGen: India's AI Manhattan project

Source: The post BharatGen: India's AI Manhattan project has been created, based on the article "**BharatGen: India's AI Manhattan project**" published in "**Business Standard**" on **24th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper -3- Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

Context: The Indian government has announced BharatGen at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay as India's sovereign AI initiative, backed by more than ₹20,000 crore in funding.

Vision of BharatGen

- BharatGen aims to be India's AI Manhattan Project by creating a sovereign AI ecosystem built on domestic innovation and public infrastructure.
- It seeks to develop a stack of AI services, similar to how Aadhaar and UPI revolutionized identity and payments in India.
- The initiative will focus on open APIs, developer toolkits, and open-source frameworks to democratize access to AI and build public digital infrastructure.

Key objectives

- To establish sovereign AI compute and indigenous methods for pushing data and models to the edge.
- To ensure diffusion of AI benefits across villages, small towns, and underrepresented communities.

- To empower farmers, teachers, health workers, and other grassroots stakeholders as active participants and co-creators in the AI ecosystem.

Features

- BharatGen emphasizes the localization of AI, including the use of dialects and regional languages, to ensure inclusivity.
- It envisions affordable hardware, such as low-cost AI-ready devices, enabling mass adoption in rural areas.
- It focuses on “edge AI,” where intelligence resides closer to users, such as Direct-to-Mobile broadcasting or voice-enabled devices for farmers.

Challenges and risks

- Without domestic hardware design and affordable AI-ready devices, diffusion of AI benefits may stall.
- Unchecked adoption of Western AI models risks amplifying biases against India’s diverse population and spreading misinformation.
- Sovereign AI must address both technological gaps and regulatory guardrails to protect vulnerable communities.

Implications for India

- BharatGen can become the AI equivalent of Aadhaar or UPI, a public good that the world adopts and emulates.
- The initiative could make AI usable, accessible, and relevant to a billion people, positioning India as a leader in participatory AI.
- By focusing on local innovation and public infrastructure, India can provide a counterweight to Western AI monopolies and Silicon Valley models.

Question: Discuss how BharatGen, envisioned as India’s AI Manhattan Project, seeks to democratize artificial intelligence and ensure technological sovereignty. What challenges does it face in achieving inclusive diffusion of AI benefits?

Lessons from India’s vaccination drive

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Introduction

India’s vaccination drive shows how scale, focus, and technology can save lives. Services reached children and pregnant women at speed and cost-efficiency. Immunity gaps during COVID-19 exposed weak spots. Catch-up rounds, digital tracking, and stronger cold chains are closing those gaps. Clear goals now guide action toward full, durable coverage.

Gains from India’s vaccination drive

1. **Scale and outcomes:** The Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) vaccinates about 2.6 crore infants and 2.9 crore pregnant women each year. Under-5 mortality fell from 45 to 31 per 1,000 live births between 2014 and 2021.

2. **Programme breadth and disease control:** UIP provides 11 nationwide vaccines and one vaccine in endemic areas. India remains polio-free since 2011. Maternal and neonatal tetanus was eliminated in 2015. Yaws was eliminated in 2016.

3. **Measles-Rubella push:** From 2017 to 2019, 34.8 crore children (9 months to 15 years) received the MR vaccine. Measles outbreaks in 2022–2024 revealed immunity gaps. IMI 5.0 in 2023 targeted under-five children. The 2025 Zero MR Elimination campaign seeks >95% MR coverage through awareness and rapid uptake.

4. **COVID-19 leadership and recognition:** The COVID-19 programme began on January 16, 2021. By January 2023, more than 220 crore doses were administered, with 97% single-dose and 90% double-dose coverage. Vaccine Maitri supported many countries, reflecting Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. On March 6, 2024, India received the Measles and Rubella Champion Award.

Key initiatives of India's vaccination drive

1. India's major programme:

- **Universal Immunisation Programme (1985):** Free immunisation against 12 diseases for newborns and pregnant women.
- **Mission Indradhanush (2014):** Special drive to vaccinate unvaccinated and partially vaccinated beneficiaries.
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0 (2023):** Catch-up for under-five children and pregnant women left out.

2. **Digital-first delivery and cold-chain capacity:** U-WIN enables anytime-anywhere access, including for migratory families. eVIN and NCCMIS provide real-time stock and equipment visibility. NCCTE (Pune) and NCCVMRC-NIHFWS (New Delhi) train technicians for repair and maintenance of cold-chain equipment.

Lessons from India's vaccination drive

1. **Mission-mode delivery works at scale:** Mission Indradhanush (2014) and IMI phases (from 2017) targeted low-coverage blocks and missed groups, and integration with Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan deepened last-mile reach.

2. **Digital public goods reduce misses and wastage:** U-WIN supports end-to-end registration and longitudinal records; eVIN digitises stocks; NCCMIS tracks cold-chain equipment; SAFE-VAC enables safety reporting.

3. **Domestic capacity builds resilience and solidarity:** Make in India, public-private partnerships, and local R&D ensured supply during COVID-19 and enabled Vaccine Maitri, reflecting Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

4. **Surveillance must guide micro-planning:** Polio-era systems strengthened **vaccine-preventable disease surveillance**, enabling sensitive detection and targeted catch-up, including **IMI 5.0 (2023)** for under-five children.

5. **A One-Health lens strengthens preparedness:** Linking immunisation with joint surveillance of human, animal, and environmental systems supports early risk detection and coordinated response.

Challenges Remain

1. **Coverage inequities and mobility:** State and regional gaps persist due to infrastructure limits and socio-economic barriers. Migrant and urban slum populations are often missed because of mobility and documentation issues.

2. **Hesitancy and awareness:** Cultural beliefs, misinformation, and fear of side effects reduce uptake. Awareness of newer vaccines remains uneven.

3. **Infrastructure, workforce, and wastage:** Cold-chain functionality and timely repairs are uneven in hard-to-reach areas. Workforce shortages strain delivery. Wastage arises from storage lapses, distribution delays, and multi-dose under-use.

Conclusion

Strengthen cold-chain capacity and last-mile facilities in underserved regions. Use micro-plans for low-coverage blocks, migratory routes, and urban slums. Scale U-WIN, eVIN, NCCMIS, and safety reporting for real-time action. Invest in community engagement to counter hesitancy. Integrate immunisation with One-Health surveillance for robust preparedness

Question for practice:

Examine how India's vaccination drive became a model for low- and middle-income countries.

Source: [The Hindu](#)