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For UPSC CSE mains examination



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News Papers editorials

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Decarbonising Transportation Sector

Source: The post “Decarbonising Transportation Sector” has been created, based on the article “**Electrifying freight: Having no truck with carbon emissions**” published in “**Businessline**” on 1st September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Context: India rapidly scaled e-buses with a fully domestic model. Trucks dominate diesel use and emissions but are barely electrified. The article emphasises what should be done: adapt finance, build corridor charging, improve operations, and mobilise private leadership for a viable freight transition.

For detailed information on **Decarbonisation of Transport Sector** [read this article here](#)

Why focus on e-trucks now?

1. **Scale and emissions baseline:** India has ~12 million trucks using 64% of diesel and emitting 40%+ of transport greenhouse gases. Emissions will rise for ~25 years with growth. Fewer than 500 trucks are electric.
2. **Economic centrality:** Freight contributes 16% of GDP. Electrifying trucking affects costs, competitiveness, and air quality.
3. **Proven domestic capability:** At least four e-bus manufacturers also make e-trucks. E-buses already number 11,000 on road, with 25,000+ contracted in under three years—all locally manufactured and domestically structured.

What finance and demand model should be used?

1. **Replicate long-term fixed-revenue contracts.:** These contracts made e-buses bankable and drew patient infrastructure capital. The same template can back e-truck investments.
2. **Homogenise demand where feasible:** E-bus demand was standardised across cities to gain scale. Certain truck classes can be standardised, with needed customisation.
3. **Aggregate corporate demand.:** Work with large corporate freight users rather than transit agencies. Create a coalition of leaders that commits to regular volumes. This makes demand predictable.

For detailed information on **Green Financing Critical to Decarbonizing the Indian Transport Sector** [read this article here](#)

Where and how should charging be built?

1. **Ensure corridor coverage:** Trucks run on shifting, long routes. They need charging stations at least every 150 km. Without this coverage, the transition becomes impossible or limited to a few easy routes.
2. **Fast-track approvals.:** Trucks run on shifting, long routes. They need charging stations at least every 150 km. Without this coverage, the transition becomes impossible or limited to a few easy routes.
3. **Prioritise and align highways.:** Electrify select national highways, ministry-led and time-monitored. Optionally overlay with PM Gati Shakti.

How must operations change for viability?

1. **Improve efficiency:** Diesel trucks run at **70–75% utilisation** and e-trucks cost **over twice** as much. Operations must improve by at least **15%**.
2. **Cut delays across the chain:** Reduce loading times, unloading times, and waiting on roadways. Saving even 15 minutes can change the economics.
3. **Coordinate multiple actors:** Emitters, transport providers, and highway authorities should provide priority access and smoother flows. The aim is to keep trucks moving and earning, like airlines keep aircraft in the air to earn revenue.

Who should lead this shift?

1. **Bus template for leadership:** E-buses scaled with **government incentives** and **committed leadership** (including the then NITI Aayog CEO).
2. **Private-led trucking reality:** Most trucks are privately managed. **Corporate leaders** must commit demand and work with stakeholders.
3. **Prize for success:** Cleaner air, **lower costs**, and a **more competitive economy** are achievable if these steps are executed.

Question for practice:

Examine how lessons from India's electric bus programme can be used to electrify freight trucks, focusing on finance models, corridor charging, operational efficiency, and private-sector leadership.

Restoring Jammu and Kashmir statehood safeguards federalism

Source: The post Restoring Jammu and Kashmir statehood safeguards federalism has been created, based on the article "**The importance of India's federal design**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 1st September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Context: The Supreme Court asked the Centre for a detailed response on restoring Jammu & Kashmir's statehood while hearing *Zahoor Ahmed Bhat v. UT of J&K*. The matter follows the Court's 2023 directions and concerns the present constitutional status and governance of Jammu & Kashmir.

For detailed information on **Supreme Court upholds repeal of J&K's Special Status** [read this article here](#)

What constitutional questions are before the Court?

1. **Petitioners' claims on rights and federalism:** They argue that the failure to restore statehood harms citizens' rights in J&K. They also say this failure violates essential federal features and thus the Constitution's basic structure.
2. **Court's stance on institutional roles:** The Court stated that it does not possess full policy expertise. Some decisions lie with the executive, within constitutional limits and the separation of powers.
3. **Why the Centre's detailed reply matters:** A comprehensive reply is needed to set out the Union's position and timeline. The reply will address the constitutional concerns raised in the petition.

How does the Constitution confer or reshape statehood?

1. **Admission into the Union:** To be admitted into the Union, a territory must be an organised political unit. If admission occurs through acquisition, the process must follow international law. J&K entered India in 1947 through the Instrument of Accession executed by Maharaja Hari Singh under the Indian Independence Act, 1947.

2. **Establishment after acquisition:** When India acquires territory in line with international law, Parliament may establish it as a State. Goa and Sikkim followed this route.

3. **Formation by reorganisation (Article 3):** Parliament may form new States, unite territories, change areas, alter boundaries, or rename States. Such reorganisation expanded India from 14 States in 1956 to 29 before the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019.

What guardrails preserve India's federal balance?

1. **Article 3 powers bounded by federal design:** Parliament's powers are broad, but they operate within federal constraints that protect constitutional balance.

2. **No conversion of a State into a Union Territory:** The Union may reduce a State's area, but it cannot convert a State into a Union Territory. Such a move would run against India's federal features.

3. **Consequence for J&K:** Restoring J&K's statehood follows the constitutional design. The timing may depend on conditions on the ground.

How is India's federal architecture designed, and why does it matter?

1. **Union of States and indivisibility:** Article 1 describes India as a Union of States with no right to secede. "India" denotes a unitary federation, and "Bharat" reflects composite culture and unity in diversity.

2. **Strong Centre with welfare federalism:** The term "Union" protects unity and integrity. The federal character enables equitable resource distribution and supports a welfare state. This federal character is part of the Basic Structure.

3. **Continuous State voice at the Centre:** The Rajya Sabha is permanent under Article 83(1) and is not subject to dissolution. This ensures ongoing State representation at the Union level.

Where do things stand after the 2023 ruling?

1. **Supreme Court directions and elections:** On December 11, 2023, the Court upheld the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. It also directed restoration of statehood and Assembly elections. Elections for the 90-member Assembly were held in October 2024.

2. **Government's stance so far:** There is no indication yet from the Union on restoring statehood.

3. **Critics' concern and constitutional answer:** Critics say restoration would empower the elected government and curtail the Lieutenant Governor's powers. Accepting that view would conflict with India's constitutional design and would erode federal features.

Question for practice:

Examine how the question of restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood highlights constitutional processes of state reorganisation, the limits protecting India's federal balance, and the broader design of India's federal structure.

Indo-China Relation

Source: The post **Indo-China Relation** has been created, based on the article “A reconnection in Tianjin” published in “Indian Express” on 01st 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 bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Tianjin has generated global attention.

Positive Outcomes of the Tianjin Meeting

- **Political Endorsement:** Both leaders welcomed “positive momentum” in ties and progress since their last meeting in Kazan (2024).
- **Recommitment to Dialogue:** They agreed to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border and recognised the efforts of the Special Representatives.
- **Strategic Symbolism:** The idea of a “cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant” was invoked, signalling the need for coexistence.
- **Resumption of Stability:** The meeting eased tensions after the Galwan clash and years of strained ties, offering hope for restoring stability.

Challenges

- **Border Dispute:** The border dispute continues to remain a “work in progress,” with both countries seeking to manage rather than resolve the contentious issue.
- **China's Strategic Posture:** Beijing's adversarial policies since 1962, its shifting alliances during the Cold War and its tactical engagement strategies continue to pose challenges for India.
- **Trade and Strategic Tensions:** India has been impacted by U.S.A. tariffs and remains caught in the larger U.S.A–China trade rivalry, while China remains wary of India's participation in the Quad and its growing involvement in the Indo-Pacific strategies.
- **Trust Deficit:** The relationship has witnessed long periods of breakdown in dialogue, such as the freeze following the 2008 nuclear deal after a phase of rapprochement between 1988 and 2005, which shows the fragility of engagement.

Geopolitical Context

- **Contrapolar World:** Rising powers like India and China face complex contradictions in navigating USA–China rivalry.
- **India's Strategic Balancing:** India needs to reaffirm ties with Japan, USA, Russia, and others. Also, India should avoid being pulled into exclusive blocs that may antagonise Beijing unnecessarily.

Way Forward

- **Sustain Border Dialogue:** Both sides should continue talks through Special Representatives to gradually reduce tensions.
- **Promote Economic Engagement:** Expanding trade and investment can create interdependence and reduce hostility.
- **Leverage Multilateral Forums:** Platforms like SCO, BRICS, and G20 can be used to build trust and manage competition.
- **Calibrated Strategic Approach:** India should engage China where possible while simultaneously strengthening ties with other partners like the US, Japan, and ASEAN to maintain balance.
- **Confidence-Building Measures:** Enhanced people-to-people exchanges, military hotlines, and cultural diplomacy can reduce mistrust.

Question: India-China meeting makes progress, but border issues remain a challenge. Comment.

Tariffs as a Catalyst for Structural Reforms in India

Source: The post **Tariffs as a Catalyst for Structural Reforms in India** has been created, based on the article **"Tariffs must spark reforms"** published in **"Economic times"** on **01st 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 imposition of tariffs by the USA on Indian goods, particularly a 25% punitive tariff, has exposed India's vulnerability to external trade shocks. Such disruptions highlight the urgent need for India to pursue deep structural reforms.

Challenges Posed by Tariffs

1. A 50% tariff shock could shave off 0.4 percentage points of GDP growth, slowing India's trajectory by 6.5%.
2. Exporters of textiles, leather, chemicals, and engineering goods are particularly vulnerable.
3. Overdependence on external markets risks exposing India to sudden economic shocks.

Reforms Required

1. Trade and Regulatory Reforms

- Regulations across states and the Centre should be harmonised to create a unified market.
- Outdated laws need to be phased out, and minor compliance must be reduced to ease the burden on businesses.
- Self-certification for low-risk industries should be promoted in order to improve the ease of doing business.

2. Labour and Industrial Policy

- Labour laws should be made more flexible to boost competitiveness in industries.
- Workers must be safeguarded through responsible social security systems.
- MSMEs should be supported with opportunities to scale and with easier access to credit.

3. Boosting Investment and FDI

- FDI should be liberalised while ensuring adequate safeguards for critical industries.
- India should position itself as a global hub for both manufacturing and services.

4. Export Diversification and Trade Strategy

- Exports need to be expanded beyond traditional markets to reduce dependence on the US.
- Trade negotiations with the EU, ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America should be accelerated.

5. Technology and R&D

- Greater investment is required in high-value R&D sectors such as AI, green energy, advanced manufacturing, and biotechnology.
- Sovereign technology funds should be developed to support innovation and reduce external dependence.

6. Inclusive Growth and Human Capital

- Skill development initiatives must be strengthened to create high-quality employment opportunities.
- Female labour force participation should be encouraged, along with return-to-work programmes for women.

7. Sectoral Priorities

- Strategic focus should be placed on sectors such as green hydrogen, semiconductor manufacturing, rare earth minerals, and critical supply chains to build autonomy.
- Tourism and medical sectors should be improved as they hold high potential for earning foreign exchange.

Question: In light of recent global tariff disruptions, discuss how India can use such shocks as a catalyst for structural reforms.

India and Japan Relations

Source: The post **India and Japan Relations** has been created, based on the article “**India–Japan ties need a big leap in Indo-Pacific**” published in “**Hindustan Times**” on **01st 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: India and Japan share converging strategic interests shaped by China’s rise and uncertainties over U.S. commitment. Despite growing cooperation in defence, economy, and infrastructure, their partnership now needs a significant leap to meet emerging regional challenges.

Building Blocks of the Partnership

1. **Strategic Convergence:** Both countries view the Indo-Pacific as central to their security and prosperity.
2. **Institutional Mechanisms:** Frameworks like Quad, Malabar, and trilateral dialogues with Australia, U.S.A., and Africa provide strong foundations.
3. **Growing Economic Engagement:** Japan is a top investor in India, supporting critical sectors such as infrastructure, digital transformation, clean energy, and space.
4. **People-to-People Ties:** Cultural respect and shared democratic values enhance mutual trust.

Key Drivers of Partnership

1. **China Factor:** Shared concerns over China’s assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific push India and Japan closer together.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** Japan’s \$68 billion investment in India, including the \$30 billion trade target, underlines growing economic alignment.
3. **Strategic Defence Cooperation:** Defence collaboration and technology partnerships are gaining momentum.
4. **Shared Vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific:** Both nations seek stability and a balance of power in the region.

Challenges in the Relationship

1. **Asymmetry in Security Postures:** Japan is heavily dependent on the US for security, while India maintains strategic autonomy.
2. **Diverging US-China Calculus:** Japan aligns more closely with US strategic priorities, while India avoids direct alignment.
3. **Unpredictability in US Policy:** Instability in American commitment creates uncertainty for both countries.
4. **Need for Tangible Outcomes:** Existing frameworks have not yet translated into sufficient concrete deliverables.

Way Forward

1. **Deepening Defence Cooperation:** Translate defence declarations into joint initiatives and technology sharing.
2. **Expanding Economic Partnership:** Diversify trade, improve infrastructure connectivity, and enhance digital and energy collaboration.
3. **Regional Engagement:** Work with ASEAN, Australia, and Africa to strengthen an inclusive regional order.
4. **Strategic Coordination:** Balance relations with the US and China while reinforcing a shared Indo-Pacific vision.

Question: India and Japan are key strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific, but their partnership needs a quantum leap. Discuss.

SCO And Its Significance

Source: The post **SCO and its significance** has been created, based on the article “What is SCO and what is its significance?” published in “Financial Express” on 31st August 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the summit meeting of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**, which was attended by China's President Xi Jinping, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Origins and Structure

1. The SCO traces its roots to the **Shanghai Five**, formed in 1996 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan for border security and trust-building.
2. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined, and the grouping became the SCO.
3. The organisation is headed by the **Council of Heads of State**. It is its top decision-making body.
4. It also operates through the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** to coordinate on security and terrorism-related issues.

Areas of Cooperation

1. **Security** – The SCO strengthens **security cooperation** through counter-terrorism drills, intelligence sharing, and joint action against extremism.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** It promotes **economic connectivity** through trade partnerships, infrastructure development, and energy cooperation.
3. **Regional Stability:** It enhances **regional stability** by providing a multilateral dialogue platform despite bilateral disputes among members.
4. **Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges:** It advances **cultural and people-to-people exchanges** through youth, science, and innovation initiatives.

Significance

1. **Strategic Counterbalance:** The SCO serves as a **counterbalance to Western-led institutions** such as NATO, the WTO, and the IMF.
 - a. Russia and China view the SCO as a **platform to project leadership in the Global South** and reduce Western dominance.
 - b. For **Central Asian states**, the SCO helps balance Russia's traditional role in security with China's expanding economic footprint.
2. For **India**, the SCO provides:
 - a. Access to counter-terrorism cooperation through RATS.
 - b. New initiatives such as the SCO Startup Forum and the Sub-Group on Traditional Medicine.
 - c. An opportunity to deepen ties with Central Asia and maintain dialogue with both China and Pakistan.
3. In the **2025 Summit context**, the SCO provides a forum where India, China, and Russia can coordinate responses to US tariffs and sanctions, explore **de-dollarisation**, and expand energy and financial cooperation.

Question: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has emerged as a major regional grouping with growing geopolitical and economic influence. Critically examine its significance for India in the present global context.

The External Shocks and A Way Out for India

Source: The post **How to mitigate external shocks** has been created, based on the article “**How to Respond to External Shocks**” published in “**Business Line**” on 02nd September 2025.

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

Context: In the backdrop of the **United States imposing steep tariffs on Indian exports in 2025**, it has raised concerns about the vulnerability of India's economy particularly MSMEs and labour-intensive sectors to external shocks such as trade protectionism, global slowdowns, and liquidity disruptions.

Challenges posed by external shocks

1. Disruption of trade flows due to tariffs and protectionist measures.
2. Disproportionate impact on MSMEs with low resilience and limited access to credit.
3. Pressure on employment in labour-intensive export industries.
4. Increased uncertainty leading to lower investment and consumption.
5. Risk of inflationary pressures if global commodity markets are disrupted.

Measures to respond effectively

1. **Diversification of trade:** Expanding trade across multiple countries to reduce overdependence on one market.
2. **Credit support for MSMEs:** Providing credit guarantees, interest subsidies, and restructuring of loans to maintain liquidity and prevent closures.
3. **Domestic reforms:** Simplifying regulations, improving land and labour markets, and encouraging infrastructure investment to boost competitiveness.
4. **Counter-cyclical fiscal measures:** Using targeted government spending to stimulate demand during slowdowns.
5. **Monetary policy flexibility:** Ensuring adequate liquidity while avoiding excessive credit misallocation.
6. **Sustained infrastructure investment:** Enhancing long-term productivity, job creation, and resilience against global headwinds.
7. **Promoting R&D and innovation:** Strengthening India's technological capabilities to move up the global value chain.

Question: India's economy is increasingly vulnerable to external shocks such as tariffs and global slowdowns. Discuss the challenges posed by such shocks and suggest measures India can adopt to mitigate their impact.

Insurance cannot deliver universal health care (UHC) alone

Source: The post Insurance cannot deliver universal health care (UHC) alone has been created, based on the article “**The rise and risks of health insurance in India**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 2nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Issues Related to Health

Context: India defined universal health care (UHC) in 1946 as quality care for all, regardless of ability to pay. Despite rapid insurance expansion, India remains far from this goal. The rise of PMJAY and **State Health Insurance Programme (SHIP)** models has triggered concerns about distortions, low use, and neglect of public health services.

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

What is UHC and where is India?

1. Minimal guarantee: Universal health care (UHC) means guaranteed quality care to all, irrespective of ability to pay, as the Bhole Committee stated. Nearly eight decades later, India is still far from this goal, even as many other countries progressed.

2. Insurance surge: In the last decade, State-sponsored health insurance grew rapidly. PMJAY began in 2018 under Ayushman Bharat. Most State schemes mirror PMJAY, typically offering ₹5 lakh per household a year.

3. Scheme scale and design: In 2023–24, PMJAY covered 58.8 crore people with about ₹12,000 crore. SHIPs covered a similar number with at least ₹16,000 crore. Together, ~₹28,000 crore. Coverage is inpatient-only through empanelled public and private hospitals.

4. Fast-rising State spending: SHIP budgets in Gujarat, Kerala, and Maharashtra grew 8% to 25% per year in real terms between 2018–19 and 2023–24.

For detailed information on **Government initiative to improve PMJAY** [read this article here](#)

What are the issues with insurance-led UHC?

1. Profit bias toward private providers: About two-thirds of PMJAY spending goes to private, mainly profit-oriented hospitals. Study in 6 major states found little change in hospitalisation rates but higher use of private hospitals. Weak regulation makes profit seeking especially problematic.

2. Hospital-centric tilt and weak primary care: PMJAY and State Health Insurance Programmes (SHIPs) cover in-patient care only. This pulls attention and funds away from primary and outpatient services that prevent illness and reduce costs. Inducting all citizens aged 70 and above risks expensive tertiary care absorbing a growing share of spending while basics lag.

3. Low effective utilisation: Combined coverage may reach about 80% of the population. Yet only 35% of insured inpatients in 2022–23 could use their cover. Many lack information or face hurdles. There is no strong evidence of large reductions in out-of-pocket spending.

4. Discrimination between insured and uninsured: Private hospitals prefer uninsured patients because commercial charges exceed reimbursements and may discourage insured use. Public hospitals prefer insured patients for reimbursements. This creates discriminatory treatment and pressure to enrol on the spot.

5. Payment delays and provider exits: Providers complain of low rates and long delays. Pending PMJAY dues reached ₹12,161 crore, exceeding the annual budget. Services were suspended in places and some hospitals withdrew. Since inception, 609 hospitals have opted out.

6. Fraud, abuse, and opacity: The NHA recommended action against 3,200 hospitals for fraudulent activities. Irregularities include denial of care, extra charges, and unnecessary procedures. Safeguards exist, but audit reports are not traceable. Transparency is weak.

What is required for Universal Health Care?

1. Insurance is not UHC: Insurance offers some relief when public facilities are overcrowded or substandard. Yet it is a very poor way to arrange care and cannot substitute for expanding and improving public provision. No country has achieved UHC on this foundation.

2. Social insurance, properly defined: Some countries use social health insurance. PMJAY and SHIPs lack key features: universal coverage and a strong focus on non-profit providers.

3. Invest in public health: India's profit-driven system reflects decades of under-investment. Public health spending was 1.3% of GDP in 2022 versus a world average of 6.1%. UHC needs serious investment and public-sector transformation.

4. Uneven progress: Some States show encouraging results. Immense gaps persist. Health insurance remains a pain killer for a system that needs real healing.

Question for practice:

Examine whether insurance-led schemes like PMJAY and State Health Insurance Programmes (SHIPs) can achieve Universal Health Care in India.

Urban Noise Harms Health Rights And Ecosystems

Source: The post Urban noise harms health rights and ecosystems has been created, based on the article "Noise pollution is rising but policy is falling silent" published in "The Hindu" on 2nd September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environmental pollution

Context: Urban noise across Indian cities now routinely breaches limits, including near schools and hospitals. The 2011 monitoring network has become a passive archive, while enforcement stalls. Fresh evidence on rights, health, and ecology, and stark global contrasts, have pushed the neglected crisis back into view.

For detailed information on **Noise Pollution: Causes, Effects and Remedies** [read this article here](#)

Why has urban noise become a public health crisis?

- 1. Chronic exceedances in sensitive zones:** Levels near schools, hospitals, and homes breach permissible limits, eroding everyday peace and the constitutional promise of dignity.
- 2. Infrastructure and logistics pressures:** Late-night drilling, crane operations, and traffic intensify noise despite restrictions and expansion-first choices.
- 3. Invisible harms and civic fatigue:** Noise leaves no residue yet frays minds and sleep cycles, especially for children and the elderly, while normalisation dulls outrage.

Why is monitoring failing to drive action?

- 1. NANMN's drift from reform tool: National Ambient Noise Monitoring Network (NANMN)** launched by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2011 for real-time use, it now functions as a passive repository with scattered dashboards.
- 2. Improper sensor placement:** Many sensors sit 25–30 feet high, violating CPCB's 2015 guidelines and skewing readings.
- 3. Opacity and inertia:** RTIs go unanswered and Boards work in silos; in Uttar Pradesh, Q1 2025 data is not public; unlike Europe, where €100 billion annual costs spur redesigns of speed zones and zoning frameworks.

Are legal and constitutional safeguards working?

- 1. Rights and duties are clear: Article 21** protects life with dignity, including mental and environmental well-being; **Article 48A** mandates proactive environmental protection.

2. Rules exist but enforcement is symbolic: The **Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000** provide a robust framework, yet implementation remains sporadic.

3. Courts have warned: WHO prescribes **50 dB(A) day and 40 dB(A) night in silent zones**, but Delhi and Bengaluru often record 65–70 dB(A) near sensitive sites; in 2024 the Supreme Court reaffirmed that excessive noise can infringe Article 21, referencing **Noise Pollution (V), In Re (2005)**.

What are the ecological consequences?

1. Immediate effects on common mynas: A 2025 University of Auckland study found that urban noise and artificial light, after just one night, disrupted sleep and song in common mynas. The birds sang less and their songs were less complex. This directly weakens their social signalling.

2. Signals of wider ecological stress: Such impaired signalling shows that ecological communication systems in cities are being disturbed. When biodiversity “loses its voice,” it reflects a deeper erosion of urban environmental ethics.

What must change now?

1. Decentralise monitoring and close the enforcement loop: Give local bodies real-time NANMN access and the duty to act. Tie data to penalties, zoning compliance, and construction curbs; otherwise, monitoring remains performative.

2. Make awareness continuous, not episodic: Move beyond one-day drives like “No Honking Day.” Build sustained behaviour change through schools, driver training, and community spaces to cultivate sonic empathy.

3. Plan and regulate for acoustic resilience: Design cities for sonic civility, not just speed and expansion. Create a national acoustic policy akin to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, with clear limits, regular audits, and empowered grievance redress.

4. Create inter-agency synergy for delivery: Coordinate municipal bodies, traffic police, and pollution control boards. Without this, enforcement stays sporadic and symbolic.

5. Adopt a rights-based lens to quiet: Enable silence through design, governance, and democratic will. Without this shift, smart cities remain unliveable at the level of sound.

Question for practice:

Examine why urban noise pollution in India persists despite the NANMN and the Noise Pollution Rules, 2000.

Indian Semiconductor Industry

Source: The post **Indian Semiconductor Industry** has been created, based on the article “**Shaping the future, chip by chip**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **03rd September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: Semiconductors have become the backbone of the modern digital and industrial economy, powering everything from smartphones and cars to satellites and defence systems. Recognising the strategic importance of this sector, India is making a concerted effort to become a major player in the global semiconductor value chain.

Importance of Semiconductors

1. Semiconductors are indispensable to digital progress as they form the foundation for computing, data processing, artificial intelligence, and telecommunications.
2. The pandemic highlighted the fragility of global supply chains, where a shortage of chips severely disrupted industries such as automobiles, consumer electronics, and networking.
3. Without chips, there can be no secure communications, modern defense systems, or advanced healthcare technologies.

Opportunities for India

1. **Government Initiatives:** The Government of India has launched the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) along with schemes worth ₹76,000 crore to incentivise fabrication, assembly, and design.
2. **FDI & Global Partnerships:** Leading global companies such as Micron, AMD, and Applied Materials have committed significant investments, which shows growing trust in India's semiconductor ecosystem.
3. **Talent pool:** India already contributes around 20 per cent of the global chip design workforce, and with over 60,000 engineers and 350 academic institutions engaged, the country has a strong base of skilled talent.
4. **Digital Infrastructure:** India's large domestic digital economy, supported by initiatives such as Digital India, UPI, Aadhaar, and 5G expansion, creates a robust internal market for semiconductor demand.
5. **Strategic Advantage:** Strategic global collaborations with the US, Japan, EU, and Singapore are helping India integrate into the global supply chain while also building resilience against disruptions.

Challenges

1. **High Capital Intensity:** Semiconductor manufacturing is extremely capital-intensive, requiring investments of billions of dollars and long gestation periods before profitability.
2. **Skilled Manpower Shortage:** Despite having a strong design workforce, India faces the risk of a talent shortage, with global estimates suggesting a deficit of over 1.2 million semiconductor professionals in the coming decade.
3. **Geopolitical Risks:** Geopolitical uncertainties, particularly the concentration of chip production in East Asia, pose risks for India's ambitions to build a secure and reliable supply chain.
4. **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Even minor disruptions in the semiconductor supply chain can cause ripple effects across industries worldwide, and India must prepare for such vulnerabilities.

Way Forward

1. India should fast-track the construction and commissioning of approved fabrication plants to ensure early operational capacity.
2. Stronger collaboration between academia and industry must be promoted to create a continuous pipeline of skilled engineers and researchers.
3. The government needs to provide long-term policy stability and consistent incentives to attract global investments in this high-risk sector.
4. India should also focus on developing its R&D capabilities and intellectual property in semiconductor design and manufacturing to move from being a participant to a leader in innovation.

Question: Discuss India's opportunities and challenges in becoming a global semiconductor hub.

India's Trade Resilience Amid US Tariff Pressures

Source: The post **India's Trade Resilience Amid US Tariff Pressures** has been created, based on the article "Keeping Growth out of the US tariff Shadow" published in "Hindustan times" on 03rd September 2025.

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

Context: In recent times, the imposition of U.S.A. tariffs on Indian exports such as steel, aluminium, textiles, and pharmaceuticals threatens to slow growth and weaken job creation. At the same time, the U.S.A. continues to benefit from services, education, and royalties, making the trade relationship both asymmetric and sensitive.

Impact of US Tariffs on India

1. **GDP growth under strain:** U.S.A tariffs could shave off 20–50 basis points from India's annual GDP growth, weakening momentum at a time of slowing global demand.
2. **Pressure on labour-intensive sectors:** Industries such as textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, and auto components, which employ millions, are the worst hit by tariff shocks.
3. **Investor sentiment affected:** Rising U.S.A protectionism creates uncertainty in markets, as investors are highly sensitive to political signals from Washington.

Challenges for India's Trade Strategy

1. **Export basket vulnerability:** India's exports are still concentrated in low-value, labour-intensive sectors, making them highly susceptible to tariff actions.
2. **Slow diversification:** Without fast-track trade deals with partners like the EU, UK, and ASEAN, India remains dependent on a narrow set of export destinations.
3. **Costlier imports:** Tariffs on raw materials and intermediate goods drive up input costs for Indian manufacturing, reducing competitiveness.

Opportunities for Strategic Response

1. **Negotiating from confidence:** India must leverage its growing market and services strength to secure better trade terms rather than reacting defensively.
2. **Moving up the value chain:** Like South Korea and Taiwan, India can build credibility by specialising in high-value sectors and steadily upgrading its role in the global chain.
3. **Supportive government measures:** Steps like GST rationalisation, corporate tax cuts, and liquidity for MSMEs can provide a buffer, but more targeted interventions are required.
4. **Diversifying global role:** Focusing on chemicals, services, electronics, and logistics can reduce dependence on tariff-sensitive industries.

Way Forward

1. **Calibrated trade policy:** India must avoid knee-jerk protectionism and instead deepen integration into global supply chains through disciplined policies.
2. **Boosting competitiveness:** Long-term resilience requires investment in infrastructure, logistics, and technology to reduce costs and attract global capital.
3. **Turning challenge into opportunity:** With pragmatic reforms, India can transform tariff shocks into a springboard for sustainable economic growth.

Question: Analyse the impact of US tariffs on India's trade prospects and suggest measures for resilience.

Jan Vishwas Bill 2025

Source: The post **Jan Vishwas Bill 2025** has been created, based on the article "**Jan Vishwas Bill: Towards trust-based governance**" published in "**Hindustan times**" on **03rd September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper-2- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Context: India's regulatory framework has long been criticised for over-criminalisation, where even minor compliance failures could lead to imprisonment and criminal records. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, seeks to address this challenge by shifting from a punitive enforcement culture to a trust-based, correction-first approach aimed at improving ease of doing business and governance.

Need for the Bill

1. **Colonial legacy of distrust:** Many laws criminalised even minor lapses, creating an environment of fear and rent-seeking.
2. **Burden on judiciary:** With over 50 million pending cases, minor infractions add to judicial delays.
3. **Business environment:** MSMEs in particular suffered as small procedural mistakes led to disproportionate penalties.

Key Provisions of the Bill

1. **Decriminalisation of minor offences:** 288 provisions shifted from criminal penalties to civil penalties across 16 central Acts.
2. **Graduated penalty system:** Introduction of “improvement notices” for first-time offences, giving violators a chance to comply before facing fines.
3. **Adjudication by officers:** Designated officials will handle violations through administrative processes rather than dragging cases to courts.
4. **Focus on deliberate fraud:** Serious offences like fraudulent deliveries or deliberate deception retain imprisonment, ensuring accountability.

Significance of the Bill

- **Promotes trust-based governance:** It recognises the difference between inadvertent errors and wilful fraud.
- **Encourages entrepreneurship:** It reduces fear of criminalisation, especially for MSMEs, and boosts ease of doing business.
- **Predictable compliance environment:** Graduated penalties create certainty and fairness in enforcement.
- **Reduces judicial burden:** By shifting minor violations outside the courts, the judiciary can focus on more serious cases.

Way Forward

- **Effective implementation:** Administrative officers must act fairly to prevent corruption or misuse.
- **Awareness among businesses:** MSMEs need clarity on the new system to avoid compliance gaps.
- **Balancing deterrence and trust:** While decriminalisation is welcome, strong enforcement is still required for deliberate fraud.

Question: Discuss how the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2025, strengthens India’s move towards trust-based governance and ease of doing business.

Gender Imbalance in Supreme Court Appointments in India

Source: The post Gender imbalance persists in Supreme Court appointments in India has been created, based on the article “**India needs more women judges in the Supreme Court**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 3rd September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Judiciary

Context: On **August 9, 2025**, two Supreme Court vacancies arose after Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia retired. The chance to correct **gender imbalance** was missed. **Justice B.V. Nagarathna** remained the only woman among **34 judges**. Her dissent on Justice Vipul Pancholi’s elevation, citing **seniority** and **regional representation**, was not considered. **Justice Vipul Pancholi** and **Justice Alok Aradhe** were sworn in on **August 29, 2025**.

For detailed information on **Low representation of women in India’s higher judiciary** [read this article here](#)

Why has women under-representation persisted?

1. Sparse history and rare peaks: Since 1950, only **11 women** have served, **3.8% of 287 judges**. The women and tenures are: **Fathima Beevi (1989–1992)**, **Sujata V. Manohar (1994–1999)**, **Ruma Pal (2000–2006)**, **Gyan Sudha Mishra (2010–2014)**, **Ranjana Prakash Desai (2011–2014)**, **R. Banumathi (2014–2020)**, **Indu Malhotra (2018–2021)**, **Indira Banerjee (2018–2022)**, **Hima Kohli (2021–2024)**, **Bela M. Trivedi (2021–2025)**, **B.V. Nagarathna (2021–2027)**. On **August 31, 2021**, three women were appointed together; with Justice Indira Banerjee already on the Bench, women briefly crossed **10%**.

2. Missing social diversity: No woman from the **Scheduled Castes** or **Scheduled Tribes** has served. **Justice Fathima Beevi** is the only woman from a **minority faith**.

3. Bar-to-Bench and pipeline gaps: Since 1950, **nine men** have been directly elevated from the **Bar**. Only **one woman**, **Justice Indu Malhotra**, received such elevation. The Bar route has not worked for women in India.

4. Late appointments and curtailed influence: Women are often appointed late, so tenures are short and seniority is limited. Only **five women** have been in the **Collegium**, and only **three** participated in Supreme Court appointments. **Justice Fathima Beevi** and **Justice Indu Malhotra** served **under three years**, a rarity shared by **only five male judges**. **Justice Nagarathna** is slated to be **CJI for 36 days**, from **September 24, 2027 to October 29, 2027**.

For detailed information on **Women in India's justice system** [read this article here](#)

How does the appointment process work and what are the issues with it?

1. Formal route under the Memorandum of Procedure: The CJI consults a Collegium of the four seniormost judges. After the CJI's final recommendation, the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs places it before the Prime Minister, who advises the President.

2. Opaque criteria and inconsistent disclosure: Selection criteria are not public. In 2017, the Collegium led by CJI Dipak Misra disclosed some reasons. Later practice was inconsistent. Under CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, reasons were more detailed. Caste, religion, and region were sometimes considered. Gender is not taken into consideration at all.

3. Secrecy over who is considered: There is no transparency about candidates or timing. Higher judiciary appointments are not made **publicly**. This limits scrutiny and weakens accountability.

4. Seniority claims used selectively: Former CJIs cited the **non-availability** of senior women. The current round **ignored seniority** while overlooking **senior women** in High Courts. No woman has been **directly elevated** from the Bar since **2018**.

What must change, and why does it matter?

1. Institutionalise gender in selection: Adopt a **written policy** mandating diversity across **gender, caste, religion, and region**. Make gender representation a **criterion** for Supreme Court and High Court appointments. Candidates should show **outstanding ability, sound judgment**, strong records, and **sensitivity** to varied social contexts.

2. Open the process to public view: Make pending appointments **public**. Disclose **who** is being considered and **why**. Clear reasons will align decisions with **merit** and **diversity** goals.

3. Align practice with equality rulings: The Court has promoted gender equality and directed Bar associations to reserve **30% of elected seats and office-bearer posts** for women. Yet there is **no internal mandate** in constitutional courts. This gap should end.

4. Representation strengthens justice and trust: Women judges bring **experience-shaped perspectives**. Their presence improves **reasoning, outcomes, and public trust**. A diverse Bench makes the Court **more representative** of the citizens it serves.

Question for practice:

Examine why women remain under-represented in the Supreme Court of India and how the current appointment process contributes to this.

Recognising Sickle Cell Disability Must Translate Into Real Protections

Source: The post Recognising sickle cell disability must translate into real protections has been created, based on the article “Sickle cell: The battle for disability justice” published in “The Hindu ” on 3rd September 2025.

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

Context: In March 2024, India revised RPWD guidelines to assess disability for sickle cell disease and related haemoglobinopathies. Recognition raised hopes of reservations and services. Exclusion from the employment quota triggered criticism.

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

What do the March 2024 RPWD guidelines specify for assessing SCD and related disorders?

- 1. Scope of assessment:** The guidelines set norms to assess those with two sickle genes, or SCD with beta thalassaemia or Hb D. They frame how disability is measured in these conditions.
- 2. Expected benefits:** Recognition was expected to unlock access to land, housing, poverty schemes, education, work, and healthcare.
- 3. The quota gap:** The Act’s 4% job quota covers vision, hearing, locomotor, and intellectual disabilities. SCD and other blood disorders are excluded.

How does the RPWD Act define rights and eligibility?

- 1. Rights-based promise:** The Act aligns with the UN Convention. It promises dignity, equality, and non-discrimination, and broadens legal recognition.
- 2. Benchmark threshold and entitlements:** “Benchmark” means 40% or more impairment under Section 2(r). It enables free school education, reservations in higher education, development assistance, and government employment.
- 3. Subjective measurement:** The 40% cut-off excludes many. Percentages vary across hospitals and boards, showing subjectivity in impairment scoring.

What is the lived impact of SCD?

- 1. Debilitating yet often invisible:** SCD causes recurrent pain, fatigue, anaemia, organ damage, and frequent hospitalisations from early childhood. The condition may not look disabling, but it is progressive and severely limiting.
- 2. Education and livelihoods:** Crises from childhood cause hospital stays and long recoveries. Students miss classes, fall behind, and schooling becomes irregular. In working years, unpredictable pain and fatigue interrupt shifts and undermine reliability. Jobs are lost, and livelihood options shrink. Long-term prospects steadily worsen.
- 3. Stigma and a narrow lens:** Stigma and discrimination intensify barriers, especially for Adivasi and Dalit communities. A narrow, biomedical focus undervalues chronic, fluctuating, and invisible disabilities, limiting access to full protections. **Life expectancy also falls.**

How does certification place the burden on patients?

- 1. Certification as prerequisite to benefits:** To access enhanced pensions in Odisha and Himachal Pradesh and tax relief under Section 80U, people must first obtain a disability certificate issued under Section 58. Making certification the entry pass shifts the burden onto patients.
- 2. Biomedical hurdles:** Certification by a medical authority, including the chief medical officer, needs confirmatory tests from government or standard labs.
- 3. Scoring blind spots:** Point-based grading weighs pain, transfusion needs, and neurological complications, but misses socioeconomic and emotional tolls.
- 4. Access barriers:** Adivasi and Dalit patients in remote areas struggle to arrange tests or reach district hospitals. Young people miss school or lose jobs yet fail to attain a higher score.

What must change now, and why?

- 1. Include SCD in reservations:** Extend job reservations to SCD and related blood disorders to reflect their lifelong disability.
- 2. Fix certification:** Redesign certification to account for fluctuating and invisible disabilities through a rights-based, not purely biomedical, lens.
- 3. Make recognition real:** Rights must translate into protections. Otherwise, recognition risks exclusion disguised as inclusion.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the RPWD Act's 40% benchmark and certification process affect access to benefits for people with sickle cell disease.

National Sports Governance Act, 2025

Source: The post **National Sports Governance Act, 2025** has been created, based on the article "**National Sports Governance Act will ensure sports bodies do not function as fiefdoms**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 04th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 2- Governance

Context: Sports governance in India has historically suffered from **politicisation, lack of transparency, and weak accountability**. The administration of sports federations was earlier governed by the **National Sports Development Code of India**, a stop-gap arrangement riddled with loopholes. The enactment of the **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**, represents a watershed moment, providing a statutory framework to regulate and democratise sports bodies.

Issues in the pre-Act regime

- Fiefdoms of political satraps:** In the pre-Act regime, sports federations were treated as fiefdoms of political satraps, dominated largely by non-sportspersons, electoral malpractices and overstaying of tenure.
- Judicial intervention:** Judicial intervention became frequent, with over 350 cases pending in various courts, leading to the appointment of Committees of Administrators (e.g., AIFF, WFI).

- **International suspensions:** Several federations faced international suspensions — FIFA in 2022, WFI in 2023, and the Amateur Kabaddi Federation in 2024 — which disrupted India's participation in global events.
- **Victimisation of athletes:** Athletes became the ultimate victims, as their careers were jeopardised due to litigation, administrative paralysis, and lack of institutional support.

Key provisions of the Act

1. **National Sports Board:** The Act establishes a National Sports Board to serve as the central recognition authority for federations, thereby ending legitimacy battles between rival associations.
2. **National Olympic & Paralympic Committees:** It also sets up the National Olympic Committee and the National Paralympic Committee, which must adopt international best practices.
3. **Governance reforms:** Governance reforms mandate that executive committees cannot exceed 15 members, and they must include at least two eminent sportspersons and four women. The Act also prescribes strict age and tenure limits to prevent monopolisation of positions.
4. **Sports Tribunal:** A National Sports Tribunal has been created to provide specialist adjudication, with appeals permitted only to the Supreme Court, which will reduce litigation backlog.
5. **Electoral oversight:** Electoral oversight will be ensured through a national panel of electoral officers as well as affiliate-level panels.
6. **Disqualification clause:** Non-compliance with these provisions can lead to disqualification, creating a strong deterrent.

Significance of the Act

1. **Democratisation:** Ends the monopoly of entrenched elites; greater role for sportspersons.
2. **Transparency & accountability:** Codified norms on elections, tenure, and representation.
3. **Legal certainty:** Replaces fragmented codes and court-driven governance with statutory authority.
4. **Athlete-centric governance:** Puts the careers and aspirations of sportspersons at the centre.
5. **Global credibility:** Prevents suspensions by international federations; aligns with IOC/FIFA standards.

Challenges and concerns

1. **Centre's control vs autonomy:** Risk of over-centralisation affecting independence of federations.
2. **Implementation gap:** Effective monitoring of hundreds of state/district bodies may strain capacity.
3. **Resistance from entrenched interests:** Political elites may find ways to circumvent provisions.

Question: Critically examine the significance of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, in reforming sports administration in India.

Job creation in India

Source: The post **Job creation in India** has been created, based on the article "**Job creation poses big policy challenge**" published in "**Business Line**" on **04th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Employment in India has long been a structural challenge. While growth was once assumed to generate jobs automatically, recent experience shows persistent unemployment and underemployment. **PLFS data (2017-18 to 2023-24)** indicate improvements in labour force participation, but structural issues remain.

Challenges

1. **Concentration in low-skilled jobs:** Employment in agriculture rose to 280 million in 2023-24, with over 70% of workers in low-productivity sectors. The mismatch between imparted and demanded skills must be addressed by promoting high-value manufacturing and rural industrialisation.
2. **Exam-dependence and rent-seeking:** Nearly one-third of youth are NEET, with half preparing for government jobs. This results in wasted potential. Measures include limiting exam attempts, incentivising entrepreneurship, and ensuring faster MSME resolution.

3. **Gender gap in participation:** Female LFPR is only 30%, far below the 50% needed. Ensuring workplace safety, targeted credit, and social support systems like childcare can help.
4. **Stagnant income of self-employed:** Incomes grew marginally (male: 3.6%, female: -1.3%). Collateral-free loans, reduced compliance, and market linkages are essential.
5. **Labour law rigidity:** Only 24 million non-agricultural workers enjoy full welfare compliance. Reforms should extend social security to gig and informal workers and incentivise States to implement labour codes.

Way Forward

1. Promote **labour-intensive manufacturing** and green jobs.
2. Invest in **vocational and digital skills** aligned with industry needs.
3. Expand **MSME access to credit and technology**.
4. Ensure **female participation** through childcare, flexible work, and safety.
5. Implement **universal social security** for informal and gig workers.

Question: Job creation poses a big policy challenge in India. Discuss the issues involved and suggest measures.

India Debates Reservations And Charts Equitable Future Policy Pathways

Source: The post India debates reservations and charts equitable future policy pathways has been created, based on the article “**Should reservations exceed the 50% cap?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th September 2025

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

Context: Debate sharpened after **Tejashwi Yadav** promised **85%** reservation in Bihar and the **Supreme Court** sought the Union’s view on a ‘**creamy layer**’-like system for **SC/ST**. The article maps law, judgments, distribution issues, and the path ahead.

For detailed information on Issues of reservation in India [read this article here](#)

Why has the reservation debate resurfaced now?

1. Political trigger and judicial move: **85%** sparked questions on legal limits and fairness. The Court’s notice on a ‘**creamy layer**’ for **SC/ST** revived concerns about concentration of benefits and equitable targeting within quotas.

2. Current central reservation matrix: Central quotas are **OBC 27%, SC 15%, ST 7.5%, and EWS 10%**. The total is **59.5%**. **States vary** based on demographics and policy choices; they frame their own percentages.

What do Articles 15–16 and equality principles imply?

1. Formal and substantive equality: A tension exists. **Formal equality** treats reservations as exceptions. **Substantive equality** views them as tools to realise real opportunity for historically disadvantaged groups.

2. Scope for special provisions: Articles 15–16 authorise targeted measures for **socially and educationally backward classes** and **SC/ST**. The design must advance opportunity without undermining the broader equality guarantee.

3. Reasonable limits debate: Courts test “reasonable limits” to balance group claims and community interests. How far quotas may extend remains central to current disputes, especially amid proposals above **50%**.

How have landmark judgments shaped limits and categories?

- 1. Balaji (1962) (the 50% ceiling):** The Court said reservations must be within reasonable limits and **should not exceed 50%**. This reflected a **formal equality** approach and set a durable benchmark.
- 2. N.M. Thomas (1975) (substantive equality lens):** The Bench framed reservation as part of equality of opportunity. It **did not decide** the 50% question, but strengthened the **substantive equality** narrative.
- 3. Indra Sawhney (1992) (OBCs, cap, creamy layer):** A nine-judge Bench upheld **27% OBC** quotas, treated **caste as a class marker**, reaffirmed the **50% cap** absent **exceptional circumstances**, and required **creamy layer** exclusion for **OBCs**.
- 4. Janhit Abhiyan (2022) (validating EWS):** The Court upheld **10% EWS**, allowed **economic criteria**, and read the **50% limit** as for **backward classes**. **EWS** targets a distinct **unreserved** segment.

Where are benefits concentrated, and what is the 'creamy layer' dispute?

- 1. Ambedkar's caution and rising demands:** **B. R. Ambedkar** supported reservations but said they should be **confined to a minority**. Demands now seek exceeding **50%**, backed by calls for a **caste census** to anchor policy.
- 2. Vacancies and representation gaps:** Government replies show **40–50%** of reserved **Central** posts remain **unfilled**. This signals implementation gaps and weakens the promise of meaningful representation.
- 3. Concentration within OBCs:** The **Rohini Commission** estimated that **about 97%** of reserved jobs and seats are taken by **around 25%** of OBC groups. **Nearly 1,000 of ~2,600** OBC communities show **zero representation** at the Central level. This indicates that benefits cluster among a relatively small set of sub-castes.
- 4. SC/ST 'creamy layer' contestation:** Concentration concerns exist for **SC/ST** too, but **no creamy layer** applies. In **Davinder Singh (2024)**, four judges urged policy on exclusion. The **Union Cabinet (Aug 2024)** reaffirmed **non-applicability**.

What could balance equality and inclusion going forward?

- 1. Calibrating levels using data:** **85%** may offend **equality of opportunity**. Yet affirmative action is vital. The **2027 Census** (with backward caste enumeration) should guide **stakeholder** deliberations on suitable levels.
- 2. Targeting benefits better:** Implement **OBC sub-categorisation** per **Rohini** using Census data. For **SC/ST**, consider a **two-tier** design that prioritises the **most marginalised** before extending to relatively better-off sections.
- 3. Managing risks and backlogs:** Opponents fear creamy layer rules could **increase backlogs** and risk **conversion of vacancies** to **unreserved** seats. Reforms must prevent these outcomes while widening access.
- 4. Beyond quotas:** Public sector jobs are limited. Reservations alone cannot meet aspirations. Strong skill development is essential to secure gainful employment for a young workforce.

Question for practice:

Discuss how constitutional provisions, judicial rulings, and distributional concerns shape the current debate on reservations in India.

New Maritime Laws Modernise India Yet Threaten Federal Autonomy

Source: The post New maritime laws modernise India yet threaten federal autonomy has been created, based on the article “**India’s recent maritime reforms need course correction**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructures.

Context: On August 18, the Raj Sabha passed the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, replacing the 1908 Act. It accompanies the Coastal Shipping Act, the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, and the Merchant Shipping Act. Together they seek to modernise maritime regulation and align India with global practices.

For detailed information on **India’s efforts to develop its maritime sector** [read this article here](#)

Why does the package matter?

1. **Modernisation push:** India’s maritime laws are fragmented and outdated. Finance, offshore activity, and global conventions have outpaced existing frameworks. System upgrades are necessary for global competitiveness.
2. **Promised benefits:** The Ports Act is presented as facilitative. It aims to improve ease of doing business, promote sustainable port development, and replace fragmented rules with a coherent, predictable framework.
3. **Process concern:** Passage without deep debate or committee review raises concerns about consensus and scrutiny. This weakens legitimacy for sweeping sectoral reform.

How does the Ports Act reshape Centre–State relations?

1. **Centralised policymaking:** The Maritime State Development Council, chaired by the Union Ports Minister, can direct States to follow central guidelines.
2. **From cooperation to subordination:** Critics see subordination, with States required to align with Sagarmala and PM Gati Shakti.
3. **Reduced State flexibility:** State maritime boards cannot change frameworks without central approval, shrinking fiscal autonomy and policy room.
4. **Responsibilities without power:** Coastal States remain burdened with port management, yet lose discretion over development choices.

Where do regulatory and dispute rules falter?

1. **Vague discretion:** New, discretionary regulatory powers risk uneven application and heavier compliance for smaller operators.
2. **Courts barred:** Clause 17 bars civil courts from hearing port-related disputes and routes parties to internal dispute-resolution committees created by the same authorities they contest. Experts warn that removing impartial, independent judicial review **can deter private investment and erode trust in the regulatory system**, even if other reforms appear business-friendly.

What risks arise under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025?

1. **Useful updates:** The law expands vessel definitions, tightens oversight of training institutes, and aligns liability and insurance with conventions.
2. **Ownership dilution:** Earlier, Indian-flagged vessels had to be fully Indian-owned. Now “partial” Indian ownership is allowed, with thresholds left to notification.
3. **Leasing loophole:** Bareboat Charter-Cum-Demise is recognised. Without strict rules, foreign lessors may retain control despite nominal transfers.
4. **Small operator burden:** All vessels must register, regardless of size or propulsion, adding bureaucracy and compliance strain.

How could the Coastal Shipping Act affect competition?

1. **Cabotage rule and its purpose:** The Act clarifies that domestic coastal trade is reserved for Indian-flagged vessels. This is meant to protect and strengthen national coastal shipping.
2. **Discretion to admit foreign vessels:** The Director General of Shipping gets broad powers to license foreign vessels on open-ended grounds such as “national security” or “alignment with strategic plans.” These vague criteria can enable arbitrary or selective entry, creating uncertainty for domestic competitors.
3. **Compliance load on small operators:** Small players, including those in the fishing sector, face mandatory voyage and cargo reporting. The law gives no clear guidance on how such data will be used or protected, raising compliance burdens and trust concerns for operators with limited resources.
4. **Central planning vs local autonomy:** Opposition MPs caution that the Act, together with the centrally mandated National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan, concentrates control with the Centre. They argue this can sideline local priorities and weaken the autonomy of coastal communities and smaller operators, even as these groups bear day-to-day operational responsibilities.

What course corrections are needed?

1. **Modernise without overreach:** Reform must protect federal balance and fair competition.
2. **Legislate core thresholds:** Ownership and licensing thresholds should be set in law, not left to executive discretion.
3. **Restore independence:** Ensure impartial judicial review and meaningful State participation in planning.
4. **Long-term stakes:** As drafted, benefits may accrue to a few while weakening the federal compact and maritime security.

Question for practice:

Examine whether India’s 2025 maritime laws modernise shipping while protecting federal autonomy, clear ownership rules, impartial dispute resolution, and fair competition.

Convergence-driven corridors will power Atmanirbhar Viksit Bharat

Source: The post Convergence-driven corridors will power Atma Nirbhar Viksit Bharat has been created, based on the article “**Time for innovation corridors**” published in “**Businessline**” on 5th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- growth, development and employment.

Context: The Prime Minister’s Independence Day call renewed the 2047 vision: Atmanirbhar Bharat leading to a Viksit Bharat. He stressed domestic technology and manufacturing in semiconductors, EV batteries, space, digital infrastructure, fighter jets and engines. The trigger is a strategic shift to build integrated innovation systems that can beat trade and tariff headwinds.

What is the core vision and why now?

1. **Vision and trigger:** The announcement goes beyond industrial policy. It seeks an innovation architecture linking research, design, manufacturing, and talent so India shapes, not follows, global rules.
2. **Priority sectors:** Semiconductors, EV batteries, space technology, digital infrastructure, fighter jets and engines require breakthroughs, not incremental steps. They need self-sustaining ecosystems that speed ideas into products.

3. **Architecture for speed:** The aim is mission-driven integration. When labs, factories, and skills sit together, timelines compress and the nation gains strategic autonomy.

4. **Inflection point:** A global race in emerging technologies is intensifying. Convergence can turn addition into multiplication, making 1 + 1 approach infinity in outcomes.

How does convergence accelerate breakthrough innovation?

1. **Interdisciplinary principle:** Pandemic vaccine delivery showed coders, creators, and changemakers can compress years into months. Breakthroughs emerge when disciplines unite around a shared problem.

2. **Modern learning spaces:** At MIT's museum, AI, holography, robotics, and biotech met art, ethics, and storytelling. A Harvard student explained their labs thrive by integrating disciplines.

3. **Historical intersections:** Faraday linked electricity and magnetism, shaping electronics. Galileo fused mathematics with optics and transformed astronomy. Progress often comes from unexpected crossings.

4. **Contemporary megaproject:** The James Webb Space Telescope combines materials science, cryogenics, data processing, and international collaboration. It is not astronomy alone; it is convergence at scale.

Where does India stand and what gaps persist?

1. **India's ingredients:** India has young talent, fast-growing digital infrastructure, scalable manufacturing, and a policy climate more supportive of R&D.

2. **Policy enablers:** Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), the Semiconductor Mission, and PLI schemes aim to bridge research-to-market gaps and catalyse innovation.

3. **Structural silos:** University research is often disconnected from urgent industry needs. Start-ups move fast but lack scale pathways. Large firms execute well yet avoid unproven ideas.

4. **Platform opportunity:** The task is to build platforms where academia, start-ups, corporates, and government close these gaps by design.

What are innovation corridors and how would they work?

1. **Precedent:** Like defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, innovation corridors would focus and accelerate capability-building.

2. **Core features:** They co-locate R&D and manufacturing for rapid prototyping-to-production. They provide shared testing, advanced fabrication, and simulation facilities. They offer regulatory sandboxes and structured talent exchanges.

3. **Global proof points:** Stanford-Silicon Valley shows constant talent-technology exchange. The Cascadia corridor links Seattle and Vancouver on sustainable tech. China's G60 connects nine cities into a high-tech powerhouse.

4. **Inclusive spread:** Such corridors can speed innovation and spread benefits to tier-2 and tier-3 cities, ensuring equitable capacity-building and social impact.

What are the pay-offs and what mindset shifts are needed?

1. **Domestic value chains:** Convergence corridors create value chains rooted in India, turning the nation into a net exporter of components and intellectual property.
2. **Resilience and jobs:** They strengthen trade positions, reduce exposure to external shocks, and generate high-skill jobs at scale with strong multipliers.
3. **Sectoral multipliers:** An EV-battery breakthrough can lift mining, refining, materials science, grid upgrades, and recycling. Advances in semiconductor packaging can ripple into telecom, automotive, defence, and consumer electronics.
4. **Mindset and practice:** Academia should meet industry timelines without losing rigour. Industry must back early-stage research. Policymakers should enable safe, rapid experimentation. Practically, align university research to national missions, expand start-up access to prototyping, build corporate convergence labs, and fund multidisciplinary teams. Institutionalise convergence through innovation corridors to achieve Atmanirbharta and a Viksit Bharat.

Question for practice:

Discuss how convergence-driven innovation corridors can help India achieve Atmanirbhar Bharat and a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Supreme Court seeks guidelines balancing free speech and dignity

Source: The post Supreme Court seeks guidelines balancing free speech and dignity has been created, based on the article “Should commercial speech on digital platforms be regulated?” published in “The Hindu ” on 5th September 2025

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

Context: On **August 25**, the Supreme Court asked the Union government to draft social-media rules, citing **commercialised speech** that may hurt vulnerable groups. Justices **Surya Kant** and **Joymalaya Bagchi** sought consultation with the **National Broadcasters and Digital Association** after a disability group flagged derogatory comedy content.

For detailed information on **Indian Courts Are Managing Free Speech, Not Defending It** [read this article here](#)

Is there a regulatory vacuum requiring new guidelines?

1. **Existing legal tools were already invoked:** FIRs in **Maharashtra** and **Assam** cited the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita** and the **IT Act, 2000** over a YouTube skit, “**India’s Got Latent.**” This formed the basis for the Court’s consideration of the complaint against named comedians.

2. **The IT Act enables takedowns but lacks transparency:** Courts or the executive can order removals. In practice, actions often occur secretly and with weak adherence to natural justice. This opacity, not absence of law, is the core concern raised.

3. **Building a new framework from one episode is an overreaction:** The jokes may be in poor taste, but existing provisions exist. Creating elaborate new rules on the back of a single episode “fixes what is not broken.”

Can “dignity” be a ground to restrict speech?

1. **Article 19(2) does not list dignity as a ground:** Restrictions are exhaustive: security of the state, public order, decency, morality, and others. Treating dignity—an amorphous concept—as an independent ground risks a slippery slope.

2. **Courts may act to do “complete justice.”:** Concerns about participation and dignity of persons with disabilities are legitimate. The Court can consider wider social effects of online speech within its constitutional mandate.

3. **Limits must be lawful and proportionate:** Any restriction needs a duly enacted law and must pass proportionality. In *Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India* (2016), criminal defamation was upheld, recognising dignity to sustain that remedy. Yet elevating dignity alone invites expansive censorship.

Would new rules chill speech deemed unpalatable?

1. **Independent “dignity” tests would deter artists:** When morality or defamation overlaps with dignity, limits may apply. But dignity as a stand-alone basis is not defensible and would chill comedians, satirists, and others.

2. **Uncomfortable speech has constitutional value:** Literature and stand-up often confront society. The Court has protected speech that offends or disturbs; a March order quashed a criminal case against a poem by a politician, reaffirming Article 19(1)(a).

3. **Regulatory overreach risks mass censorship:** Reviving the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill could place independent creators under scrutiny. If “social value” is majoritarian, inconvenient voices may be suppressed.

Does profit-driven speech justify stricter control?

1. **Commercial speech serves public discourse:** The “marketplace of ideas” includes paid expression. In *Sakal Papers* (1962), limits tying newspaper pages to price were struck down as curtailing Article 19(1)(a).

2. **Livelihood does not dilute protection:** A comedian must earn to perform; profit motive alone cannot justify regulation of speech.

3. **Jurisprudence covers commercial speech, but creators’ speech is not merely commercial:** Courts have treated commercial speech as protected. Comedians, journalists, and satirists are not traditionally categorised as commercial speakers.

How should institutions proceed, and what safeguards are vital?

1. **Polyvocality does not erase precedent:** As a court of record, the Supreme Court follows earlier law; even with new facts, the essence of precedent endures.

2. **Court-mandated rule-making raises constitutional hurdles:** Directing the executive to frame regulations confers ordinary and reinforced legitimacy, blurring boundaries and making later challenges harder.

3. **Coordinate Bench conflicts require referral:** When a Bench of equal strength departs from another, discipline demands reference to a larger Bench.

4. **Safeguards must ensure transparency and inclusion:** Build strong review mechanisms and a free-speech ethos in enforcement. Consult all affected stakeholders, not only those favouring restrictions. Address opacity in Section 69A/Blocking Rules processes, including notice to those whose content is removed.

Question for practice:

Examine whether new social media regulations are necessary in India despite existing legal mechanisms.

GST 2.0 simplifies taxes and strengthens economy

Source: The post GST 2.0 simplifies taxes and strengthens economy has been created, based on the article “**GST 2.0 is a landmark in India’s tax journey**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 5th September 2025

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

Context: September 3, 2025, the GST Council unveiled **GST 2.0**. It simplifies slabs, fixes anomalies, and strengthens processes to support a **simpler, fairer, growth-oriented** system aligned with **Viksit Bharat 2047**. The decisions answer long-standing demands for clarity, affordability, and faster dispute resolution.

For detailed information on **Goods and Services Tax (GST) 2.0** [read this article here](#)

What changed in the GST structure?

1. **Two-rate “Simple Tax” with a de-merit slab:** The Council adopted **18% Standard** and **5% Merit** rates, with a **40% de-merit rate** for a select few goods. This transparent design simplifies slabs and advances a simpler, fairer, growth-oriented approach.
2. **Compliance and predictability:** The structure **reduces compliance burdens**, improves predictability for business, and is more citizen-friendly. It signals alignment with **best global practices**.
3. **Phased rollout for stability:** Reforms are phased from **September 22, 2025**. Sequencing **preserves revenue stability** while enabling immediate benefits that **stimulate demand and investment**.

How do households, health, and insurance benefit?

1. **Lower GST on daily-use items:** Soap, shampoo, toothpaste, bicycles, and kitchenware are in **5%**. **UHT milk, paneer, chapati, and paratha** are **exempt**. The Council has reduced GST on packaged foods, noodles, chocolates, and beverages. The cuts lower prices and support higher consumption while easing costs for households across income groups.
2. **Insurance now GST-exempt:** All life and health insurance are **exempt**. This improves affordability for **senior citizens** and **low-income families**, raises insurance penetration, and **strengthens social security**.
3. **Healthcare cost relief:** Exemptions and reductions cover **essential drugs, devices, and treatments** for **cancer, rare diseases, and chronic conditions**. Wider access to modern medicine and diagnostics **eases financial burdens**.

How are agriculture and labour-intensive sectors supported?

1. **Cheaper inputs and machinery:** Tractors and farm machinery attract **5%**. **Fertilisers** and inputs like **sulphuric acid and ammonia** move from **18% to 5%**. The reforms correct earlier inverted duty structures. This change lowers cultivation costs and supports higher farm productivity.
2. **Boost for traditional industries:** Handicrafts, marble, granite, and leather goods face **reduced rates**. This **stimulates demand, secures employment, and enhances competitiveness**.
3. **Livelihoods and growth:** By making traditional sectors more competitive, the reforms **safeguard livelihoods** while **opening new growth avenues**.

Which critical sectors saw anomaly corrections?

1. **Textiles value chain fixed:** Man-made fibre and yarn now attract **5%**, removing a long-standing distortion. This is expected to **lift competitiveness, exports, jobs, and domestic value addition** in textiles and apparel.
2. **Construction costs ease:** Cement shifts from **28% to 18%**. This supports housing and infrastructure

with **multiplier effects**.

3. **Green and services push:** Cuts for renewable energy devices and automotive components accelerate green growth. Acceptance of recommendations, from **rationalising auto parts** to **relief for hospitality and wellness services**, **harmonises markets** and **reduces disputes**.

What institutional and process changes will build trust?

1. **GSTAT by year-end:** The **Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal** will be **operational by year-end**, enabling **faster dispute resolution**, **consistent rulings**, and **greater trust**.

2. **Simpler, risk-based administration:** **Provisional refunds** for inverted duty structures, **risk-based compliance checks**, and **harmonised valuation rules** cut **uncertainty** and **compliance costs**, reinforcing the **ease of doing business**.

3. **Responsive partnership with industry:** Over eight months, **CII** urged two-rate simplification, anomaly correction, rate cuts on essentials, support for labour-intensive sectors, and faster GSTAT. Many are **adopted**. This **people's reform** touches citizens, farmers, workers, businesses, and entrepreneurs. **CII stands ready to support implementation and awareness** so benefits **flow seamlessly**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key decisions of the 56th GST Council meeting and their impact on households, agriculture, labour-intensive sectors, and dispute resolution.

India Recalibrates Strategy amid U.S. Tariffs And Multipolarity Pressures

Source: The post India recalibrates strategy amid U.S. tariffs and multipolarity pressures has been created, based on the article "**Trump's tariff war as opportunity for the Global South**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th September 2025

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

Context: A layered economic, geopolitical, and technological **polycrisis** drives disruptive U.S. actions. India must reassess assumptions, protect interests, and pursue a fairer order through strategic recalibration.

For detailed information on **India's Trade Resilience amid US Tariff Pressures** [read this article here](#)

What drives Mr. Trump's economic warfare?

1. **Populist grievance, not structural reform:** He courts a "silent majority" that feels cheated by globalisation's capital accumulation, cheap labour, environmental colonisation, and trickle-down economics. He responds with **xenophobic, racist, centrifugal politics** instead of redesigning economic paradigms.

2. **Assault on liberal norms and mobility:** Sanctions on **30+ nations** and tariffs on **~70** restrict free movement. Trade blocs, weaker treaties, **aid cuts**, and **immigration curbs** advance a pursuit of sovereign self-interest.

3. **Super-tax logic and coercion:** **Goldman Sachs** estimates **70%** of tariff costs fall on U.S. firms and consumers. Tariffs are used to extort nations and companies and project power.

How is U.S. power being repositioned?

1. **Bolstering economic primacy:** The U.S. forms **26% of global GDP**; China is **17%**; the **G-7** is **20%-22%** combined. Washington subsidises agriculture, pursues unilateral industry-tech-climate policies, demands investment pledges, and shields the dollar, curbing alternatives.

2. **Protectionist hypocrisy with sectoral pain:** The U.S. pressures India to drop farm protections while keeping **350%** tariffs on tobacco, **200%** on dairy, and **120%** on fruits. India's **textiles, jewellery and gems, auto components, and metals** are hit by barriers.

3. **Security overlay on China:** Tariffs include provisions to check China's strategic influence and further U.S. security goals. A **Washington Post** report cites a "supplemental negotiation objectives" memo.

Where does this leave India-U.S. ties?

1. **Eroded convergence assumptions:** Washington renews vows to **Pakistan**, seeks **re-hyphenation**, may **skip the India-hosted Quad Summit**, and inhibits manufacturing and advanced technology collaboration in India.
2. **Compelled tactical concessions:** To avoid a two-front problem, India has made **major concessions to China** without reciprocity. Northern borders stay live fault-lines that require deterrence and careful management.
3. **Bipartisan momentum against China:** Tariff weaponisation is Trumpian, yet reversing deindustrialisation and checking China enjoys **bipartisan** support. Ukraine-linked penalties **continue** despite a U.S.-Russia meeting.

What strategic course should New Delhi adopt now?

1. **Confront coercion with leverage:** The U.S. has not levied tariffs on China despite a **\$295-billion** deficit, partly due to Chinese control over **rare metals and magnets** vital to U.S. defence. India should not repeat compliance that **stopped Iran and Venezuela oil** and **waived 11% cotton duty**.
2. **Recalibrate foreign-policy style:** Personalised diplomacy, **diaspora spectacles**, and acronym politics did not advance interests. Attempts to ingratiate right-wing influencers misread support and diluted **multi-alignment**.
3. **Manage neighbourhood risks:** Policy choices bound **China and Pakistan** into an "**iron-clad alliance**" and isolated India in its neighbourhood. Indian wealth-creators face **punitive tariffs**, and American-Indians face **racism**.

How can India use the polycrisis to shape a fairer order?

1. **Champion multipolarity and a New Economic Deal:** India should advance multipolarity against uni- or bipolarity and push an equitable framework. This follows **neoliberal globalisation's failures**, **weak multilateralism**, **concentrated power and wealth**, **forced tax cuts**, and **sovereign debts** that shrink fiscal space.
2. **Fix structural weaknesses at home:** **Manufacturing** is at a **four-decade low**; **unemployment** is high; **private investment** is stagnant; **research** is abysmal; and **PSUs** are not redeployed strategically. The government must restore trust, ensure equitable growth, and set a bold new vision.
3. **Forge durable coalitions:** Leaders should eschew transactionalism and invest in relationships within and outside government. India should build **bipartisan** consensus domestically and with the **Global South** before the U.S. mid-terms next year.

Question for practice:

Examine how U.S. tariff and sanctions policies under President Trump are shaping India's economy and foreign policy.

How Q1 GDP reflects economic strength

Source: The post **How Q1 GDP reflects economic strength** has been created, based on the article "**Q1 GDP reflects economic strength**" published in "**Business Line**" on **06th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: India's GDP growth in Q1 FY26 was recorded at 7.8%, the highest in recent quarters, reflecting broad-based economic strength. Agriculture, manufacturing, and services all contributed positively despite inflationary pressures and global uncertainties.

Key Highlights of Q1 GDP

1. **Overall Growth:** India's overall GDP recorded **7.8% growth**, which was driven by multiple sectors.
2. **Agriculture:** The **agriculture sector performed well**, sustaining growth for four consecutive quarters.
3. **Manufacturing:** The **manufacturing sector outperformed the last three quarters**, despite facing global tariff uncertainties.
4. **Services:** The **services sector showed broad-based strength**, with finance, IT, and health making significant contributions.
5. **Resilience:** These results indicate **economic resilience**, with sustained recovery despite inflationary pressures and trade-related concerns.

Methodology and Indicators

1. **Nominal vs Real GDP:** The gap between **nominal GDP and real GDP was smaller this quarter**, reflecting a moderation in inflation.
2. **GDP Deflator:** The **GDP deflator fell to around 2–3%**, compared to last year's 10%, which made real GDP growth appear stronger.
3. **Use of Datasets:** GDP estimates were **compiled from multiple datasets**, including the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and household expenditure surveys, in order to capture service sector growth more accurately.

Issues and Challenges

1. **Service Price Representation:** The **current indices may not fully capture service price movements**, which can affect the accuracy of estimates.
2. **Overestimation/Underestimation Risk:** There is a risk of **overestimation or underestimation**, as divergence between WPI and CPI can distort results.
3. **Base Revision Needed:** A **base revision of GDP datasets is needed** to include fresh data sources and improve accuracy.
4. **External Factors:** External factors such as **global trade uncertainties and inflation risks** continue to pose challenges to sustained growth.

Significance

1. The Q1 GDP results **reflect India's domestic economic resilience** despite global headwinds.
2. The strong growth performance has **strengthened investor confidence**, especially after the recent S&P rating upgrade.
3. The data provides **policy assurance for continuing reforms, deregulation, and diversification efforts**.
4. It indicates that **India is on track for sustainable growth**, supported by sound fiscal and monetary measures.

Question: The Q1 FY26 GDP growth numbers reflect India's underlying economic strength, yet challenges remain in methodology and sectoral representation. Discuss.

GI Law Beyond Borders

Source: The post **GI Law Beyond Borders** has been created, based on the article "**GI law is ineffective against violations abroad**" published in "**Business Line**" on **06th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 2- Governance

Context: Geographical Indications (GIs) are intellectual property rights that identify goods with specific geographical origins and attributes. In India, the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 provides protection. However, the Kolhapuri chappal versus Prada sandal controversy highlights the territorial limitations of GI law.

1. Jurisprudential Issues

- **Territoriality of Law:** GI rights under the Indian Act are enforceable only within Indian borders. Courts in India cannot restrain foreign entities operating overseas.
- **Locus Standi:** The Act allows only registered producer associations to initiate action, restricting broader community or state interventions.

2. Enforcement within India

- **Available Remedies:** The GI Act provides civil remedies (injunctions, damages) and criminal remedies (imprisonment, fines).
- **Practical Scope:** These protections are confined domestically; artisans cannot directly enforce their rights against foreign misappropriation.

3. Foreign Violations and Legal Vacuum

- **Reliance on TRIPS:** WTO's TRIPS agreement mandates GI protection, but its enforcement is left to national laws.
- **Need for Foreign Registration:** For example, Odisha Rasgulla would need to be separately registered under US trademark law to prevent misuse.
- **No Global Harmonisation:** The absence of a unified GI framework allows multinational corporations to exploit traditional designs.

4. Implications for Artisans

- **Cultural Appropriation:** Indigenous products are replicated abroad without attribution.
- **Economic Disadvantage:** While luxury brands profit, original creators remain marginalised.
- **Barriers to Litigation:** High costs and procedural complexities abroad make enforcement inaccessible for small artisan groups.

5. Larger Concerns

- **Sovereignty vs. Cultural Heritage:** The principle of territorial sovereignty clashes with the idea of protecting shared cultural heritage in a globalised market.
- **Jurisprudential Inadequacy:** Current frameworks inadequately safeguard traditional knowledge in borderless digital and trade ecosystems.

Way Forward

1. **Bilateral & Regional GI Agreements:** India can negotiate **mutual recognition of GIs** through bilateral treaties and inclusion in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
2. **Strengthening TRIPS:** Push for **expanded and binding global rules** on GIs within the WTO framework.
3. **International Registries:** Advocate for a **WIPO-administered international GI registry** to reduce the burden of country-wise registrations.
4. **Capacity Building for Artisans:** Support producer groups with legal literacy, funding for foreign registrations, and branding assistance.

5. **Leveraging Soft Power:** Promote Indian GIs through international exhibitions, cultural diplomacy, and global branding campaigns.
6. **Domestic Strengthening:** Encourage stronger enforcement within India to build credibility and act as a model for reciprocal recognition.

Question: Geographical Indication (GI) law is often ineffective against violations abroad. Discuss.

India balances ties while guarding strategic autonomy

Source: The post India balances ties while guarding strategic autonomy has been created, based on the article “India’s strategic autonomy in a multipolar world” published in “The Hindu” on 6th September 2025

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

Context: Strategic autonomy has moved from academic theory to India’s daily diplomacy. A fragmented world, sharpened rivalries among the U.S., China, and Russia, and fraying alliances have triggered a renewed debate on how India preserves sovereign choices while pursuing security, growth, technology, and regional stability.

What is strategic autonomy?

1. **Definition and scope:** It is the sovereign ability to take foreign policy and defence decisions free from external pressure or alliance constraints. It is not isolationism or neutrality, but flexible, interest-driven engagement on India’s terms.
2. **Indian origins and evolution:** The idea draws from colonial experience and a resolve to decide India’s place in the world. It evolved from Nehru’s non-alignment to today’s “multi-alignment,” preserving freedom of action amid changing realities.
3. **Promise and practice:** It offers a middle path between bloc politics and disengagement. In practice it requires deft diplomacy, resilient institutions, and a clear view of national interest.

How is the world order changing?

1. **From dominance to fragmentation:** The unipolar moment has given way to a fluid order marked by China’s assertiveness, Russia’s revisionism, and Western divisions. Washington’s unpredictability adds uncertainty.
2. **India’s recalibration and interests:** India must recalibrate ties while safeguarding territorial integrity, economic growth, technology advancement, and regional stability. Strategic choices are shaped by these core interests.
3. **Flexibility with resilience:** Autonomy demands adaptable partnerships and steady statecraft. It is essential for a rising India that avoids clientelism yet remains deeply engaged.

How is India managing the United States?

1. **Deepening partnership:** Over two decades, defence cooperation, intelligence sharing, exercises, and technology transfers have expanded. The Quad, Indo-Pacific dialogues, I2U2, and IMEC reflect converging concerns over China.
2. **Friction points:** Erratic trade policies, tariffs, and sanctions in the Trump era strained economic ties. Pressure to curb energy and defence dealings with Russia tested India’s resolve.
3. **Measured response:** India engages the U.S. while taking independent positions on conflicts. It places national interest above ideological alignment, rejecting subsumption under another’s priorities.

How is India balancing China and Russia?

1. **China: challenge and approach:** The 2020 border clashes ended assumptions of benign coexistence, even as China remains a major trading partner and regional actor. India mixes cautious engagement with firm deterrence, stronger borders, Indo-Pacific partnerships, and indigenous defence.
2. **Meaning vis-à-vis China:** Autonomy rejects confrontation or capitulation. India asserts sovereignty, avoids being anyone's counterweight, controls Chinese economic access, and keeps diplomatic channels open.
3. **Russia: continuity amid change:** Ties rest on Cold War solidarity, defence cooperation, and shared interests. Even as Russia faced global isolation after the Ukraine conflict and drew closer to China, India continued to buy Russian oil, procure defence equipment, and keep diplomatic channels open.
4. **Refusing binaries:** India diversifies imports and builds indigenous capacity without abandoning old partners. It will not accept external vetoes or a forced choice between camps.

What is India's Global South posture?

1. **Voice and identity:** During the G-20 presidency, India framed itself as the Global South's voice—plural, potent, and democratic. Its democracy was cast as a “bouquet of hope.”
2. **Interest-led partnerships:** Policy is shaped by interest, not sentiment. India seeks to be “non-West” without being “anti-West,” practising assertive, pragmatic, unapologetically Indian diplomacy.
3. **Resonance across the South:** Many rising and middle powers seek agency over alignment. They prioritise regional peace and stability while guarding geopolitical and economic interests.

What capabilities sustain autonomy and what is the path ahead?

1. **Domestic prerequisites:** Autonomy needs economic strength, technological capability, and political coherence. Polarisation, vulnerabilities, and institutional limits can undercut choices.
2. **New domains:** Because cyber, AI, and space are new arenas of contestation, autonomy must extend into them. That means ensuring data sovereignty, robust digital infrastructure, and secure supply chains.
3. **Recent steps:** India is building indigenous platforms, securing critical minerals, and asserting its voice in global tech governance. These moves aim at resilience and adaptability.
4. **Strategy, not slogan:** India must keep walking the tightrope—engaging the U.S. without vassalage, deterring China without war, and partnering Russia without isolation. It should invest in capabilities, cultivate partnerships, and assert interests with clarity, reclaiming agency while standing straight and tall.

Question for practice:

Examine how India practises strategic autonomy while balancing ties with the United States, China, and Russia.

GST 2.0 reforms boost growth and simplify India's taxes

Source: The post GST 2.0 reforms boost growth and simplify India's taxes has been created, based on the article “Fixing problems, unlocking India's growth potential” published in “The Hindu” on 6th September 2025

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

Context: At the **56th GST Council meeting (September 3, 2025)**, India unveiled “**GST 2.0**” to simplify rates, fix anomalies, ease compliance, and resolve disputes faster. The reform reflects **collaborative federalism** and targets **predictability and fairness**, aiming to power growth over the next decade.

For detailed information on **GST 2.0 simplifies taxes and strengthens economy** [read this article here](#)

What triggered GST 2.0, and why is it pivotal?

1. **Council decision and intent:** The Council approved measures that streamline rates and fix distortions. The focus is simplification, predictability, and fairness in the indirect tax regime.
2. **Collaborative reform design:** These steps reflect a cooperative spirit. The package balances ambition with pragmatism, seeking solutions that endure..
3. **Beyond quick fixes: GST 2.0** addresses current frictions and is built to **support sustained expansion** in the years ahead.
4. **Comprehensive scope:** GST 2.0 is designed not only to solve current problems but to support sustained expansion in the years ahead.

How do rate changes ease costs and spur demand?

1. **Household essentials:** Lower brackets for soap, toothpaste, hair oil, shampoo, kitchenware, and packaged foods reduce budgets. This supports demand in sectors employing millions..
2. **Housing and infrastructure:** Reduced GST on **cement and construction materials** makes homes more affordable and supports **Housing for All**. Lower input costs improve **infrastructure viability** and free capital.
3. **Healthcare affordability:** **Life-saving drugs and critical medical devices** move to **nil or 5% GST**. Treatment costs fall and access broadens, reinforcing India's strength in affordable medicines.
4. **Labour-intensive industries and autos:** Textiles, handicrafts, leather, footwear, and toys gain from lower rates that protect margins and jobs in semi-urban and rural clusters. More affordable small cars, motorcycles, buses, and trucks stimulate auto demand and investment.

How are exporters and MSMEs empowered?

1. **Fixing inverted duties:** Distortions in **textiles, fertilizers, and renewables energy** are corrected. Competitiveness rises and import dependence falls for export-heavy segments.
2. **Value addition push:** **Lower duties on capital goods and intermediates** promote local value addition. This directly **supports "Make in India."**
3. **Faster refunds:** Removing thresholds for **low-value consignment refunds** helps small exporters and **courier/e-commerce** players. **Quicker refunds** ease liquidity and enable reinvestment.
4. **Simplified registration:** A **Simplified GST Registration Scheme** offers **automated approvals within three days** for small, low-risk businesses. **Compliance costs drop, formalisation** rises, and MSMEs can scale into new markets.

What improves certainty and institutions—and what signal is sent?

1. **Lower litigation risk:** Simpler **slabs** and **harmonised rates for similar goods** reduce interpretational disputes and classification complexity.
2. **Clearer rules for services:** Clarifications on **intermediary services and post-sale discounts** align tax with commercial practice. Service exporters get long-awaited relief..
3. **Operational GSTAT:** The **Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)** enables **faster, fairer dispute resolution** and reduces backlogs, strengthening confidence.

4. **Global-grade structure and signal:** A streamlined two-rate design—**standard 18%, merit 5%, and a 40% de-merit rate** for select items—aligns with **global best practices** and signals **stability and ease of doing business**.

What remains to be done, and what is the outlook?

1. **Execution focus: Implementation** is critical. **Delays and procedural complexities** still need attention.
2. **Policy resolve:** The government is **listening to industry**, acting decisively, and building a tax system that **fuels growth**.
3. **Growth momentum: GST 2.0** promises higher **consumption**, stronger **MSMEs**, and greater **competitiveness**, reinforcing growth momentum.
4. **Next chapter:** This is more than rate adjustments. It **lays the foundation** for India's **next phase of economic expansion** and marks a **decisive step** in the GST story.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how GST 2.0 reforms address the challenges of India's indirect tax system while promoting consumption, competitiveness, and economic growth.

GST 2.0

Source: The post **GST 2.0** has been created, based on the article "**GST 2.0 will empower young Indians**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **08th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: India has a young demographic which forms the backbone of the nation's economic growth and innovation. GST 2.0, by simplifying taxation and reducing financial burdens on households and businesses, aims to harness this demographic dividend and empower young Indians.

Importance of GST 2.0

1. Boosting Household Spending and Consumption:

- Private consumption accounts for over 60% of India's GDP. GST 2.0 reduces taxes on essentials and exempts services like insurance, easing monthly financial pressures for households.
- Increased disposable income allows young families to save and spend on education, healthcare, housing, and digital products.
- This creates a multiplier effect, translating micro-level affordability into macroeconomic growth.

2. Encouraging Financial Planning and Protection:

- Exemptions on health and life insurance premiums make financial protection more attainable for young professionals.
- This promotes a culture of savings, risk-sharing, and long-term planning, strengthening household resilience.

3. **Supporting MSMEs and Entrepreneurship:**

- Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) employ over 110 million people and significantly contribute to GDP.
- GST 2.0 simplifies compliance, reduces friction, and encourages formalization.
- Young entrepreneurs benefit from easier access to credit, supply chains, and growth opportunities, fostering business creation and employment.

4. **Promoting Economic Predictability and Trust:**

- Transparent, consistent taxation under GST 2.0 builds confidence among citizens and businesses.
- Predictability in tax compliance reduces uncertainty for young professionals and entrepreneurs planning for the future.

5. **Creating a Virtuous Cycle of Growth:**

- Reduced taxes increase affordability, which raises demand and encourages investment.
- Investment generates employment, which in turn fuels further consumption. This self-sustaining cycle supports youth-led economic growth.

Way Forward

GST 2.0 aligns fiscal policy with the aspirations of young Indians. To further enhance its impact, the following measures can be adopted:

1. Expand digital infrastructure for seamless GST filing, especially for small entrepreneurs.
2. Provide targeted GST incentives for start-ups and youth-led enterprises.
3. Increase awareness campaigns about tax benefits and exemptions for young households.
4. Continuously monitor and simplify compliance procedures to reduce bureaucratic hurdles.
5. Encourage financial literacy programs to complement GST reforms and strengthen household financial planning.

Question: Discuss how GST 2.0 can empower young Indians.

Building Sustainable cities in India

Source: The post Building Sustainable cities in India has been created, based on the article "Building a city of the Future" published in "Business Line" on 04th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Urbanization is a key driver of India's future economic growth. By 2045, India's urban population is projected to reach nearly one billion, with several megacities emerging. This rapid urban expansion necessitates the development of climate-resilient and sustainable urban infrastructure to protect citizens from extreme heat, flooding, and other climate-induced risks.

Challenges:

1. **Vulnerability of urban housing:** More than half of the housing stock needed by 2070 is yet to be built, making new housing highly susceptible to flooding, extreme heat, cyclones, landslides, and earthquakes.

2. **Infrastructure gap:** India needs to build over 144 million new homes along with robust transportation and municipal services to meet future demands.
3. **Climate risks:** Extreme heat and urban flooding pose severe threats. Rising temperatures and inadequate drainage systems exacerbate the impacts on health and productivity.
4. **Economic losses:** Without proper planning, climate-induced disasters may cost billions of dollars annually and disrupt urban economic activity.
5. **Institutional and planning challenges:** Lack of forward-looking urban planning and inadequate institutional capacity can hinder climate-resilient urban development.

Measures/Strategies:

1. **Integrated flood management:** Identify high-risk zones, improve city-wide drainage, and use nature-based solutions to absorb excess rainwater. Cities like Kolkata and Chennai are adopting city-level forecasting and stormwater management systems.
2. **Climate-resilient housing:** Plan, design, construct, and maintain new housing with compact, sustainable layouts that can withstand floods, heatwaves, and other extreme events.
3. **Transportation and urban planning:** Ensure road networks are resilient to floods; integrate public transport and alternative routes to maintain connectivity during disasters.
4. **Green infrastructure:** Increase tree cover, implement heat mitigation strategies like cool roofs, and enhance public spaces to reduce urban heat islands.
5. **Institutional and financial support:** Strengthen collaboration between government, citizens, and private sector; mobilize investment for sustainable urban development.
6. **Technology and innovation:** Use early warning systems, digital mapping, and climate-resilient construction technologies to enhance urban preparedness.

Question: Discuss the challenges posed by rapid urbanization in India and suggest measures to make Indian cities climate-resilient and sustainable.

Great Nicobar Island Project

Source: The post Great Nicobar project threatens tribes ecology and disaster safety has been created, based on the article “The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar” published in “The Hindu” on 8th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- economy- infrastructure, and environment conservation.

Context: The Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project, costing ₹72,000 crore, is portrayed as reckless. It endangers indigenous communities, damages a rare rainforest ecosystem, and ignores disaster risks. The article says legal safeguards and deliberative processes were bypassed to push it through.

For detailed information information on **Great Nicobar Island Project** [read this article here](#)

Why is the project contested?

1. **Scale and stakes:** A ₹72,000 crore plan is called a misplaced spend. It threatens communities and ecology, and proceeds despite statutory protections.

2. **Indigenous homelands targeted:** Ancestral Nicobarese villages lie within the project area. The 2004 tsunami forced evacuation; the project means **permanent displacement**, ending hopes of return.

3. **Shompen policy ignored:** The Shompen Policy requires prioritising tribal welfare and **integrity**. Instead, reserves are denotified, forests are opened, and population inflows are enabled, cutting the Shompen off from ancestral lands and livelihoods.

How are tribal rights being undermined?

1. **Bypassing constitutional bodies:** Under **Article 338-A**, the Government should have consulted the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. It did not. The Tribal Council Chairman's plea for Nicobarese return was ignored.

2. **Coerced consent revoked:** A Letter of No Objection from the Tribal Council was later **revoked**. The Council said it had been "**rushed**" into signing.

3. **Legal assessments evaded:** The **SIA** under the 2013 land acquisition law omitted Nicobarese and Shompen as stakeholders. **Forest Rights Act (2006)** mandates and Shompen consultations were ignored, despite their authority over forest protection.

What are the ecological and legal red flags?

1. **Massive deforestation:** About **15% of the island** may be cleared. The Ministry estimates **8.5 lakh** trees cut; independent estimates suggest **32–58 lakh**. A globally unique rainforest is imperilled.

2. **Dubious compensatory afforestation:** Afforestation is planned in **Haryana**, with a different ecology and far from the island. **A quarter of that land** has been **auctioned for mining**. Plantations cannot replace old-growth, biodiversity-rich forests.

3. **CRZ 1A concerns and secrecy:** Parts of the port site fall in **CRZ 1A**, where ports are **prohibited** due to turtle nesting sites and coral reefs. Despite evidence, a **High-Powered Committee** reclassified the site; its report and ground-truthing remain **unpublished**.

What methodological flaws are alleged?

1. **Ignored expert warnings:** Primatologists warned about impacts on the **Nicobar long-tailed macaque**. Their concerns were ignored.

2. **Flawed biodiversity surveys:** **Sea turtle nesting** was assessed **off-season**. **Drones** used for **dugongs** can assess only shallow areas, limiting accuracy.

3. **Questionable research conditions:** Evidence suggests institutes worked under **highly unusual conditions**, bordering on duress. This undermines credibility.

What are the disaster risks and moral stakes?

1. **Seismic vulnerability:** The area is earthquake-prone. The **2004 tsunami** caused about **15 feet** of permanent subsidence. A **6.2 magnitude** quake in **July 2025** shows continuing risk. Siting a massive project here jeopardises investment, infrastructure, people, and ecology.

2. **Existential threat to tribes:** The **Shompen** and **Nicobarese** face survival risks from displacement and ecological loss.

Question for practice:

Examine the major social, legal, ecological, and disaster-risk concerns raised about the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project.

India must prioritise quality FDI over headline inflow figures

Source: The post India must prioritise quality FDI over headline inflow figures has been created, based on the article “**A complex turn in India’s FDI story**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 8th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Context: FDI powered India’s post-1991 modernisation, especially in **e-commerce** and **computer hardware/software**. Recent years show strain: inflows look strong, yet withdrawals surge, investments skew short-term, and Indian firms invest abroad. The concern is weak capital retention, narrow sectoral depth, and a less predictable domestic climate.

For detailed information **Global FDI is falling and India faces growing challenges** [read this article here](#)

How has India’s FDI story shifted?

1. **From reform-led modernisation to mixed signals:** FDI strengthened industry, innovation, and global market integration. Lately, the pattern looks complex, with rising disinvestments and outward flows tempering earlier gains.

2. **Short-term focus eclipsing long-term development:** Investments increasingly chase quick returns, including tax arbitrage and treaty routing. Durable commitments to technology and capacity creation have weakened.

3. **E-commerce and tech transformed; breadth lags:** Large inflows reshaped e-commerce and computer hardware/software. However, broader industrial deepening has not kept pace.

4. **Indian capital going out, not staying in:** Domestic firms invest heavily abroad. This questions policy predictability and the attractiveness of building capabilities at home.

What do the numbers reveal post-pandemic?

1. **Gross inflows rose, but with volatility:** Gross inflows touched \$81 billion in FY 2024-25, up 13.7% year-on-year. Flows climbed from \$46.6 billion (2011) to \$84.8 billion (2021), peaked in FY 2021-22, then slipped to \$71 billion in FY 2023-24 before a mild recovery.

2. Divergence between inflows and repatriations: Post-pandemic, gross inflows totalled \$308.5 billion, while \$153.9 billion was withdrawn or repatriated. Inflows grew just 0.3% annually; repatriations rose 18.9%.

3. Net inflows eroded sharply: After subtracting repatriations and loan repayments, net inflows fell steeply from FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25. After adjusting for outward FDI, net retained capital shrank to \$0.4 billion.

4. Disinvestments surged to new highs: Disinvestments rose 51% to \$44.4 billion in FY 2023-24 and to \$51.4 billion in FY 2024-25. They now represent over 63%, marking a decisive behaviour shift.

Why are withdrawals and outflows rising?

1. Manufacturing's shrinking share: Manufacturing, once central to FDI, saw steep outflows. Its share fell to 12% of total FDI, curbing technology diffusion and jobs.

2. Domestic bottlenecks deter stickiness: Regulatory opacity, legal unpredictability, and inconsistent governance dampen confidence. Rankings improved, yet execution frictions persist.

3. Indian firms' outward push accelerates: Outflows grew from \$13 billion (FY 2011-12) to \$29.2 billion (FY 2024-25). Firms cite regulatory inefficiencies, infrastructure gaps, and policy uncertainty.

4. Confidence, not capital, is the constraint: The parallel rise of foreign withdrawals and Indian outward FDI signals systemic issues that limit long-horizon commitments.

Where is capital going—and what is missed?

1. Tax-hub dominance and source fatigue: Singapore and Mauritius dominate inflows, hinting at tax-driven routing. Traditional industrial sources—the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.—have scaled back.

2. Services and rent-seeking tilt: Financial services, energy distribution, and hospitality drew more capital. These add to GDP but lack the strong multipliers of manufacturing, infrastructure, and advanced tech.

3. Weaker long-term resilience: Shifts toward short-term, service-heavy flows reduce potential for capability building and durable growth.

4. Gross figures conceal fragility: Headline inflows look robust but mask churn, sectoral skews, and limited retention.

What are the macro risks and policy priorities?

1. External account pressures rise: FDI supports the balance of payments and the currency. Falling net inflows narrow policy space and complicate external management.

2. RBI's measured caution: The RBI notes outflows mirror broader emerging-market trends yet carry risks that require careful handling.

3. Quality over quantity of capital: India should prioritise durability and strategic alignment over raw inflow size. Committed capital must build domestic capabilities.

4. Reform and human capital: Simplify rules, ensure policy consistency, upgrade infrastructure, and expand education and skills to attract **advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and technology**.

Question for practice:

Examine how rising disinvestments and outward FDI since FY 2021–22 have reduced India's net FDI inflows and weakened long-term industrial development

Impact of GST 2.0 on health

Source: The post **Impact of GST 2.0 on health** has been created, based on the article "GST 2.0 could undermine dietary health" published in **"The Hindu"** on **09th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: The Government of India will simplify the GST structure from September 22, 2025, to rates of 5%, 18%, and a 40% bracket for "sinful" and ultra-luxury goods. While aimed at tax rationalization and efficiency, this raises public health concerns over its potential impact on dietary habits and non-communicable diseases.

Impact of GST 2.0 on Public Health:

- The reduction of GST on sugar-based products such as chocolates, confectionery, jams, and fruit jellies from 12–18% to 5% lowers their market price, increasing affordability and consumption.
- This undermines efforts to tackle rising cases of obesity, diabetes, and other NCDs.
- Moreover, India lacks a comprehensive **front-of-pack labelling (FOPL)** system and clear regulatory thresholds for warning labels.
- As a result, consumers are unable to effectively distinguish between healthy and unhealthy products, further promoting poor dietary choices.

Role of Food Advertising:

- Current regulations are insufficient to restrict misleading advertising, particularly to children.
- Unlike countries such as Chile, which ban the advertisement of "high-in" sugar/salt/fat products to children, India has no uniform policy to regulate such practices across TV, print, or digital media.
- This contributes to unhealthy dietary patterns, especially among adolescents.

Policy Measures:

1. Implement mandatory FOPL warnings based on WHO-SEARO and ICMR-NIN 2024 thresholds.
2. Apply differential GST rates—18% on "high-in" unhealthy products and 5% on healthy alternatives.
3. Ban advertising of "high-in" products during peak child-viewing hours.
4. Allocate tax revenues for NCD prevention, labelling enforcement, and food reformulation.

Q. Discuss how the proposed GST 2.0 regime in India could affect public health, especially in relation to dietary habits. Also, suggest appropriate policy measures.

GST 2.0

Source: The post **GST 2.0** has been created, based on the article “A nudge to Businesses ” published in “**Indian express**” on 09th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Eight years post GST launch, the Government of India is implementing **GST 2.0**, aimed at simplifying tax structures, enhancing compliance, and supporting long-term revenue growth rather than short-term collection maximisation.

Objectives of GST 2.0:

1. **Simplification of Tax Structure:** Streamline GST rates into a simpler slab system (5%, 18%, and 40% for “sinful” and luxury goods).
2. **Ease of Doing Business:** Reduce compliance burden on small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
3. **Long-term Revenue Growth:** Encourage voluntary compliance and broaden the tax base instead of focusing on immediate revenue maximisation.
4. **Encourage Formalization:** Integrate more businesses into the formal economy through targeted reliefs and simplified processes.

Key Features of GST 2.0:

1. **Rate Rationalization:** Collapse multiple rates (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) into simplified slabs of 5%, 18%, and 40% for luxury and demerit goods.
2. **Targeted Reliefs:** Special provisions for small businesses (monthly output tax liability under ₹2.5 lakh) to reduce compliance costs.
3. **Technological Integration:** Voluntary simplified registration and procedural reforms through the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) to resolve disputes.
4. **Sectoral Focus:** Higher rates on tobacco, aerated drinks, and luxury goods to align public health and revenue objectives.

Potential Impact

1. **Economic:** Expected to boost compliance and revenue collection over time, reduce tax disputes, and support ease of doing business.
2. **Social:** Taxing “sinful” goods like tobacco may positively affect public health by reducing consumption.
3. **Business:** SMEs and exporters benefit from simplified compliance, faster refunds, and lower procedural hurdles.
4. **Implementation Risk:** Requires meticulous coordination; past international experiences (e.g., Malaysia) show that poorly implemented reforms can disrupt businesses.

Q. Discuss the objectives, features, and potential impact of GST 2.0 in India.

India advances technological independence through open-source mission

Source: The post India advances technological independence through open-source mission now has been created, based on the article “**The long march ahead to technological independence**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Science and technology

Context: On India's 79th Independence Day (August 15, 2025), the article argues that political freedom is no longer sufficient. True independence now requires technological sovereignty because daily life and national security depend on software, networks, and cloud services controlled by a few foreign companies, creating serious vulnerabilities.

Why does independence now demand technological sovereignty?

- Digital conflict and critical exposure:** Modern wars are fought through software, drones, and cyber operations rather than conventional weapons. The most damaging battlefield is cyberspace, where attacks can disrupt banks, trains, and power grids that run on information and communication technology.
- Dependence on a concentrated vendor base:** A small number of firms, largely from one country, design and control core systems. If these providers disable cloud or Artificial Intelligence services under national diktat or malice, the nation's operations can be crippled.
- Risk already demonstrated in practice:** Cloud services were recently cut off to a company, proving the threat is not hypothetical. The episode underscores the need to reduce single-point dependencies before a larger crisis forces action.

How can India build software sovereignty?

- Open-source as the practical route:** India can create trustworthy variants of Linux and Android free of backdoors. Building them is feasible for a committed professional community. The harder problem is ensuring long-term support, delivering regular updates, and cultivating a large user base to ensure viability.
- Collective mobilisation of talent:** The issue affects everyone, but the solution rests with IT professionals who build the digital world. No single institution can shoulder the task. A united, mission-driven effort can do so..
- Component strategy and product discipline:** Assemble a crack team to deliver essential client-side tools—database, email client, calendar—and server-side systems—web, email, and cloud servers—using existing open-source bases. Teams must continually update and maintain these like product groups, not one-off projects.
- Self-sustaining business model:** The mission must fund itself rather than rely on government or private grants. Today's climate is more receptive. Companies and individuals worry about external dependence and already pay, directly or indirectly, for “free” open source. Making costs explicit to support trusted software is a small shift.

What is the path to hardware sovereignty?

1. **Higher barriers and longer horizons:** Hardware autonomy is harder than software. Building advanced semiconductor fabs demands massive, patient national investment across chip design, manufacturing, and supply chains.
2. **Pragmatic first steps:** Focus on select hardware components and forge partnerships to grow expertise in chip design and assembly. Fabrication can initially be outsourced while domestic capabilities scale.
3. **Ethos of non-adversarial independence:** As political freedom was pursued through non-violence, technology independence should advance through open source. The goal is self-reliance, not opposition to others.

What mission architecture and societal shift are required now?

1. **From diluted movement to renewed autonomy:** Although much software is open source, effective control sits with centralised cloud and externally managed data. A social movement for autonomy in software and hardware is needed. India has talent and a clear path.
2. **Implementation over research:** Establish an implementation mission led by strong engineering and support teams. It should be coordinated by capable project management, not an academic R&D initiative.
3. **Enablement, sustainability, urgency:** The government should act as an enabler and set up a self-sustaining model early. The collective will must drive planning, development, and execution now—before a crisis compels it.

Question for practice:

Examine why technological sovereignty is vital for India and the mission-based steps proposed to achieve it.

Kerala transforms urban governance through new blueprint

Source: The post Kerala transforms urban governance through new blueprint has been created, based on the article “**Lessons for India: how Kerala is tackling rapid urbanisation**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Context: Kerala’s urban fabric is urbanising faster than infrastructure and governance, while climate hazards—floods, landslides, coastal erosion, erratic weather—intensify. To respond, the State created the **Kerala Urban Policy Commission (KUPC)** to craft a long-range, climate-aware urban strategy, culminating in a March 2025 report.

Why and how was KUPC formed?

1. **Urban pressures and mounting risks:** By late 2023, urbanisation raced ahead of the national average, with projections of over 80% urban population by 2050. Simultaneously, floods, landslides, and coastal stress exposed widening gaps between crisis and planning.
2. **A deliberate political choice:** The cabinet’s December 2023 resolution signalled a break from centralised, project-led models. Kerala sought its own compass, tailored to place, history, and climate.

3. **Mandate and horizon:** Set up in December 2023, KUPC was tasked with a 25-year roadmap viewing cities as organic, climate-aware ecosystems, not concrete problems.

4. **A first in India:** As India's first State-level urban commission, it shifted policy from reactive fixes to systems thinking.

What did KUPC recommend?

1. **Climate- and risk-aware zoning:** Urban planning must reflect hazard mapping of landslides, coastal inundation, and flood zones so that decisions are proactive rather than reactive.

2. **A digital data observatory:** Set up a real-time data centre at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. It should combine LIDAR, ground-penetrating radar, tide and gauge readings, satellite images, and live weather.

3. **Green fees and climate insurance:** Charge green fees for projects in eco-sensitive zones. Use parametric insurance to ensure pre-approved payouts in disasters.

4. **Municipal and pooled bonds:** Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kozhikode, as larger cities, could issue municipal bonds, while smaller towns use pooled instruments. Bond subscriptions were even plugged into the 2024 interim Budget.

5. **Governance overhaul:** City cabinets led by mayors should replace bureaucratic inertia. Specialist cells—climate, waste, mobility, and law—with dedicated municipal cadres are proposed, alongside a “jnanashree” programme to recruit and deploy youth tech talent.

6. **Place-based economic revival:** Thrissur–Kochi is identified as a FinTech hub; Thiruvananthapuram–Kollam as a knowledge corridor; Kozhikode as the city of literature; and Palakkad and Kasaragod as smart-industrial zones.

7. **Commons, culture, and care:** Revive wetlands, reactivate waterways, and preserve heritage zones. Create city health councils to serve migrants, students, and gig workers.

What makes the report unique?

1. **Narratives fused with data:** Fisherfolk's coastal recession, youth water drives, and bazaar mobility woes were structured into data systems. LIDAR maps register tidal health; municipal dashboards carry community indicators; briefings embed lived stories.

2. **Climate embedded, not appended:** Every pillar integrates disaster awareness, making resilience foundational across planning, finance, well-being, and identity.

3. **Fiscal and institutional emancipation:** Municipal bonds and green levies enhance local fiscal agency, while election-led city cabinets and youth technocrats replace passive bureaucracies.

4. **A 360° urban system:** The approach dismantles silos and integrates planning, finance, and governance.

What can others learn, and what lies ahead?

1. **Transferable lessons.** States can create time-bound commissions and pair technical data with lived experience. They can also build dialogic systems and data observatories, empower locals through levies, bonds, and risk premiums, and insert youth and specialists in governance.

2. **Next steps.** KUPC rewires how Kerala conceives cities by entwining climate awareness, community narrative, finance, digital governance, and identity economy. It is a beginning for Kerala, and an invitation for others to author urban transformation.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Kerala Urban Policy Commission's recommendations aim to make Kerala's urban system climate ready, data driven, and better governed.

Transhumanist technologies and its implication

Source: The post **Transhumanist technologies and its implication** has been created, based on the article "Longevity Debate" published in "Indian Express" on 10th September 2025.

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

Context: The rapid advancement in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and nanotechnology has led to a new frontier in human longevity research. The concept of transhumanism envisions radically extending human life and enhancing cognitive and physical capabilities through scientific innovations such as gene editing, brain-computer interfaces, and digital consciousness preservation. This revolutionary shift raises profound questions related to ethics, society, and governance.

Scientific and Technological Developments:

1. Transhumanist technologies include **CRISPR gene editing, neuroprosthetics, brain-machine interfaces, and digital mind uploading.**
2. These tools aim **to repair defective DNA, rejuvenate organs, restore lost brain capacities, and enable uploading of human consciousness into digital systems.**
3. Entrepreneurs like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos are **investing heavily in these fields**, driven by the vision of overcoming biological limitations.

Social Implications:

1. **Demographic Shift:** As birth rates decline globally, extending healthy lifespans could maintain a productive workforce well into advanced age, preventing economic stagnation.
2. **Inequality:** Access to these radical technologies is unlikely to be universal. This raises the risk of a growing divide between the biologically privileged elite and the rest of society, exacerbating existing disparities of wealth and power.

Ethical Implications:

1. **Playing God:** Many religious and philosophical traditions argue against the unnatural extension of life, viewing it as an affront to divine will or natural order.

2. **Mind Uploading and Identity:** The process of uploading consciousness to a digital format raises questions about personal identity, agency, and the meaning of life and death.
3. **Eugenics Risk:** The ability to selectively enhance or alter human characteristics could lead to a resurgence of eugenic practices, with profound moral consequences.

Political Implications:

1. **Regulatory Challenges:** Governance frameworks are ill-prepared to deal with these fast-evolving technologies. The absence of clear regulations may lead to misuse or monopolization by powerful corporations and individuals.
2. **Power Dynamics:** Leaders such as Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping show interest in using such technologies for political longevity, posing risks to democratic accountability and increasing authoritarian tendencies.
3. **Global Governance:** There is a pressing need for multilateral regulations to ensure ethical research practices, prevent the creation of a super-rich biologically privileged class, and guarantee access equity.

Way Forward:

1. India, given its spiritual traditions and emerging scientific capabilities is well-positioned to take a balanced approach.
2. It must focus on establishing robust ethical and regulatory frameworks while promoting scientific research aimed at public good.
3. The emphasis should be on ensuring that technological progress benefits society as a whole and does not exacerbate inequality or ethical dilemmas.

Q. Discuss the potential social, ethical, and political implications of extending human life through transhumanist technologies.

Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) and its implication

Source: The post **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) and its implication** has been created, based on the article "The Global Stage on our Terms" published in "**Indian Express**" on **10th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper- 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Recent signing of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein is a landmark development. It marks India's first comprehensive trade agreement with a group of advanced European economies, reflecting its ambition to transform into a globally integrated, self-reliant, and confident economy. The agreement has multiple economic, strategic, and diplomatic implications.

Economic Benefits:

1. **Market Access and Export Promotion:** The agreement enhances market access for Indian goods and services by eliminating or reducing tariffs on 92.2% of tariff lines, representing 99.6% of India's exports by value.

2. It facilitates duty-free treatment for non-agricultural products such as organic chemicals, textiles, gems, jewellery, and industrial goods.
3. **Investment Commitments:** The pledge to promote investment of about \$100 billion over 15 years and facilitate up to 1 million direct jobs reflects a significant boost to India's industrial and service sectors.
4. **Sub-sectoral Commitments:** India has secured commitments across 128 sub-sectors from Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, especially in information technology, business services, and skilled workforce domains.
5. **Competitive Consumer Market:** Tariff cuts and duty-free access promise competitive prices and wider product choices for Indian consumers.

Strategic and Technological Collaboration:

1. **Access to Advanced Technologies:** TEPA provides India with access to Europe's advanced capabilities in precision engineering, pharmaceuticals, health sciences, renewable energy, and frontier technologies, aligned with India's domestic needs.
2. **Thorium Energy Potential:** With India holding nearly a quarter of the world's thorium reserves, TEPA offers opportunities for collaboration in thorium fuel irradiation, research, and scaling up India's nuclear energy program for clean and stable power generation.
3. **Support for Energy Transition:** The EU's Sustainable Finance Taxonomy enables India to tap into green transition funds, accelerating efforts toward achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070.

Diplomatic and Geopolitical Implications:

1. **Global Standing and Confidence:** The agreement symbolizes India's transition into a globally confident nation able to negotiate on equal footing with advanced economies, bolstering its image as a trusted and strategic partner.
2. **Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India Alignment:** TEPA reinforces India's vision of self-reliance by strategically integrating domestic manufacturing and innovation with global supply chains.
3. **Resilience and Diversification:** In an era of geopolitical uncertainty and supply chain disruptions, TEPA helps diversify India's economic partnerships, reducing over-reliance on any single bloc.

Challenges and Way Forward:

1. **Implementation and Capacity Building:** Translating the agreement's potential into tangible outcomes requires robust institutional mechanisms and capacity building for Indian businesses to adapt and scale advanced technologies.
2. **Equitable Growth:** Ensuring the benefits reach all sections of society and do not further exacerbate economic inequalities is crucial.
3. **Ongoing Strategic Engagement:** India should continue to negotiate and align with multilateral frameworks, ensuring that economic diplomacy supports long-term sustainable development and strategic autonomy.

Q. Analyze the significance of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in strengthening India's global economic and strategic positioning.

India advances technological independence through open-source mission

Source: The post India advances technological independence through open-source mission now has been created, based on the article “**The long march ahead to technological independence**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Science and technology

Context: On India's 79th Independence Day (August 15, 2025), the article argues that political freedom is no longer sufficient. True independence now requires technological sovereignty because daily life and national security depend on software, networks, and cloud services controlled by a few foreign companies, creating serious vulnerabilities.

Why does independence now demand technological sovereignty?

- Digital conflict and critical exposure:** Modern wars are fought through software, drones, and cyber operations rather than conventional weapons. The most damaging battlefield is cyberspace, where attacks can disrupt banks, trains, and power grids that run on information and communication technology.
- Dependence on a concentrated vendor base:** A small number of firms, largely from one country, design and control core systems. If these providers disable cloud or Artificial Intelligence services under national diktat or malice, the nation's operations can be crippled.
- Risk already demonstrated in practice:** Cloud services were recently cut off to a company, proving the threat is not hypothetical. The episode underscores the need to reduce single-point dependencies before a larger crisis forces action.

How can India build software sovereignty?

- Open-source as the practical route:** India can create trustworthy variants of Linux and Android free of backdoors. Building them is feasible for a committed professional community. The harder problem is ensuring long-term support, delivering regular updates, and cultivating a large user base to ensure viability.
- Collective mobilisation of talent:** The issue affects everyone, but the solution rests with IT professionals who build the digital world. No single institution can shoulder the task. A united, mission-driven effort can do so..
- Component strategy and product discipline:** Assemble a crack team to deliver essential client-side tools—database, email client, calendar—and server-side systems—web, email, and cloud servers—using existing open-source bases. Teams must continually update and maintain these like product groups, not one-off projects.
- Self-sustaining business model:** The mission must fund itself rather than rely on government or private grants. Today's climate is more receptive. Companies and individuals worry about external dependence and already pay, directly or indirectly, for “free” open source. Making costs explicit to support trusted software is a small shift.

What is the path to hardware sovereignty?

1. **Higher barriers and longer horizons:** Hardware autonomy is harder than software. Building advanced semiconductor fabs demands massive, patient national investment across chip design, manufacturing, and supply chains.
2. **Pragmatic first steps:** Focus on select hardware components and forge partnerships to grow expertise in chip design and assembly. Fabrication can initially be outsourced while domestic capabilities scale.
3. **Ethos of non-adversarial independence:** As political freedom was pursued through non-violence, technology independence should advance through open source. The goal is self-reliance, not opposition to others.

What mission architecture and societal shift are required now?

1. **From diluted movement to renewed autonomy:** Although much software is open source, effective control sits with centralised cloud and externally managed data. A social movement for autonomy in software and hardware is needed. India has talent and a clear path.
2. **Implementation over research:** Establish an implementation mission led by strong engineering and support teams. It should be coordinated by capable project management, not an academic R&D initiative.
3. **Enablement, sustainability, urgency:** The government should act as an enabler and set up a self-sustaining model early. The collective will must drive planning, development, and execution now—before a crisis compels it.

Question for practice:

Examine why technological sovereignty is vital for India and the mission-based steps proposed to achieve it.

Kerala transforms urban governance through new blueprint

Source: The post Kerala transforms urban governance through new blueprint has been created, based on the article “Lessons for India: how Kerala is tackling rapid urbanisation” published in “The Hindu” on 10th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Context: Kerala’s urban fabric is urbanising faster than infrastructure and governance, while climate hazards—floods, landslides, coastal erosion, erratic weather—intensify. To respond, the State created the **Kerala Urban Policy Commission (KUPC)** to craft a long-range, climate-aware urban strategy, culminating in a March 2025 report.

Why and how was KUPC formed?

1. **Rurban pressures and mounting risks:** By late 2023, urbanisation raced ahead of the national average, with projections of over 80% urban population by 2050. Simultaneously, floods, landslides, and coastal stress exposed widening gaps between crisis and planning.
2. **A deliberate political choice:** The cabinet’s December 2023 resolution signalled a break from centralised, project-led models. Kerala sought its own compass, tailored to place, history, and climate.

3. **Mandate and horizon:** Set up in December 2023, KUPC was tasked with a 25-year roadmap viewing cities as organic, climate-aware ecosystems, not concrete problems.

4. **A first in India:** As India's first State-level urban commission, it shifted policy from reactive fixes to systems thinking.

What did KUPC recommend?

1. **Climate- and risk-aware zoning:** Urban planning must reflect hazard mapping of landslides, coastal inundation, and flood zones so that decisions are proactive rather than reactive.

2. **A digital data observatory:** Set up a real-time data centre at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. It should combine LIDAR, ground-penetrating radar, tide and gauge readings, satellite images, and live weather.

3. **Green fees and climate insurance:** Charge green fees for projects in eco-sensitive zones. Use parametric insurance to ensure pre-approved payouts in disasters.

4. **Municipal and pooled bonds:** Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kozhikode, as larger cities, could issue municipal bonds, while smaller towns use pooled instruments. Bond subscriptions were even plugged into the 2024 interim Budget.

5. **Governance overhaul:** City cabinets led by mayors should replace bureaucratic inertia. Specialist cells—climate, waste, mobility, and law—with dedicated municipal cadres are proposed, alongside a “jnanashree” programme to recruit and deploy youth tech talent.

6. **Place-based economic revival:** Thrissur–Kochi is identified as a FinTech hub; Thiruvananthapuram–Kollam as a knowledge corridor; Kozhikode as the city of literature; and Palakkad and Kasaragod as smart-industrial zones.

7. **Commons, culture, and care:** Revive wetlands, reactivate waterways, and preserve heritage zones. Create city health councils to serve migrants, students, and gig workers.

What makes the report unique?

1. **Narratives fused with data:** Fisherfolk's coastal recession, youth water drives, and bazaar mobility woes were structured into data systems. LIDAR maps register tidal health; municipal dashboards carry community indicators; briefings embed lived stories.

2. **Climate embedded, not appended:** Every pillar integrates disaster awareness, making resilience foundational across planning, finance, well-being, and identity.

3. **Fiscal and institutional emancipation:** Municipal bonds and green levies enhance local fiscal agency, while election-led city cabinets and youth technocrats replace passive bureaucracies.

4. **A 360° urban system:** The approach dismantles silos and integrates planning, finance, and governance.

What can others learn, and what lies ahead?

1. **Transferable lessons.** States can create time-bound commissions and pair technical data with lived experience. They can also build dialogic systems and data observatories, empower locals through levies, bonds, and risk premiums, and insert youth and specialists in governance.

2. **Next steps.** KUPC rewires how Kerala conceives cities by entwining climate awareness, community narrative, finance, digital governance, and identity economy. It is a beginning for Kerala, and an invitation for others to author urban transformation.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Kerala Urban Policy Commission's recommendations aim to make Kerala's urban system climate ready, data driven, and better governed.

Katchatheevu dispute demand cooperative solutions

Source: The post Katchatheevu dispute demand cooperative solutions has been created, based on the article "The way forward on Katchatheevu, Palk Strait disputes" published in "The Hindu" on 11th September 2025

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

Context: India's diplomacy—rooted in Panchsheel, NAM, SAARC, and a **Neighbourhood First** outlook—faces a test with Sri Lanka. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's **April 2025 Colombo visit** refocused attention on the Palk Straits fisheries dispute and Katchatheevu. The task is to align livelihoods, ecology, and law through cooperation.

For detailed information on **Katchatheevu Island controversy** [read this article here](#)

What drives the Palk Straits conflict?

1. **Shared waters, rising disputes:** Communities from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Northern Province long shared waters. Tensions rose as **Indian mechanised trawlers** entered Sri Lankan waters.
2. **Bottom trawling and legal norms:** UNCLOS couples equitable use with conservation, and the **1995 FAO Code** rejects bottom trawling. Sri Lanka **banned bottom trawling in 2017**, yet many Indian trawlers persist.
3. **Ecological damage and stock depletion:** Bottom trawling damages **coral beds and shrimp habitats**. It depletes fish stocks and intensifies competition.
4. **Intra-Tamil livelihood conflict:** Artisanal fishers using sustainable gear lose their near-shore catch. The clash pits **profit-driven trawler operators** against subsistence fishers.

How can livelihoods and conservation be balanced?

Distinguish needs and responsibilities: Policy must separate artisanal needs from trawler interests. 1. **Commercial profits cannot claim empathy** when they harm sustainability and community welfare.

2. **Humane accommodation for small fishers:** Small-boat fishers have worked here "from time immemorial." Their plight warrants **humane accommodation**.

3. Dialogue and regulated access: Fisher organisations can negotiate **quotas, regulated access, and limited rights** on specific days or seasons, with **Sri Lankan fishers' consent**, until Indian stocks recover.

4. Community sensitisation and fraternity: Sri Lankan Tamil MPs and media can highlight wartime hardships of Northern fishers. Tamil Nadu earlier sheltered refugees with compassion, and such bonds can lower tensions..

What is the Katchatheevu issue—fact versus myth?

1. Status and treaty facts: Katchatheevu is tiny and uninhabited, with **St. Anthony's church** visited annually under the **1974 Maritime Boundary Treaty**. The settlement placed the islet within Sri Lankan waters..

2. Sanctity of boundary treaties: Boundary treaties are **legally binding (pacta sunt servanda)**. Unilateral repudiation undermines stability, as contests of settled frontiers with India show.

3. Evidence of sovereignty weighed: Historic records showed Sri Lankan administrative control dating **back to Portuguese and Dutch rule**, and, earlier, to the Tamil kings of the kingdom of Jaffna.

4. Precedents on administrative control: In **Minquiers and Ecrehos (ICJ, 1953)**, the Court awarded sovereignty to the U.K. because it had exercised **administrative jurisdiction**, despite France's historical claim. The **Rann of Kutch Arbitration (1968)** applied a similar logic. Therefore, **Katchatheevu is a settled legal issue**; calls to "retrieve" it are **political rhetoric**. Fishing rights are **distinct and not linked** to sovereignty over the islet..

What do "historic waters" and UNCLOS imply?

1. Historic waters and stronger rights

Indian and Sri Lankan law recognised the **Palk Straits as historic waters**. Rights exceed ordinary territorial seas; there is **no right of innocent passage**, and third-state fishing needs consent..

2. Judicial recognition of historic rights: **Annakumar Pillai v. Muthupayal (Madras HC, 1904)** upheld traditional pearl and conch fisheries. India's 1974 acceptance aligned with precedent.

3. Obligation to cooperate in semi-enclosed seas: **UNCLOS Article 123** urges cooperation in **semi-enclosed seas** like the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar.

What cooperative pathways fit Neighbourhood First?

1. Quota-based conservation and science: Adopt **shared quotas**, as in the **Baltic Sea Fisheries Convention**, and set up a **joint research station on Katchatheevu** to guide sustainable practices.

2. Shift pressure offshore: Promote **deep-sea fishing in India's 200-nautical-mile EEZ** to ease pressure and curb illegal crossings.

3. Multi-level engagement architecture: Use **government-to-government talks**, State/Provincial coordination with **Tamil Nadu and Northern Provincial Council**, and fisher-to-fisher dialogue.

4. **From dispute to cooperation:** Handled prudently, these issues can **symbolise cooperation**. The task is fair resource management that protects **artisanal livelihoods** and **ecological sustainability** while respecting legal agreements.

Question for practice:

Q. Examine how India and Sri Lanka can balance artisanal livelihoods and marine conservation in the Palk Straits under existing legal frameworks.

Road development brings peace in conflict regions

Source: The post Road development brings peace in conflict regions has been created, based on the article “To build roads is to build peace” published in “**The Hindu**” on 11th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper-Infrastructure

Context: In Maoist-affected tribal regions, **roads mark the first arrival of governance**. They connect isolated settlements to services and lawful authority, shrinking space for parallel control. The article shows how connectivity weakens extralegal power, why formal institutions matter, and which safeguards keep infrastructure inclusive and legitimate.

Why do roads matter in conflict-hit tribal regions?

1. Emissaries of the state: A road in remote forests and hills carries the **state into places marked by marginalisation and neglect**. Where formal institutions are barely visible, a new road becomes the first sign of governance.
2. Stabilising effects in the Red Corridor: Research from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha **links rural roads with better electricity, employment, and security**. Connectivity stabilises daily life and reduces the appeal of insurgent control.
3. Reclaiming governance from isolation: Non-state actors flourish where the state is absent. Roads **reduce isolation, enable service delivery, and weaken insurgent monopolies** over order.

How do insurgents build parallel authority?

1. **Filling governance gaps:** When formal governance is undersupplied, others imitate it. Classic research on organised crime shows that withdrawal of the state invites **extralegal conflict resolution and taxation** by non-state actors.
2. **Services as strategy, not charity:** Fieldwork from 2018 and a 2009 rights report note that Naxalites sometimes provide **rudimentary health aid and welfare**. Studies of insurgent rule explain these as **tools to build legitimacy, backed by coercion**.
3. **Coercion and extralegal justice:** Jan adalats have issued summary punishments, including executions, without due process. This is justice without appeal or accountability.

What does infrastructure change in rule of law?

- 1. Infrastructure as political precondition:** Infrastructure is political. A 2023 rural India study links **road connectivity with lower crime and better service access**. A 2020 international analysis finds **higher violence in poorly connected areas**.
- 2. Formal institutions and accountability:** Formal institutions operate within **laws shaped by democratic consensus**. Roads enable schools, clinics, police stations, and courts to reach conflict zones with **procedures accountable to citizens**.
- 3. Contrast with informal norms:** Informal justice often reflects entrenched hierarchies and patriarchal codes. It can produce vigilante action and collective punishment, including reprisals against those accused of collaborating with security forces.

What strategy and safeguards are needed?

- 1. Sequencing the state's return:** In Chhattisgarh, **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam (then a senior State official, now NITI Aayog CEO)** led a strategy placing **roads first, then schools, clinics, and law enforcement**. Each road signalled that **the state had arrived and would stay**.
- 2. Building with the village:** Infrastructure alone cannot resolve conflict. Without justice mechanisms, health access, and community consultation, **roads risk symbolising control rather than inclusion**. They must be built within the village.
- 3. Towards belonging and peace:** Development should replace insurgent authority with **pluralistic, rights-based governance rooted in constitutional values**. As India invests in southern Chhattisgarh, the goal is **dignity, opportunity, and belonging. To build roads is to build peace**.

Question for practice:

Q. Discuss how road development in Maoist-affected tribal regions strengthens formal governance and what safeguards are needed to ensure inclusion.

India's GST reforms strengthen universal health coverage

Source: The post India's GST reforms strengthen universal health coverage has been created, based on the article "**A 'health check' for the new GST health-care reforms**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper2**-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health. And **GS paper 3**-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: India's GST overhaul targets affordable, accessible health care. It realigns taxes on insurance, hospital charges, medicines, devices, diagnostics, and daily-use products. **Key premium changes start on September 22, 2025**. The goal is universal coverage and stronger preventive health.

For detailed information on **GST 2.0 reforms boost growth and simplify India's taxes** [read this article here](#)

What changed in insurance and hospital taxation?

1. **Insurance relief:** GST on individual health and life insurance is removed. It covers **term, ULIP, endowment, family floaters, and senior-citizen plans**, and **reinsurance**. **Premiums become 18% cheaper.** A family paying ₹50,000 earlier paid ₹9,000 as GST. Gains depend on pass-through by insurers.
2. **Room charge rules:** Hospital rooms below ₹5,000/day stay exempt. **Non-ICU rooms above ₹5,000/day** continue to attract **5% GST without input tax credit** (since July 2022). **ICU/CCU/ICCU/NICU** remain fully exempt regardless of tariff.
3. **Treatment stays untaxed:** Core services by hospitals, doctors, and paramedics remain GST-exempt. **No change from the 2022 framework.**

How do reforms affect medicines, devices, and diagnostics?

1. **Drug taxes simplified:** GST on **most medicines is 5%** and **life-saving drugs are zero-rated.**
2. **Devices and diagnostics at 5%:** Most medical devices and diagnostic products shift to a **uniform 5% slab**. For example, CT scan machines fall from 18% to 5%, easing hospital capital costs.
3. **Cheaper tests if passed on:** Laboratory services remain exempt, but inputs—kits, reagents, equipment—are taxed less. If labs pass savings on, routine tests such as blood tests, X-rays, and MRIs may become cheaper. Pharmacies and small clinics gain competitiveness.
4. **Commercial adjustments:** **Manufacturers and distributors** will revise pricing and contracts. **Hospitals and labs** can negotiate better terms with insurers and corporate clients.

How do reforms encourage prevention and healthier choices?

1. **Wellness services cheaper:** GST on **gyms, fitness centres, yoga studios, salons, barbers, and wellness services** falls from **18% to 5%**.
2. **Personal care at 5%:** **Hair oil, soap bars, shampoos, toothpaste, toothbrushes, talcum powder, face powder, shaving cream, aftershave** move to **5%**. A ₹100 shampoo now costs ₹105 with GST.
3. **Deterring harmful products:** **Cigarettes** retain **28% GST + compensation cess** (effective **52%–88%**). A new **40% "sin goods" slab** is announced and **applies only after cess liabilities are cleared**. **Sugary drinks** shift to this **40% slab from 28% + cess**.

What outcomes will determine success?

1. **System-wide alignment:** The reforms support the 2047 Viksit Bharat goals by lowering insurance taxes, cutting input costs, and backing preventive care.

2. Real-world tests should monitor following outcomes: **timely and affordable access to treatment, routine use of preventive and wellness services, consumer trust in the health system, reductions in misuse of antibiotics and Schedule H drugs, and lives saved..**

3. **Coverage gap addressed:** Insurance relief targets low coverage at **3.7% of GDP vs 6.8% global.**

Question for practice:

Examine how the recent GST reforms reduce health-care costs and expand access through changes to insurance, medicines and devices, and preventive services.

India strengthens development partnership with Mauritius

Source: The post India strengthens development partnership with Mauritius has been created, based on the article "India and Mauritius not just partners but a family: Modi" published in "The Hindu" on 12th September 2025.

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

Context: India and Mauritius deepened ties in Varanasi after a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam. They unveiled a special economic package, seven MoUs, and projects.

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

What Was Agreed in Varanasi?

1. **Package and financing:** India announced a package worth \$680 million, including \$25 million as budgetary assistance. It is structured on grant and grant-cum-line of credit bases and is described as an investment in a shared future.
2. **MoUs and sectors:** Both sides signed seven MoUs covering science and technology, oceanographic research, the power sector, and Phase-2 small development projects.
3. **Local currency trade.** After UPI and RuPay launched last year, both countries will work towards enabling trade in local currencies.

How Will People Benefit?

1. **Healthcare and medicines:** India will support an AYUSH Centre of Excellence and a 500-bed Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital. The first Jan Aushadhi Kendra outside India operates in Mauritius to improve access to affordable medicines.
2. **Education and research:** IIT Madras and the Indian Institute of Plantation Management have agreements with the University of Mauritius to elevate research, education, and innovation. India will also help set up a new Directorate of Science and Technology in Mauritius.

3. Capacity building: Over 5,000 Mauritians have trained in India. Training for 500 civil servants has begun in Mussoorie, and Mission Karmayogi modules will launch in Mauritius.

4. Animal health. Plans include a Veterinary School and an Animal Hospital. These will expand services and skills.

How Are Seas and Security Addressed?

1. EEZ security and roles: India remains fully committed to strengthening Mauritius's Exclusive Economic Zone security and maritime capacity. India highlights its role as first responder and net security provider in the region.

2. Hydrography cooperation: A new agreement provides five years of joint surveys, navigation charts, and hydrographic data for Mauritius's EEZ. The EEZ expanded after a treaty with the UK established sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

3. Port and marine protection: In-principle accords cover redevelopment of Port Louis and development and surveillance of the Chagos Marine Protected Area. Priorities include maritime security, drug traffic, and illegal fishing.

4. Training and refit: India is refitting a Mauritius Coast Guard ship and training 120 officers. These steps lift readiness and strengthen operations.

What Will Be Built and Powered?

1. Air and road projects: The package advances an ATC Tower at SSR International Airport and expansion of highways and ring roads. This supports safer travel and better connectivity.

2. Clean energy and mobility: India will support a 17.5 MW floating solar project at Tamarind Falls and provide 100 electric buses; ten are delivered. These actions back Mauritius's energy transition.

3. Equipment and services: The package includes choppers and support for road building. Combined works generate employment and improve services.

How Do Culture and Policy Align?

1. Civilisational ties: Leaders described India and Mauritius as a family rooted in shared culture, with the Varanasi visit underscoring spiritual linkages.

2. Neighbourhood First and ocean vision: Mauritius is integral to India's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision Mahasagar. Both affirmed a free, open, secure, stable, and prosperous Indian Ocean as a shared priority.

3. Mutual appreciation and symbolism: PM Ramgoolam praised India's timely support. He expressed intent to visit Chagos, preferring an Indian vessel, reflecting trust and enduring friendship.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's special economic package and seven MoUs will support Mauritius in healthcare, infrastructure, energy, and maritime security?

Ayurveda-Future of Health

Source: The post Ayurveda Day celebrates people and planet through global collaboration has been created, based on the article “**Ayurveda for people & planet: Rooted in tradition, empowering global wellness**” published in “**Economic Times**” on 13th September 2025

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

Context: India fixed Ayurveda Day on 23 September via a 23 March 2025 Gazette Notification. The 2025 theme—“Ayurveda for People & Planet” links wellness with sustainability.

Why was Ayurveda Day 2025 fixed, and what does it signify?

- 1. Policy decision and theme: Ayurveda Day is fixed on 23 September each year.** The theme “**Ayurveda for People & Planet**” presents Ayurveda as a timeless and progressive healthcare system, strengthened by **education, research, and partnerships**.
- 2. Equinox symbolism and philosophy:** The **autumnal equinox** reflects near-equal day and night. This symbolises **harmony and balance**, mirroring Ayurveda's focus on **equilibrium of mind, body, and spirit**.
- 3. From variable date to global rhythm:** This replaces the **earlier Dhanteras-based variable date**. A fixed, symbolic date supports **global resonance** and the ethos of “**One World, One Family**.”

What infrastructure is shaping Ayurveda's future in India?

- 1. Anchor institutions:** AIIA (New Delhi, 2017), on the AIIMS model, holds **NAAC A++**. ITRA (Jamnagar) is the **first INI in Ayush**, and NIA (Jaipur) is a **Deemed-to-be University**.
- 2. Recent expansion at AIIA:** In 2024, AIIA added a **Panchakarma hospital, sports medicine unit, Ayurvedic pharmacy, start-up incubation centre, and international guest facilities**.
- 3. Standards and research ecosystem:** CCRAS advances **evidence-based research**. PCIM&H sets **quality benchmarks**, creating a cohesive **R&D and standards** framework.

How is India globalising Ayurveda?

- 1. International Cooperation Scheme outcomes:** India has **25 country-level MoUs** and **52 institutional MoUs**. There are **43 Ayush Information Cells in 39 countries** and **15 Ayush Chairs** in leading foreign universities.
- 2. WHO-linked validation:** ITRA, MDNIY, and CCRAS-NIIMH are **WHO Collaborating Centres**. This elevates **standards and credibility**.

3. **Diplomacy and technology:** The **2023 Group of Friends of Traditional Medicine**, initiated by India, advances policy dialogue. A **WHO brief on AI in Traditional Medicine** highlighted **India's pioneering AI applications in Ayush**.

What is the economic footprint, and what lies ahead?

1. **Industry scale and growth:** Ayush has **92,000+ MSMEs** and a market of **USD 43.4 billion (83.6 lakh crore)**. Manufacturing grew **nearly six-fold (2014–2020)** and **almost eight-fold by 2022** (projections).

2. **Detailed growth metrics:** **RIS studies** show manufacturing rose from **721,697 crore (USD 2.85 billion) in 2014–15** to **71,37,800 crore (USD 18.1 billion) in 2020**. The services sector generated **71,66,797 crore**.

3. **Exports and recognition:** India exports **USD 1.54 billion (811,400 crore)** in Ayush and herbal products to **150+ countries**. Ayurveda is recognised in **30+ nations**.

4. **Outlook:** Rooted in tradition, strengthened by science, and expanded through global collaboration, Ayurveda supports **holistic, affordable, sustainable healthcare**.

Question for practice:

Q. Discuss why Ayurveda Day is fixed on 23 September and how this decision supports the 2025 theme Ayurveda for People and Planet.

DPDP Act vs RTI Act

Source: The post DPDP Act undermines RTI transparency and fuels corruption risks has been created, based on the article "**The RTI's shift to a 'right to deny information'**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 13th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance

Context: The article examines how amendments to the RTI Act via the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act threaten transparency. It explains the original balance in Section 8(1)(j) and the ambiguity around "personal information." It also describes the chilling effect on public information officers (PIOs) and the consequences for anti-corruption, public monitoring, and democratic accountability.

For detailed information on **RTI Amendment via DPDP Act, 2023** [read this article here](#)

What was the RTI's original balance on privacy?

1. **Democratic premise and default disclosure:** Information held by government belongs to citizens. Representatives and bureaucracy act as custodians. The default is disclosure, with narrow, defined exemptions.

2. **Original Section 8(1)(j) and the proviso:** Personal information could be withheld only if unconnected to public activity or an unwarranted invasion of privacy, unless larger public interest required disclosure. A

proviso set an acid test: what cannot be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature cannot be denied to any person.

3. Privacy interpretation and constitutional limits: PIOs distinguished public from private activity in context. Privacy evolves case by case, as held in *K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India*. Limits arise from Article 19(1)(2), where only “decency” or “morality” bear on privacy. If disclosure violates these, it must be denied to everyone, including Parliament.

How did the DPDP amendment change Section 8(1)(j)?

1. Six-word truncation and widened denial space: Section 8(1)(j) has been drastically shortened, making refusals easier. The key issue now is what counts as ‘personal information’.

2. Competing meanings of “person”: There are two ways to interpret “person.” One view reads “person” as a natural person. Another adopts the DPDP Bill’s expansive definition, including families, firms, companies, associations, and the State. If second view is adopted, almost everything links to some person, turning RTI into a right to deny.

3. Override plus heavy penalties drive risk-aversion: The DPDP Bill overrides other laws in conflicts and carries penalties up to ₹250 crore. With most records digital, PIOs fear errors and will default to denial.

4. RTI’s primacy in transparency: The DPDP Act must not override the RTI Act. Otherwise, the mandate of transparency is hollowed out.

What are the consequences for accountability and corruption?

1. Loss of citizen monitoring: Citizens are the most effective monitors against corruption. When access to information is denied, this public monitoring mechanism is severely restricted, reducing day-to-day accountability.

2. Denial of essential records: The broadened label can block everyday documents. Even a citizen’s corrected marksheet may be refused. Sharing pension beneficiary data that exposed “ghost employees” and “ghost cards” would stop. Signed official orders could be withheld. Denial can exceed 90%.

3. Space for unfettered corruption: Treating data on ghost employees or corruption charges as personal conceals wrongdoing. Wrongdoing can continue unhindered because the documentary trail that enables scrutiny is no longer available.

4. Fear-driven denial by officials: Severe penalties under the DPDP framework and its override clause create risk aversion among Public Information Officers. With most records now digital, PIOs will default to denial to avoid mistakes, undermining transparency and accountability.

5. Limits of the “larger public interest” route: Section 8(2) technically permits disclosure in larger public interest. In practice, such orders are less than 1%. The test is difficult to apply, requiring an officer to weigh individual harm against public benefit. Reliance on this clause cannot safeguard accountability after the amendment.

Why is response muted, and what must change?

1. Apathy under a data-protection veneer: The amendment is framed as data protection. It looks harmless to many citizens. People also feel their own information should never be shared, even when it is relevant. This ego-driven view weakens support. Media attention is lower than during earlier RTI changes on Commissioners' salaries and tenures..

2. Deep regression of rights: Sections 8(2) and 44(3) of the DPDP Bill are called a fundamental regression. They weaken the right to information and attack fundamental rights. The democratic promise of transparency is being compromised..

3. A focused action agenda: Four priorities matter now: widespread public discussion; demands for manifesto commitments to reverse the changes; strong public opinion with media support; and recognition that the issue warrants top national attention.

4. Democratic stakes: Silence will endanger freedom and democracy. Collective action by citizens and the media can secure a reversal. That is how the integrity of the RTI Act can be protected.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the DPDP Act's amendment to RTI Section 8(1)(j) affects the definition of "personal information" and its consequences for transparency and anti-corruption.

Emerging markets face triple shocks

Source: The post Emerging markets face triple shocks has been created, based on the article "**A time to reinvent**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Economy

Context: Global disruption is not only a US-China story. **Emerging markets** face a **triple shock** from **tariffs**, **trade diversion**, and **technology**. These forces threaten trade-led growth and job creation, and they demand urgent policy choices on competitiveness, reform, and protection for workers.

What is the "triple shock" for Emerging markets (EM)?

1. Tariffs are choking trade-driven growth: International trade powered EM growth for 25 years. EM growth and global trade moved together. After the financial crisis and Covid-era barriers, **US effective tariffs rose from 2.7% to almost 18%**, levels last seen in the 1930s. **Specialisation and exchange** are under threat.

2. Trade diversion risks a China Shock 2.0: Since 2017, rising US tariffs on China have **redirected Chinese exports** toward developing economies. With **US tariffs on China hiked from 10% to 42%**, and China's **excess capacity** creating deflationary pressure, EMs must brace for **low-priced imports** that local firms struggle to match.

3. Manufacturing faces import pressure inside EMs: Chinese import surges have weighed on industry in **Thailand, Indonesia, and India**. With higher US tariffs, these pressures will intensify. EMs must **defend domestic manufacturing** even as protectionism limits their **export opportunities**.

4. Technology is turning labour-substituting: Rising capital-labour ratios have squeezed **blue-collar** jobs. India's **capital intensity** in manufacturing and exports rose despite labour abundance. Rapid **AI diffusion** extends pressure to **white-collar** roles. **Job creation gets harder**, especially in youthful regions.

How does this shock threaten growth and jobs?

1. Export-reliant economies lack large domestic demand: Small, open economies cannot easily replace lost external demand. The **efficiency gains of trade** are at risk. As **economic balkanisation** rises, growth engines weaken.

2. Youth unrest is an early signal: Youth protests in South Asia may be a warning sign. Reinforcing shocks can **erode employment prospects** unless policy acts decisively.

3. Economic balkanisation raises systemic risk: More protectionism fragments markets. EMs face **weaker exports** while absorbing **redirected Chinese supply**, stressing firms and workers.

Why turning inward would be a mistake

1. Tariffs act like export taxes: By the **Lerner Symmetry Theorem**, an import tariff is effectively an **export tax**. **Import substitution** will not reliably deliver growth or jobs.

2. Growth history favours outward orientation: Only **13 economies** since World War II grew **7% for 25 years or more**. All shared **strong exports and global engagement**.

3. The global market is bigger than the US: The **US is under 15% of global imports**. There is still **scope for rules-based multilateral trade** and diversified demand.

4. India can raise its share within a static pie: India's global manufacturing share is **under 2%**. Even if trade wobbles, India can **lift its share**. External orientation boosts **productivity, scale, and R&D**.

How to bend the capital-labour ratio and protect people

1. Equip labour to compete with capital: Invest in **education, health, and skilling** to support **job creation** despite automation.

2. Reform labour laws wisely: Ensure stringent rules do not **hurt workers**. Balanced design supports **formal jobs**.

3. Fund transitions and safety nets: Invest in **reskilling and continuing education**. Build **robust safety nets** and a **tax system** to finance them.

What reforms can raise competitiveness?

1. Push foundational reforms: Competing abroad and at home requires progress on **land, labour, power, health, and education**. **GST simplification** and **committees on deregulation and next-generation reforms** are encouraging starts that should continue.

2. Compete with Chinese imports and higher barriers: Higher barriers and import pressure demand **lower costs** and **greater efficiency**. **Competitiveness** is the central lever.

3. Embrace creative destruction: Rewire economies so **capital and labour** move from **sunset** to **sunrise** sectors. Flexibility builds **resilience**.

4. Reform and reinvent, not retreat: EMDEs face reinforcing shocks. Use them to **reform and reinvent**. Turning **protectionist and inward** is tempting, **simple**, and **wrong**.

Question for practice:

Examine how tariffs, trade diversion (China Shock 2.0), and labour-substituting technology affect emerging markets and what reforms are needed.

India must rationalise tariffs to boost competitiveness

Source: The post India must rationalise tariffs to boost competitiveness has been created, based on the article “**Resist pressure, lower tariffs**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 15th September 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper3**-Economy and **GS paper 2**- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests

Context: US leaders label India the “tariff king” and “tariff maharaja”. The article tests this claim by comparing G20 tariffs, which cover **85% of global GDP**, **75% of trade**, and **two-thirds of population**. It examines simple and trade-weighted rates for all goods, agriculture, and non-agriculture, and proposes reforms.

For detailed information on **India’s Trade Resilience Amid US Tariff Pressures** [read this article here](#)

What do G20 tariff numbers show?

1. Overall tariffs: Turkey’s simple average tariff is **17.3 per cent** and **India’s is 16.2 per cent**. On a trade-weighted basis India leads at **12 per cent**. The US is at **3.3 per cent** simple average and **2.2 per cent** trade-weighted.

2. Agriculture tariffs: **India has the highest trade-weighted agricultural tariff at 64.3 per cent**. On **simple average**, **South Korea tops at 57 per cent** and India is at 36.7 per cent. Trade-weighted rates are 4.2 per cent for the US, 8.7 per cent for the EU, and 13.8 per cent for China.

3. Non-agriculture tariffs: In **non-agriculture goods**, **Argentina leads on a trade-weighted basis at 11.6 per cent**. India follows at 9.2 per cent, indicating high protection outside agriculture as well.

Why does India protect agriculture?

1. Livelihood structure: India has 46 per cent of its labour force in agriculture, must feed 1.45 billion people, and has average holdings near 1 hectare. By contrast, agriculture employs 2 per cent in the US, 4 per cent in the EU, and 22 per cent in China.

2. Trade reality: China is the largest net importer of agricultural products, over \$100 billion in 2024. The US is the biggest exporter at \$182.8 billion, yet also a net importer at \$59 billion. Imports can complement growth when countries focus on comparative advantage.

3. Negotiation backdrop: High agricultural tariffs are contentious in talks, yet reduction is possible because the structure is inconsistent and often irrational.

Where are agri-tariffs irrational?

1. Under-protected essentials: Edible oils, a third of India's agricultural imports, face 10 per cent duty. Cotton is zero, yellow peas negligible, and almonds below 15 per cent.

2. Over-protected items: Walnuts and chicken legs face duties above 100 per cent. Apples carry 50 per cent, blueberries 30 per cent, skimmed milk powder 60 per cent, and food preparations such as soft drink concentrates, custard powder, and lactose syrups 150 per cent.

3. Contradictory cases: India is the world's largest rice exporter, yet rice carries a 70 per cent import duty. Such dispersion cannot be justified simply as farmer protection, since farmers across commodities deserve consistent treatment.

What reform path does the article propose?

1. Rational tariff bands: Cap all duties at 50 per cent. Keep raw materials at 0–10 per cent, non-sensitive goods at 10–20 per cent, sensitive goods at 20–35 per cent, and luxury items at 35–50 per cent. Use tariff rate quotas for sensitive agricultural commodities.

2. Raise productivity: Double agricultural R&D to at least 1 per cent of agri-GDP and scale precision agriculture so farmers produce more from less.

3. Reform subsidies: Rationalise fertiliser subsidy by giving direct benefit transfers to farmers and freeing fertiliser prices.

4. Value chains and strategy: Strengthen farm-to-fork value chains. Treat the US's 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods as a wake-up call. Apply GST-like rates and, over time, lower tariffs well below 10 per cent. Shift from protecting inefficiency to building competitiveness.

Question for practice:

Examine whether India deserves the “tariff king” label based on G20 tariff data.

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-NIHFW (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](#)

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.
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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.

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Question for practice:

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

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Indian's salt overload

Source: The post **Indian's salt overload** has been created, based on the article "**Just a pinch can reduce an Indian's salt overload**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **25th September 2025**.

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

Context: Excessive salt consumption is emerging as a significant public health issue in India, with rising cases of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Despite global recommendations to limit daily salt intake to five grams per person, Indians consume nearly double this amount, leading to numerous health complications.

Impact of Excessive Salt Consumption on Health:

- **Hypertension and Cardiovascular Diseases:** Excessive salt contributes to high blood pressure, which significantly raises the risk of heart disease and stroke. The high prevalence of hypertension in India is largely due to excessive salt intake.
- **Obesity:** The use of salt in processed foods and snacks increases their taste appeal, leading to overconsumption of such foods, contributing to obesity. Obesity, in turn, increases the risk of other NCDs.
- **Public Health Burden:** The rising salt consumption in India is one of the major contributors to the growing burden of NCDs, which are responsible for millions of deaths each year. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable due to the impact of family and societal eating habits.

Sources of Excess Salt Consumption:

The major contributors to high salt consumption include:

- **Homemade Foods:** Traditional Indian foods such as pickles, papad, and other snacks often contain high levels of salt.
- **Processed Foods and Eating Out:** The growing trend of eating out and consuming packaged foods, such as chips, biscuits, and ready-to-eat meals, increases salt intake. These foods are often high in sodium and low in nutritional value.
- **Invisible Salt:** Much of the salt consumed is 'hidden' in food items that do not appear salty, such as bread, sauces, and snacks. These foods contribute to the overall salt intake, which goes unnoticed.

Measures to Curb Excessive Salt Consumption:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Public awareness regarding the health risks of high salt intake is crucial. Educational campaigns can help inform the public about the dangers of excessive salt and encourage the use of healthier alternatives, such as black salt or Himalayan pink salt.
- **Policy Interventions:** The government needs to introduce regulatory measures such as labeling the salt content in food products. Establishing standard guidelines for salt content in processed foods can encourage food manufacturers to reduce their use of salt.
- **Promote Healthier Alternatives:** Encouraging the use of less-salty or salt-free alternatives, especially in home cooking, is key. This could include the use of herbs, spices, and other seasonings instead of excessive salt.
- **Salt Reduction in Processed Foods:** Collaboration with food producers to reduce the amount of salt in processed and packaged foods is essential. The government could incentivize manufacturers who reduce the salt content in their products, as seen in several successful international models.
- **International Models:** Countries like Chile have implemented strict regulations on salt content in food products, resulting in significant reductions in salt consumption. India can adopt similar measures by introducing mandatory salt reduction programs.
- **Role of the Healthcare System:** The healthcare system must play an active role in monitoring and addressing the issue of excessive salt consumption. Regular health screenings for hypertension and related diseases can help identify individuals at risk. Additionally, health professionals should be trained to provide guidance on reducing salt intake and promoting healthier eating habits.

Question: Discuss the impact of excessive salt consumption on health in India and suggest measures to curb it.

Unrest in Ladakh

Source: The post **Unrest in Ladakh** has been created, based on the article “**Ladakh protests: demand for statehood, sixth schedule inclusion.**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **25th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- Governance- Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Context: The ongoing protests in Ladakh highlight a significant movement driven by local demands for greater autonomy.

Main Issues:

1. **Statehood Demand:** The protests reflect a long-standing dissatisfaction with the existing Union Territory status of Ladakh, following its bifurcation from Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. Protesters demand statehood to better safeguard their political, social, and economic interests.
2. **Sixth Schedule Inclusion:** A major aspect of the protest is the demand for Ladakh's inclusion under the Sixth Schedule, which grants autonomy to tribal areas. Under this provision, regions like Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura have legislative, judicial, and administrative powers.
3. The Sixth Schedule is **considered crucial for the protection of the region's unique culture, land rights, and local governance**. However, the central government is reluctant to extend these protections to Ladakh.
4. The Home Ministry has **proposed alternative solutions** like domicile-based reservations and job safeguards, but this has not been accepted by local groups, who argue that these measures do not fully address their concerns.
5. **Political and Social Dynamics:** Civil society groups in Ladakh maintain that the Sixth Schedule and statehood are necessary to preserve their cultural identity and to address growing concerns over unemployment and land rights.

Way Forward:

1. **Inclusive Dialogue:** Engage all stakeholders, including local leaders and activists, in transparent and inclusive talks to address Ladakh's demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule inclusion.
2. **Statehood and Sixth Schedule Review:** Establish a commission to assess the feasibility of granting Ladakh statehood and extending Sixth Schedule protections to preserve its cultural and land rights.
3. **Economic Development and Employment:** Focus on creating sustainable job opportunities and promoting local industries, ensuring Ladakhis have control over their land and resources.
4. **Political Unity:** Bridge divides between local leaders to present a united front in negotiations with the government, ensuring broad representation of Ladakhi interests.
5. **Maintain Law and Order:** Ensure peaceful protests are respected while the security forces maintain restraint, avoiding further escalation of violence and protecting citizens' rights.

Question: Discuss the recent protests in Ladakh demanding statehood and inclusion under the Sixth Schedule, and explain the central issues surrounding this movement.

Controlling Floods in India: Following the Rains, Not the Calendar

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Disaster and disaster management

Introduction

India's cities face recurrent flooding every monsoon, exposing weak urban planning and outdated drainage systems. With rainfall becoming untimely and more intense due to climate change, Indian cities are still designed for a climate that no longer exists. Recent floods across **Punjab, Delhi, Gurugram, Himachal Pradesh, and Kolkata** reveal the urgency of shifting from calendar-based preparedness to rainfall-based planning.

The Growing Flood Challenge

- **Shifting Monsoon Patterns:** Unseasonal heavy rainfall — e.g., Mumbai recorded **135.4 mm in 24 hours in May 2025**, while Delhi saw **81 mm in a few hours**.
- **Rising Intensity:** A **Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)** study shows **64% of Indian tehsils** have seen more heavy rainfall days, especially in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Karnataka.
- **Economic Cost:** Floods are India's most damaging natural disaster; a single event now causes losses of about **₹8,700 crore**.
- **Changing Rainfall Distribution:** One-day or one-hour cloudbursts overwhelm urban systems; rainfall that once spread across days is now compressed into hours.

Key Initiatives to Tackle Urban Floods

1. **Data-Driven Planning:** Sub-daily rainfall analysis must guide drainage upgrades. The **BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation)** widened drains to handle **120 mm/hour** rainfall.
2. **Coordinated Sanitation and Drainage Management:** Garbage blocks drains; separate municipal departments work on different schedules. Cities like **Vijayawada** use joint sanitation and engineering teams during rainfall alerts to reduce waterlogging.
3. **Updating Intensity-Duration-Frequency (IDF) Curves:** IDF curves, mapping rainfall intensity over time, should be updated every **5–10 years**. The **BMC** has proposed a new drainage master plan based on updated rainfall trends.
4. **Catchment-Based Hydrological Design:** Drainage design should factor in **micro-catchment topography** and separate storm water from sewerage networks. This prevents overload and enhances resilience.

Lessons for Flood Preparedness

- **Mission-Mode Resilience:** Like vaccination drives, flood mitigation requires coordinated, targeted planning beyond seasonal assumptions.
- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Use IMD rainfall alerts, IoT-based drainage sensors, and citizen apps to enable immediate action.
- **Integration of Departments:** Drainage, sanitation, and disaster response must align calendars and share resources.
- **Learning from Global Practices:** Cities like **Tokyo and Rotterdam** adopt adaptive drainage systems that adjust to rainfall intensity in real time.

Challenges Remain

- **Outdated Infrastructure:** Many drainage systems are decades old and built for lower rainfall volumes.

- **Urbanisation Pressure:** Encroachment on wetlands, floodplains, and natural drains worsens waterlogging.
- **Institutional Silos:** Multiple agencies working independently delay response.
- **Awareness and Preparedness:** Citizens continue to dump waste into drains, aggravating blockages.

Conclusion

India is not losing to rainfall, but to the illusion that monsoon follows predictable patterns. The way forward lies in **real-time rainfall-based planning, updated drainage infrastructure, and inter-agency coordination**. Instead of asking “when will monsoon begin?”, cities must ask “are we ready for the rains already falling?”

Question for Practice

Examine how climate change has altered rainfall patterns in India and suggest reforms needed in urban planning and flood management.

Source: The Hindu

Protecting Personality Rights in India

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

Introduction

The rise of artificial intelligence, deepfakes, and digital platforms has exposed new vulnerabilities for celebrities and ordinary citizens alike. Indian courts have stepped in to protect the dignity and autonomy of individuals against unauthorised commercial exploitation of their image, voice, and persona. Recent Delhi and Bombay High Court rulings in favour of actors Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Jackie Shroff, Anil Kapoor, and singer Arijit Singh underline the urgency of codifying personality rights. These interventions highlight both progress and gaps in safeguarding personal identity in the digital era.

Gains from Judicial Protection of Personality Rights

- **Scale and outcomes:** Since the **seminal 1994 Auto Shankar case (R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu)**, courts have linked personality rights to the constitutional right to privacy under Article 21. Successive judgments have restrained misuse of celebrity identity, granting injunctions and damages.
- **Programme breadth and legal control:** Statutory tools like the **Copyright Act, 1957 (Sections 38A and 38B)** grant performers exclusive and moral rights, while the **Trade Marks Act, 1999** enables registration of names, signatures, or catchphrases. Celebrities such as Shah Rukh Khan and Priyanka Chopra have trademarked their names.
- **AI-era adaptations:** Courts have extended protection to novel risks like **voice cloning, deepfakes, and morphing**. In **Anil Kapoor v. 16 Online Entities (2023)**, wide-ranging protections were issued against misuse of his persona. Similarly, the Bombay High Court in 2024 recognised Arijit Singh’s rights against AI-generated replicas of his voice.

• **Recognition of autonomy and dignity:** At the heart of judicial rulings lies the protection of personal autonomy. Courts have reiterated that unauthorised commercial use of identity strips away dignity and dilutes brand value painstakingly built over years.

Key Judicial Initiatives

- **R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu (1994):** Recognised right to control identity use as part of privacy.
- **Rajinikanth case (2014):** Held that infringement arises if the celebrity is readily identifiable, regardless of falsity or confusion.
- **DM Entertainment v. Baby Gift House (2010):** Protected singer Daler Mehndi's persona, while cautioning against overreach that stifles parody and satire.
- **Anil Kapoor (2023), Jackie Shroff (2024), Arijit Singh (2024):** Set modern precedents against deepfakes, AI misuse, and online impersonation.
- **Digital Collectibles v. Galactus Funware (2023):** Affirmed that satire, parody, and academic use of celebrity images remain legitimate free expression under Article 19(1)(a).

Personality Rights in India: Judicial vs Legislative Protection

Aspect	Pros	Cons
Judicial Protection	<p>Flexible and adaptive to new threats like AI deepfakes, voice cloning (Arijit Singh case, 2024).</p> <p>Quick relief via injunctions and takedowns.</p> <p>Builds evolving jurisprudence rooted in Article 21 (privacy) and Article 19(1)(a) (free speech).</p>	<p>Fragmented and inconsistent across High Courts.</p> <p>Relies on precedents; no uniform definition of rights.</p> <p>Delays in enforcement as misuse spreads online rapidly.</p> <p>Risk of judicial overreach without clear statutory limits.</p>
Legislative Codification	<p>Provides uniform framework and clarity for citizens and courts.</p> <p>Clearly defines scope of rights and exceptions (parody, satire, academic use).</p> <p>Enables proactive regulation of AI-generated misuse.</p> <p>Stronger enforcement via statutory penalties.</p>	<p>Risk of overbroad law leading to censorship of satire and creative expression.</p> <p>May privilege celebrity protection over ordinary citizens.</p> <p>Implementation challenges given vast online content.</p> <p>Requires frequent updates to keep pace with tech.</p>

Impact on Citizens	<p>Judicial rulings extend privacy safeguards beyond celebrities.</p> <p>Courts have recognised protection against revenge porn, deepfakes, and online impersonation.</p>	<p>Access to courts costly and time-consuming for ordinary citizens.</p> <p>Ad hoc remedies may not be accessible in every case.</p>
Impact on Industry & Media	<p>Courts allow space for parody, satire, art, and scholarship (DM Entertainment case, 2010; Digital Collectibles case, 2023).</p>	<p>Uncertainty over permissible use deters media, advertisers, and content creators from innovation.</p> <p>Risk of self-censorship without statutory clarity.</p>

Lessons from Judicial Protection of Personality Rights

- **Mission-mode relief works at scale:** Injunctions and takedown orders protect celebrities quickly from reputational and financial harm.
- **Technology-sensitive jurisprudence evolves:** Courts have proactively extended protection to cover AI-based impersonation and online misuse, setting global benchmarks.
- **Balance with free speech is crucial:** Courts have repeatedly drawn lines between legitimate criticism, parody, and unlawful commercial exploitation.
- **Publicity rights as economic assets:** Judicial recognition strengthens the idea that a celebrity's persona is a commercial asset deserving of legal protection.
- **Privacy rights for all:** Though celebrity cases dominate headlines, principles established equally safeguard ordinary citizens, particularly against **deepfakes, revenge porn, and cyber harassment**.

Challenges Remain

- **Fragmented legal regime:** No single statute codifies personality rights, forcing reliance on piecemeal precedents.
- **Risk of censorship:** Expansive interpretation may stifle satire, parody, and creative expression, chilling free speech.
- **Technology outpacing law:** AI-generated content spreads faster than courts or regulators can respond.
- **Disproportionate impact on women:** Deepfakes and revenge pornography often target women, highlighting gendered vulnerabilities.
- **Enforcement difficulties:** Tracking misuse across thousands of URLs and platforms remains a herculean task.

Conclusion

India stands at a crossroads in protecting personality rights. Judicial activism has laid a strong foundation, but a **comprehensive legislative framework** is essential to harmonise privacy, dignity, and free expression. Codifying exceptions for satire, parody, and academic use while criminalising malicious misuse will strike a fair balance. Protecting identity in the age of AI is not just about celebrities—it is about safeguarding the autonomy and dignity of every citizen.

Question for Practice:

Critically analyse the evolution of personality rights in India. How can the law balance protection of dignity and privacy with the constitutional guarantee of free expression?

Source: The Hindu

India's urban definition is failing its growing towns

Source: The post **India's urban definition is failing its growing towns** has been created, based on the article **"Why India's urban definition is failing its growing towns"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **26th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Context: The definition of urban areas in India, as outlined in the 2011 Census, is based on two categories: statutory towns and census towns. However, this binary classification fails to accommodate the complexities of urban growth in semi-rural and transitional areas.

Current Definition of Urban Areas

1. **The 2011 Census classified urban units** as either a **statutory town or a census town**.
2. **Statutory towns** are officially notified as urban by the state government.
3. **Census towns** are those with a **male main working population engaged in non-agricultural activities and a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre**.

Limitations of the Current Urban Definition

1. **Narrow Criteria:** The existing definition primarily **considers a male workforce engaged in non-agricultural activities**, which overlooks the broader reality of urban employment trends. The **focus on male workers and population density as sole indicators neglects the growing number of women and informal workers**, who form a significant part of the urban economy.
2. **Exclusion of Semi-Urban Areas:** Areas that **do not meet the formal criteria may be left out of the urban classification**, despite showing clear signs of urban traits such as growing industries and service sectors.
3. **Panchayat vs Urban Local Bodies:** **Urban local bodies have more autonomy and control over finances** compared to Panchayat Raj institutions, which are limited to implementing rural development programs. As a result, towns that should have urban governance structures continue to function under outdated rural models.

4. **Urbanization in India and the Role of Census Towns:** Rapid urbanisation is transforming rural areas into urban-like settlements, **but many remain classified as rural**, resulting in **gaps in infrastructure, resource allocation, and governance**.

Way Forward:

1. **Need for a Revised Urban Definition:** As India prepares for the 2027 Census, it is crucial to **redefine urban areas by focusing on population size, density, and economic activities beyond just a male workforce**. A more nuanced framework will help capture the complexities of urbanisation.
2. **Incorporate Socio-Economic Indicators:** The urban definition should include **factors like diverse employment types, service availability, and the role of women in the workforce** ensuring a more accurate representation of emerging urban regions.
3. **Update Governance Framework:** Census towns functioning as urban areas should be **given statutory recognition and empowered local urban bodies** for better governance and responsiveness.
4. **Adopt Urban-Rural Continuum:** Replace **the urban-rural divide with a continuum approach**, recognizing varying stages of urbanisation for more tailored infrastructure and service planning.
5. **Ensure Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning:** Urban planning **should account for contributions from women, informal workers, and marginalized groups** promoting equitable development.
6. **Regular Reassessment:** Urban definitions and census methods **must be regularly updated to keep pace with dynamic urban growth** ensuring effective planning and resource allocation.

Question: Critically evaluate the limitations of India's current urban classification system and suggest a way forward to better address the evolving nature of urbanisation in the country.

Regulation on Social Media

Source: The post **Regulation on Social Media** has been created, based on the article **"In Karnataka HC's rejection of X plea against Sahyog, 3 red lines for social media"** published in **"Indian Express"** on **26th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance, Transparency & Accountability and institutional and other measures.

Context: The Karnataka High Court recently rejected X's (formerly Twitter) plea to restrain the central government's Sahyog portal, highlighting significant rulings regarding social media regulation in India.

Background:

1. X filed a case against the Central Government, challenging the usage of **Section 79 (3)(b) of the Information Technology Act**, arguing it **created a "parallel" and "unlawful" content censorship regime** through the Sahyog portal.

2. X sought protection for its representatives and employees, arguing that the portal violates its **right to free expression and access to information**.
3. The court's ruling solidified India's stance on regulating social media content.

Key Points from the Judgment

- **Need for Regulation:** The judgment stressed that **India cannot allow social media platforms to operate without regulatory oversight**, particularly when it comes to preventing cybercrimes and ensuring responsible content dissemination.
 - The judgment also reinforced the idea that every sovereign nation has the right to regulate content on social media platforms, aligning India's policy with other nations such as the U.S.A.
- **Law of the Land:** The court firmly rejected the notion that social media platforms should be exempt from legal scrutiny, likening the Indian marketplace to a "mere playground" free from regulation.
 - It also emphasized that **platforms like X must operate under the jurisdiction of Indian law**, stressing accountability and transparency in the digital realm.
- **Shreya Singhal Judgment Not Applicable:** The court ruled that the Shreya Singhal ruling, which focused on the unconstitutional nature of vague intermediary rules and their impact on free speech, could not be applied in this case, stating that **new regulations on social media must be interpreted in light of evolving technological and legal landscapes**.

Key takeaways from the judgement

1. **Indian Sovereignty and Global Standards:** By asserting that **foreign legal precedents cannot be transposed into Indian law**, the court reinforces the **concept of Indian sovereignty in digital governance**.
2. **Impact on Content Regulation:** The court's decision could pave the way for **more robust and localized mechanisms for content regulation**, potentially altering how global social media companies engage with Indian laws.
3. **Indian Authority on Content Control:** The ruling emphasizes that **Indian authorities hold the power to enforce content control mechanisms** in ways that align with India's unique socio-legal environment.
4. **Future Outlook:** As digital platforms continue to grow and influence public discourse, the judgment **sets the stage for more nuanced regulations around intermediary liability, cybercrime, and freedom of expression in India**.
5. **Adaptation to Emerging Digital Challenges:** The ruling also underscores **the need for evolving legal interpretations to adapt to changing technologies and emerging challenges** in the digital space.

Way Forward

1. **Updating Legal Frameworks:** Laws like **Section 79(3)(b)** should be regularly revised to address emerging digital challenges.
2. **Clearer Content Guidelines:** **Transparent and accountable content moderation policies** must be developed, balancing free speech with preventing harm.

3. **Protecting Free Expression: Regulations should protect free speech** while addressing issues like cybercrimes and misinformation.
4. **Transparency in Operations:** Social media platforms must be **more transparent in their operations**, including algorithms and data usage.
5. **Local Regulatory Bodies:** India should **create dedicated regulatory bodies** to oversee content regulation and cybercrime prevention.
6. **Stakeholder Engagement: Ongoing dialogue between the government, tech companies, and civil society** will ensure fair and effective regulations.

Question: Discuss the significance of the Karnataka High Court's recent judgment on social media regulation in India. What are its implications for free speech and digital governance?

Role of technology in disaster risk reduction

Source: The post **Role of technology in disaster risk reduction** has been created, based on the article "Nityanand Rai highlights role of technology in disaster risk reduction at NDMA's 21st Formation Day" published in "DD News" on 27th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Disaster and Disaster Management

Context: Recently, the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** celebrated its **21st Formation Day** in New Delhi with the theme "**Technology for Risk Reduction – For a Safer Nation**."

Role of Technology in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

1. **Early Warning Systems:** Satellite imagery, Doppler radars, and mobile alerts are **improving forecast accuracy and last-mile delivery of disaster warnings**.
2. **Drones and GIS:** Drones and GIS are **enabling real-time mapping, rapid damage assessment, and faster rescue operations** during disasters.
3. **Big Data & AI:** Big data and artificial intelligence are helping governments **model risks, predict disasters, and plan mitigation measures**.
4. **Digital Platforms:** Digital platforms are **strengthening coordination between agencies** and improving outreach to citizens.
 - a. In this light, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between **NDMA and the National e-Governance Division** to **enhance digital disaster preparedness and public outreach**.

Community-Based Initiatives

1. The **Youth Aapda Mitra Scheme** is expanding preparedness by training volunteers from **NCC, NSS, Nehru Yuva Kendra, and Bharat Scouts and Guides**.
2. Over one lakh **Aapda Mitras have been trained**, including 20% women volunteers known as Aapda Sakhis, to ensure inclusive disaster response.
3. **Combining local knowledge with technology is building resilient communities** at the grassroots level.

Institutional and Policy Support

1. **NDMA Guidelines & SOPs:** NDMA has released Standard Operating Procedures for drone use, lightning safety protocols, and heat action plans to improve preparedness.
2. **Strengthening SDMA:** Strengthening State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) is decentralizing capacity building at the state level.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Education and awareness campaigns such as the comic series “Little Chanakya Aur Aapda se Bachav” are teaching children about disaster safety.
4. **Alignment with Global Goals:** India’s DRR approach fits the **Sendai Framework (2015–2030)** and PM Modi’s **10-point agenda on DRR (2016)**.
 - a. **10-Point Agenda for DRR** emphasizes **risk assessment, community involvement, early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and international cooperation**.
 - b. It guides India and global partners toward building disaster-resilient communities.

Challenges

1. **Integration of Technology with Local Capacities:** Technology must be adapted and integrated with local capacities rather than relying only on high-end tools.
2. **Last-Mile Connectivity and Inclusion:** Last-mile connectivity and the inclusion of marginalized groups remain significant gaps in disaster response.
3. **Funding and Coordination:** Sustained funding and stronger inter-agency coordination are needed to improve overall preparedness.

Way Forward

1. **Mainstream DRR into Development Planning:** Embed risk assessments in all infrastructure and urban projects.
2. **Expand Use of Indigenous Technology:** Develop low-cost, locally adapted solutions such as community-based early warning systems.
3. **Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships:** Use private expertise in AI, data analytics, and logistics for disaster management.
4. **Focus on Capacity Building:** Regular training, mock drills, and upskilling of volunteers and officials.
5. **Enhance Public Awareness:** Incorporate disaster education in school curricula and conduct community outreach.
6. **Regional and International Cooperation:** Share best practices, technology, and joint exercises with neighboring countries.

Conclusion: India’s disaster management strategy is moving from a **reactive approach to a proactive, technology-driven, and community-based model**. By combining innovation, institutional strength, and citizen participation and following a clear way forward, India can build a **globally recognized disaster-resilient nation**.

Question: How can technology and community participation strengthen disaster risk reduction in India?

India-EU Strategic Agenda

Source: The post **India-EU Strategic Agenda** has been created, based on the article “**Explained: India-EU strategic agenda**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **27th September 2025**.

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

Context: The EU recently issued a **Strategic Agenda for India-EU ties**, outlining cooperation across five main pillars: **economy & trade, global connectivity, emerging technologies, security & defence, and people-to-people ties.**

Economy & Trade

1. The EU is **India's largest trading partner**, while **India is the EU's largest partner in the Global South.**
2. In 2024, bilateral trade in goods reached **EUR 120 billion** (up 90% over a decade), with **EUR 60 billion in services trade.**
3. Around **6,000 European companies operate in India**, directly employing 3 million people.
4. **EU FDI in India reached EUR 140 billion in 2023**, nearly doubling in five years.
5. However, India accounts for **less than 2.5%** of the EU's total trade and invests only **EUR 10 billion** in the EU, indicating scope for growth.
6. Both sides aim to conclude a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025**, along with agreements on **Investment Protection (IPA), Geographical Indications, Air Transport**, and a **Bilateral Macroeconomic Dialogue.**

Global Connectivity

1. The EU's **Global Gateway (EUR 300 billion)** and India's **MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth)** support energy, digital, and transport infrastructure.
2. The 2021 **EU-India Connectivity Partnership** underpins joint infrastructure projects.
3. Flagship projects include the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** integrating maritime, rail, energy, digital, and clean hydrogen links.
4. The **EU-Africa-India Digital Corridor** with the **11,700 km Blue Raman submarine cable system** will deliver ultra-high-speed, secure data connectivity from Europe to India via the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Eastern Africa.
5. Both partners are collaborating on **Green Shipping Corridors** to support sustainable maritime connectivity and reduce carbon-intensive routes.

Emerging Technologies

1. The EU **brings world-class research, digital infrastructure, and green tech expertise**, while India offers **skilled talent, vast datasets, and a vibrant startup ecosystem.**
2. Plans include creating **EU-India Innovation Hubs** on key technologies, and an **EU-India Startup Partnership** involving the European Innovation Council and Start-up India.
3. Cooperation will cover **AI domains** (large language models, multilingual NLP, public good applications in health, agriculture, climate), and **data-sharing frameworks** to prevent misuse of sensitive technologies.
4. Both sides will also collaborate under the **Euratom-India agreement** on nuclear safety, radioactive waste management, nuclear security, and fusion research.

Security & Defence

1. The **EU-India Strategic Dialogue on Foreign and Security Policy** launched in June 2025 enhances cooperation on maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and non-proliferation.
2. Negotiations are beginning for a **Security of Information Agreement** to enable classified information exchange.
3. The EU's Indo-Pacific engagement complements India's regional role, including proposed arrangements between the **EU Naval Force and Indian Navy** for greater information-sharing in the western Indian Ocean.
4. Cooperation will extend to combating **terror financing, online propaganda, and security risks from emerging tech**, and may include tackling drug trafficking.
5. Defence-industrial cooperation is planned via an **EU-India Defence Industry Forum**, which will boost research, innovation, and reliable supply chains.

People-to-People Ties

1. In 2023, **825,000 Indian citizens lived in the EU**, making them the largest recipients of EU Blue Cards and intra-corporate transfer permits.
2. Nearly **one million Schengen visas** were issued in India in 2024, many as multiple-entry visas.
3. Both partners seek **balanced migration policies** reducing illegal flows while **supporting talent mobility** aligned with India's development priorities and the **EU's labour needs**.
4. **Education ties will deepen through initiatives** like the **Union of Skills and Erasmus**, expanding student, academic, and researcher exchanges.
5. Plans include **mutual recognition of qualifications, joint degree programmes, satellite campuses, and language training** in India to make European education more attractive.

Challenges in India-EU Relations

1. Structural and Institutional Differences: The EU **relies on the transatlantic security umbrella**, whereas India follows **strategic autonomy without external guarantees**.

2. Divergent Strategic and Political Approaches: India and the EU have different global aspirations and policy preferences, particularly **regarding democracy promotion, human rights, and interventionist policies**. **Europe's proactive engagement with China** and its critical stance on India's human rights issues create mutual mistrust.

3. Trade and Investment Barriers: Nearly two decades of inconclusive FTA negotiations have **delayed greater market access**. India **faces non-tariff barriers in the EU** and **EU criticises India's high price barriers and lack of transparency**, which hinder a predictable trade framework.

4. Technology and R&D Collaboration Gaps: The EU's aging population and lagging R&D contrast with India's **underutilized scientific and skilled workforce**. Also, **limited scholarships, rigid visa rules, and weak industry-academia links** hinder high-tech cooperation.

5. Energy and Climate Challenges: India's **development priorities make EU-level climate standards harder to adopt** quickly. Also, financing and technology transfer gaps slow India's energy transition.

6. Security and Defence Limitations: The EU has **limited hard-power capability and no unified military posture**, constraining its ability to provide security deliverables to India. **Defence cooperation remains underdeveloped** compared to India's partnerships with the U.S., Japan, or the Quad.

7. Balancing Standards and Realism: The EU's **emphasis on norms and standards sometimes clashes with India's strategic autonomy** and developmental priorities.

Way Forward

1. **Conclude ongoing negotiations** on the FTA, IPA, and Geographical Indications to unlock trade and investment potential.
2. **Scale up connectivity projects** like IMEC and Green Shipping Corridors to ensure sustainable infrastructure links.
3. **Enhance cooperation on emerging tech** through regulatory harmonization, joint research, and responsible AI frameworks.
4. **Institutionalize defence and security ties** by operationalizing the Security of Information Agreement and the Defence Industry Forum.
5. **Deepen talent mobility** with simplified visa processes, joint education programs, and recognition of qualifications.
6. **Promote trilateral and multilateral cooperation** by linking EU, Africa, Middle East, and India in energy, digital, and maritime corridors.

Conclusion: The India–EU Strategic Agenda offers a roadmap to transform shared values into concrete outcomes across trade, technology, security, and people-to-people ties. By overcoming structural differences and deepening cooperation through practical steps, both partners can build a resilient, future-ready partnership.

Question: How can the new India–EU Strategic Agenda strengthen cooperation between the two partners, and what challenges must be overcome to make it successful?

Role of Northeastern Region in Export Economy of India

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy

Introduction

Northeast **India borders five countries** and **spans 5,484 km of international frontiers**. It holds rich natural and human capital **yet contributes only 0.13% of exports**. Once periphery, it is India's strategic and digital frontier. NITI Aayog's NER SDG Index (2021–22) shows gains but uneven progress. The Economic Survey 2024–25 flags high potential for infrastructure and ASEAN integration under Act East. With investments above ₹1.5 lakh crore, the region is shifting from insurgency to innovation.

Potential of Northeast Region in India's Export Economy

1. Border location. The eight Northeastern States share borders with **Bangladesh, Bhutan, China (Tibet), Myanmar, and Nepal**. This should make the region India's land bridge to South and Southeast Asia. Yet **about 95% of trade with these neighbours still originates outside the Northeast**.

2. Export basket & advantages

• **Agri-surplus:** The region has high marketable surplus in **pineapple (95%)**, orange, jackfruit, banana, and cabbage. Export handling has begun through **Guwahati air cargo, APEDA packing houses, and Imphal cold storage**.

- **Potential energy hubs:** Rivers and terrain create **potential energy supply hubs**; hydropower and transmission corridors can make **electricity a tradable commodity** alongside agro-based exports.
- **Tea strength, value gap:** The Northeast produces **over half of India's tea**. Branding and packaging remain limited. Bulk **CTC** dominates, keeping prices vulnerable.

Government initiative to enhance the export from Northeast state

1. Trade facilitation and connectivity:

- **Direct agri-export clearance at Guwahati airport.**
- **Five Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) packing houses** for fresh fruits and vegetables (Assam, Sikkim, Mizoram).
- **Cold-storage at Imphal airport** to support perishables.
- **Greenfield airports** added in the last 11 years; **Roll-on and Roll-off (Ro-Ro)** waterways on the Brahmaputra.
- **Bogibeel Bridge** improving regional logistics.

2. Industrial and public-investment push

- **Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme (UNNATI-2024)** for industrial development with tailored incentives across all eight States.
- **Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE)** funding infrastructure, social projects, and livelihoods in the North East Region (NER).
- **Hydro project equity support** (approved August 2024) targeting about **15,000 MW** capacity.

3. Agri-horti exports and value chains

- **High marketable surplus crops** (pineapple, orange, jackfruit, banana, cabbage) supported by **airport clearance, packing houses, and cold chain**.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (NER) — Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs)**, hectares covered, farmer beneficiaries.
- **North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC)** expanding processed and value-added agri products and running **skill training**.
- **Bee-keeping project** with **North Eastern Centre for Technology and Enrich (NECTAR)** (bee boxes and accessories distributed).

4. Enterprise finance, design, and market access

- **North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi)** financing **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**, infrastructure, and agri-allied projects; advisory services.
- **North Eastern Handicrafts & Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHDC)** initiatives: **Purbashree.com** e-commerce, mobile “**Purbashree on Wheels**,” design centre (**Nature’s Weave**), textile **testing laboratory**, **calendaring unit**, and training roles.
- **Eri Silk spinning plant** (Assam) and **digital traceability network** for weavers.
- Formation of **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)** and **Van Dhan Vikas Yojana** support for tribal value addition.

5. Sector-specific policy enablers and promotion

- **Geographical Indication (GI) registrations** for **13 agri-horti products** of the North East Region (NER).
- **National Bamboo Mission** impetus after **bamboo’s reclassification as grass**.
- **Rising North East Investors Summit (May 2025)** to attract global and domestic investment; multiple **High-Level Task Forces** (North-East Economic Corridor, tourism, investment promotion, connectivity, handlooms, agriculture value chains, sports).

Key constraints and binding bottlenecks

1. Export concentration and institutional omission

Extreme centralisation. Four States—**Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka**—account for **over 70%** of merchandise exports (**Gujarat ~33%**). The Northeast contributes **about 0.13%**, despite sharing **5,483 km** of international borders.

Strategy gaps. The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** strategic export plan carried **no dedicated corridor focus** for the Northeast Region.

2. Missing corridors and security-first borders

No operational trade corridor. There is **no functional corridor** linking the Northeast to foreign markets; planned gateways did not mature into export routes.

Gateways turned bottlenecks. **Zokhawthar (Mizoram)** and **Moreh (Manipur)** have withered into **securitised checkpoints**, not facilitation nodes.

Free Movement Regime (FMR) scrapped (2024). Formal cross-border movement thinned further after the FMR ended, shrinking legitimate flows and raising costs.

3. Fragile value chains and logistics gaps

Farm-to-market frictions. Producers face hurdles in **aggregation, credit, storage, processing, and transport**; difficult terrain and dispersed cultivation raise costs and block scale.

Perishable chains are thin. Cold-chain and warehousing remain **patchy**, so agro-horticulture surpluses struggle to meet export timelines reliably.

Missed niches. Bamboo exports from Mizoram cannot meet overseas demand (e.g., South Korea) due to **logistics constraints**, showing how infrastructure gaps erase opportunities.

4. Informal economy dominance: Porous borders, insurgency legacies, and close cross-border linkages push trade into **informal routes**, crowding out formal volumes and investment..

5. External shocks, geopolitics, and social-environmental sensitivities

1. Tariff shock to tea: The **additional 25% tariffs (August 2025)** in key Western markets threaten margins and jobs in **Assam's tea belt**, where prices and wages were already tight.

2. Energy sanctions risk: Numaligarh Refinery expansion depends more on external crude, including **discounted Russian cargoes**; any sanctions or shipping squeeze will hit **Golaghat** first.

3. Regional flux: The **Myanmar coup (2021)** stalled overland integration; the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** has not delivered expected connectivity.

4. Consent and ecology: The Northeast is **ecologically sensitive**; projects have faced **land acquisition resistance** (e.g., an **Asian Development Bank** project in Imphal), underscoring the need for **science-based environmental impact assessments**, community consent, and enforceable safeguards.

Way forward

1. Build arteries and formalise trade: Fund **corridors, warehouses, LCS upgrades**, and cold-chain to connect NER to Bay-of-Bengal/ASEAN routes. Also balance **smart security** with facilitation to shift flows into formal channels with **Bangladesh and Myanmar**.

2. Deepen value addition: Promote **branding/packaging** for tea and **GI products**, scale **organic clusters**, and strengthen **bamboo/agarwood** value chains to capture premiums.

3. Elevate institutional voice: Embed **NER representation** in export strategy bodies and align incentive schemes to the region's geography and sectors.

4. Secure social licence: Institutionalise **community consent, transparent** Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs), and enforceable **environmental safeguards** to reduce friction and speed delivery

Question for practice:

Examine the factors that constrain the Northeastern Region's contribution to India's export economy despite its strategic location and resource potential.

Source: The Hindu

Cooling Rights in Global South

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Introduction

Cooling is no longer a lifestyle choice; it is a **public-health and adaptation right**. Studies indicate **~489,000 heat-related deaths each year (2000–2019)**, with nearly half in Asia—evidence that extreme heat already imposes mass mortality in the Global South. Yet access is deeply unequal across and within countries, and policy still frames cooling mainly as an energy-efficiency issue rather than a development right.

The Imperative of Cooling

- 1. Public health & survival:** Extreme heat already claims lives and overwhelms health systems. Reliable electricity is a prerequisite for safe neonatal care, emergency rooms, and cold chains—yet close to **1 billion** people are served by facilities with **unreliable or no power**, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 2. Adaptation Priority:** Europe has rapidly expanded AC ownership following heatwaves, while most cities in Asia and Africa still struggle without public cooling infrastructure despite regularly facing **40°C+** summers. This reflects a troubling asymmetry: **for the North, cooling is “adaptation”; for the South, it is treated as an “emissions liability.”**
- 3. Workforce Safety:** In India, **80% of workers** are in agriculture, construction, or street vending—sectors directly exposed to heat. Cooling, shading, and hydration facilities are therefore frontline labour rights, not comforts.

Inequities in Cooling Access

- 1. Within India:** In 2021, only **13% of urban** and **1% of rural households** owned ACs. The richest **10%** owned **72% of all units**, showing deep socio-economic divides.
- 2. Global Divide:** AC penetration is **very high in the U.S. and Japan (~90%)** and **single-digit in much of Sub-Saharan Africa**.
- 3. Infrastructure Gaps:** Nearly **1 billion people** in low- and middle-income countries are served by health facilities with **unreliable or no electricity**, limiting even basic cooling

Consequences of Neglecting Cooling Rights

- 1. Workforce productivity losses:** By **2030**, heat stress could cut more than **2%** of global working hours—about **80 million full-time jobs**—with South Asia among the hardest-hit regions. Outdoor and informal workers face the steepest risks.
- 2. Health Emergencies:** Countries like Kenya and Burkina Faso already report sharp spikes in **cardiovascular and renal cases** during heatwaves. Without reliable cooling, mortality will rise
- 3. Grid and planning risks:** Cooling demand is becoming one of the most variable daily loads; unmanaged growth will stress power systems and amplify outages and losses. (IEA underscores the need to **double AC efficiency** to contain demand.)
- 4. Health-system strain:** Underpowered facilities cannot safely deliver heat-sensitive services—risking higher mortality and lost health gains—unless electricity reliability and cooling access improve.

Policy & Governance Landscape

India's initiatives:

1. India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)

- (i) reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25% by 2037-38,
- (ii) reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by 2037-38,
- (iii) Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by 2037-38,
- (iv) recognize "cooling and related areas" as a thrust area of research under national S&T Programme,
- (v) training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, synergizing with Skill India Mission.

2. **Kigali Amendment (2021):** India committed to phasing down HFCs by 2047.

3. **BEE measures:** star-labelling and a **24 °C default setting** advisory/requirement to reduce consumption.

4. **Heat Action Plans (HAPs):** Cities like Ahmedabad pioneered HAPs with cooling centres, early warnings, and public awareness, but many remain underfunded and weakly enforced.

Global initiatives:

1. **Global Cooling Pledge (COP28):** collective goal to cut **cooling-related emissions 68% by 2050, boost access to sustainable cooling by 2030, and double AC efficiency (~+50%)**—linking equity, access, and efficiency.

2. **Health-facility electrification push:** WHO/World Bank call for targeted investments to end the power deficit in care facilities.

Way Forward

1. **Targeted access:** Provide direct vouchers/DBT for efficient fans/ACs to low-income, rural, and heat-hotspot households; priority lists for outdoor workers (construction, farm, vending), elderly, children, and persons with comorbidities.

2. **Public cooling network:** Establish 24×7 community cooling centres at schools, transit hubs, PHCs/CHCs; ensure drinking water, shaded seating, basic first-aid, and emergency transport. Also map centres to heat-index hotspots.

3. **Power health facilities:** Electrify all primary/secondary facilities with grid + rooftop solar + batteries; Need to monitor uptime and cold-chain reliability on public dashboards.

4. **Build cool by default:** Mandate cool roofs, ventilation, reflective surfaces, tree canopies, and shaded workspaces in public housing, schools, anganwadis, markets. Integrate thermal comfort metrics into building codes and urban by laws.

5. **Tighten standards & pricing:** Raise MEPS/star labels; retain 24 °C default/20–28 °C band

6. **Finance & governance:** Use concessional CSR funds for poor-household access and facility upgrades. Mandate Heat Action Plans through law, ensure dedicated budgets for their implementation, and specify clear responsibilities for state and local authorities.

Question for practice:

Discuss the inequities in access to cooling in the Global South and explain why treating cooling as a development right is essential for climate justice.

Source: The Hindu

Food Security amid Uncertainty

Source: The post **Food Security amid Uncertainty** has been created, based on the article “**Food security amid Uncertainty**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **29th September 2025**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security.

Context: In today’s globalized environment, India’s food security is intricately linked to its energy and fertilizer supplies, making it vulnerable to external shocks such as geopolitical conflicts, supply chain disruptions, and volatile commodity prices.

Current Challenges

1. **High Import Dependence:** India produces almost 90% of its urea using imported natural gas which creates a high dependence on external energy sources.
 - a. The country imports large quantities of phosphoric acid and phosphatic fertilisers such as DAP, making its agriculture vulnerable to international supply fluctuations.
2. **Geopolitical Risks:** Ongoing geopolitical conflicts such as the **Russia-Ukraine war, combined with sanctions and export restrictions** in supplier countries, disrupt the global energy and fertiliser markets on which India relies.
 - a. Also, **countries around the world are tightening their own export policies** to prioritise domestic needs, which further threatens India’s supply security.
3. **Economic Vulnerability:** Sharp price **spikes in fertilisers and energy inputs raise subsidy burdens and impact farmers’ input costs**, threatening agricultural productivity and food affordability.

Recent Initiatives

1. **Saudi Arabia and Morocco Engagements:** India is exploring agreements to import three million tonnes of phosphatic fertilisers annually from Saudi Arabia and to develop joint ventures with Morocco’s OCP Group.
2. **Domestic Capacity Building:** Policy incentives have been taken for domestic exploration of natural gas and manufacturing of fertiliser intermediates. For eg. The Government of India is promoting public-private partnerships to strengthen domestic fertiliser production capacities.
3. **Diplomatic efforts** have been intensified to maintain global supply chains, as seen in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s pitch at the UNGA **to avoid trade wars and advocate open-door policies**.

Strategic Partnerships as a Solution

1. **Diversification of Sources:** India needs to diversify its sources of gas, phosphoric acid, and rock phosphate to reduce overreliance on a few supplier countries.
2. **Joint Ventures Abroad:** Collaborating with countries like Morocco, which holds over 70% of the world's phosphate reserves, can ensure a steady and reliable supply of critical inputs.
3. **Long-term Contracts:** India should secure long-term contracts and forward supply agreements for gas and fertilisers to protect itself from global price volatility and supply disruptions.

Benefits of Strategic Diplomacy

1. **Supply Security:** Strategic diplomacy ensures uninterrupted supplies of essential inputs such as gas, phosphoric acid, and rock phosphate, which strengthens India's food security.
2. **Price Stability:** It reduces India's vulnerability to global price shocks and stabilises fertiliser subsidies, thereby protecting farmers from high input costs.
3. **Boost to Agricultural Productivity:** Reliable and affordable input supply supports higher agricultural productivity, which helps maintain food affordability for consumers.
4. **Economic Resilience:** By reducing external vulnerabilities, strategic partnerships also shield India's GDP growth and rural livelihoods from global economic shocks

Way Forward

1. India should build strategic reserves of critical fertilisers and raw materials to cushion against sudden disruptions in supply chains.
2. The government must develop indigenous technologies for fertiliser production and energy efficiency to reduce dependence on imports.
3. Public-private partnerships should be strengthened to secure overseas resources and establish joint ventures in the energy and fertiliser sectors.
4. Food security strategies should be integrated with energy and fertiliser diplomacy under a coordinated national policy.
5. Ministries dealing with agriculture and fertilisers should be empowered to negotiate long-term agreements with trusted countries to ensure uninterrupted supply.

Conclusion: Ensuring food security amid uncertainty requires India to look beyond domestic reforms and embrace strategic international partnerships. By diversifying its supply chains, investing in joint ventures, and negotiating long-term contracts with trusted partners, India can safeguard its agricultural backbone and sustain food security for its population.

Question: India's food security is increasingly dependent on external supplies of energy and fertilisers. Discuss the challenges India faces in this regard and examine how strategic international partnerships can help ensure uninterrupted supplies.

Self Reliance in Shipping

Source: The post **Self Reliance in Shipping** has been created, based on the article "India has a viable voyage plan to acquire self-reliance in shipping" published in "Live Mint" on 29th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Context: India relies heavily on foreign shipping, spending around USD 75 billion annually nearly equivalent to its defence budget. This overdependence on foreign ships, which handle about 95% of India's export-import trade, highlights the urgent need for self-reliance in shipping.

Why Self-Reliance in Shipping is Needed

1. **High Foreign Exchange Outflow:** India spends nearly USD 75 billion annually on foreign shipping services, reducing this dependency will help conserve foreign exchange and strengthen the domestic economy.
2. **Strategic Autonomy and National Security:** In times of international crises or conflicts, a strong domestic shipping fleet ensures uninterrupted supply chains for energy, food, and defence cargo. It also helps to stabilize shipping costs and improve trade competitiveness.
3. **Boosting Domestic Industry and Employment:** Building and operating Indian ships creates large-scale employment in shipyards, ancillary industries, ports, and logistics sectors. It also develops technological expertise and a skilled workforce in maritime engineering and operations.
4. **Supporting Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Self-reliance in shipping stimulates domestic shipbuilding, port infrastructure, and related industries. This aligns with the government's goal of increasing India's share in global maritime trade to 30% by 2047.
5. **Compliance with Global Environmental Norms:** Developing indigenous capacity allows India to design ships that comply with international sustainability and emission standards. It also provides control over adopting green technologies suited to India's needs.
6. **Enhancing India's Global Maritime Influence:** A robust Indian-flagged fleet increases India's bargaining power in international maritime forums and strengthens its position in global supply chains.

Government Initiatives for Self-Reliance in Shipping

1. **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS):** The Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS) will provide financial assistance to shipyards and encourage the establishment of new shipbuilding facilities.
2. **Maritime Development Fund (MDF):** The Maritime Development Fund (MDF) has been approved to provide long-term financing support for ship acquisition and port development.
3. **Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme (SCGS):** The government has allocated ₹4,000 crore under the Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme (SCGS) to guarantee up to 40% of the ship's value for buyers of ships built in India.
4. **Shipbuilding Development Scheme (SbDS):** The Shipbuilding Development Scheme (SbDS) has been launched to expand domestic shipbuilding capacity to 4.5 million gross tonnage annually and support mega shipbuilding clusters and infrastructure expansion.
5. The government plans to establish the India Ship Technology Centre under the Indian Maritime University to develop skills, research, and shipbuilding technology.
6. The government's recent policy interventions, as highlighted under the *Samudra ke Samridhi* programme, aim to transform India into a major global maritime player

Supportive Measures & Policy Framework

1. **Harmonized Master List (HML):** The Harmonized Master List (HML) now includes Indian-owned and Indian-flagged ships which are built in India and bear the Indian flag.

2. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Project Finance Directions, 2025**, will **provide flexible lending terms, enhanced limits for loans from banks, flexibility in financing, and restructuring of existing loans** for the shipping sector.
3. **Financing Access:** Infrastructure funds **such as NaBFID, PFC, REC and the Sagarmala Development Finance Corporation** will be opened for Indian shipping companies to access finance for fleet expansion and ship acquisition.
4. **Green Shipping Push:** The **Harit Nauka-Green Transition Guidelines for Inland Vessels** will **promote clean fuel-powered vessels and provide a structured plan** for greener inland shipping.
5. **Technology and Skills Development:** Proposed **India Ship Technology Centre** under Indian Maritime University for R&D and training.

Potential Impact

1. **Reduced Dependence on Foreign Shipping:** These initiatives will reduce India's dependence on foreign shipping and help retain freight earnings within the country.
2. **Boost to Employment and Shipbuilding Industry:** They will boost employment opportunities and strengthen the Indian shipbuilding and allied industries.
3. **Environmental Compliance:** They will enable Indian ships to comply with international sustainability and environmental standards, reducing risks from global emission regulations.
4. **Strategic Maritime Autonomy:** They will enhance India's strategic maritime autonomy and global competitiveness, aligning with the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision.

Challenges

1. The shipbuilding industry is **highly capital-intensive** and has **long gestation periods**, which may discourage private investment.
2. **Compliance with evolving international environmental and safety standards** requires continuous technological upgrades.
3. India needs to **develop skilled manpower and advanced infrastructure** to compete with established global shipbuilding hubs.
4. **Global competition and fluctuating freight markets** can affect the long-term viability of Indian shipping ventures.

Way Forward

1. The government should **ensure timely execution** of announced schemes and **quick disbursement of funds** to shipyards.
2. India should **develop a national shipbuilding cluster policy** with clear incentives for innovation, research, and skill development.
3. **Partnerships with global shipbuilders** should be promoted for technology transfer and green shipbuilding expertise.
4. A **supportive legal and regulatory framework** should be created to attract private sector investment in shipbuilding and ship operation.

Conclusion: India's multi-pronged approach combining financial incentives, regulatory reforms, green shipping norms, and domestic manufacturing sets a strong foundation to achieve the nation's vision of capturing 30% of global maritime trade by 2047. Effective implementation of these initiatives can transform India from a shipping-dependent nation to a maritime power.

Question: India has unveiled several initiatives to achieve self-reliance in shipping. Discuss the measures taken and their potential impact on India's maritime trade.

An engel's pause in an AI driven World

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

Introduction

AI is boosting productivity, yet broad income gains may lag. Geoffrey Hinton, AI pioneer and deep-learning researcher, warns it could enrich a few and leave many poorer. This sets up the lens of “Engels’ Pause” —high output with flat living standards, as seen in industrial Britain. With younger workers exposed, large firms pivoting to AI, and many pilots lacking visible payoffs, the risk of a modern pause is real unless institutions, skills, and fair sharing evolve fast.

What is AI and what is its status today?

1. Definition

Artificial intelligence is intelligence demonstrated by machines. Unlike the natural intelligence present in living things, the AI will develop its intelligence based on the data. In simple terms, the more we use AI, the more data we generate, the smarter AI gets.

2. Global potential

- By 2030, AI could add about \$15.7 trillion to global GDP (~14%).
- It supports 134 Sustainable Development Goal targets (~79%) and powers thousands of mapped “AI for good” use cases across sectors, signaling broad economic and social potential.

3. India's adoption snapshot

About 70% of firms run AI projects. 91% plan to use their data to train models. Early regulation aims to be light. Job-loss risks remain a concern.

4. Capability gaps persist: 95% of AI pilots show no visible gains because complements are missing. Leading innovation economists note AI lowers prediction costs, yet broad welfare needs skilled workers, high-quality data, affordable cloud, and supportive institutions to translate efficiency into real benefits.

“Engels’ Pause” and its impacts

Engels’ Pause

- It is a **phase where output rises but most people's living standards stall**. The term, coined by **Robert Allen** after Friedrich Engels, draws from early-19th-century Britain, when factories grew yet ordinary welfare lagged.
- Output surged but Wages stagnated. Food swallowed household budgets. Inequality widened. Broad welfare arrived only later.

“Engels’ Pause” Impacts

- 1. Gains concentrate:** General-purpose technologies reward capital and control first. Oligarch-style gains can appear. Workers benefit after complements—skills, tasks, and institutions—mature.
- 2. Younger workers are vulnerable:** Recent evidence shows youth face higher AI disruption. Without reskilling and safety nets, scarring can persist.

3. **Macro gains but micro stagnation:** AI can lift GDP. Households may not feel it. Prices, wages, and costly complements (cloud, data, retraining) can offset the gain.

4. **Unequal gain concentration:**

- AI could add \$15.7 trillion to global GDP, yet benefits cluster in the U.S., China, and a few model-holders.
- The IMF estimates 40% of jobs are exposed, with rich economies facing high-skill substitution.
- Indian evidence shows that stronger IP in tech races widened wage inequality, signalling how rents can concentrate.

5. **Job displacement and task shifts:**

- AI complements doctors and appears in AI-powered hospital pilots.
- Tasks in education, finance, public and infrastructure management are redesigned. New roles emerge, but some jobs shrink.
- The labour market tilts toward task reconfiguration, not broad, immediate income gains

The real challenge

1. Governance gap: History warns that productivity booms can raise inequality (Gilded Age). Broad gains arrive only when unions, public schooling, welfare systems, and clear rules mature together.

2. Why benefits lag: Missing complements (skills, compute, data access) delay diffusion. Institutions must adapt to new tasks and incentives.

3. Counter-view with a caveat: Today's welfare systems are stronger, and technology spreads quickly. AI can cut costs in health, education, and energy when access is equitable. Yet democratic backsliding and slow policy responses can still prolong the pause.

4. Political will: Political will determines whether macro gains become household welfare. Governments must align skills, infrastructure, and rent-sharing with speed. Progress delayed is progress denied, and the window for inclusive diffusion will not stay open forever..

Way Forward

1. Continuous skilling: Follow Singapore's SkillsFuture for lifelong credits. Build AI-native human capital like MBZUAI to match task shifts.

2. Redistribute AI rents: Consider robot taxes and UBI pilots (e.g., UK/EU) and philanthropic commitments (e.g., Chan-Zuckerberg) to broaden gains.

3. Compute and data as public goods: Treat compute and data as core infrastructure. Open reasoning models such as K2Think.ai and Apertus signal shared access.

4. Green the AI stack: Power data centers and model training with renewables, and use AI to optimize grid use, cooling, and efficiency.

5. Responsible AI guardrails: Use UN digital cooperation, UNESCO ethics guidance, and NITI Aayog's "Responsible AI for All" to balance promotion and governance.

Conclusion

Engels' Pause is not destiny. With skills, fair sharing, and public-good infrastructure, AI can become a human-welfare revolution, not just a productivity story. Whether the pause lingers—or passes quickly—depends on choices we make now.

Question for practice:

Discuss whether AI is causing a modern "Engels' Pause," and outline key markers and policy fixes for India.

Source: The Hindu

Need for reforming Wassenaar arrangements

Source: The post **Need for reforming Wassenaar Arrangement** has been created, based on the article “**The Wassenaar Arrangement: the need to reform export control regimes**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 30th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- International relations

Context: The Wassenaar Arrangement regulates conventional arms and dual-use technologies to prevent WMD proliferation, but its focus on physical exports leaves gaps in addressing digital technologies, cloud services, and software-as-a-service models.

Background of the Wassenaar Arrangement:

1. The Wassenaar Arrangement is a **multilateral export control regime** aimed at regulating conventional arms and dual-use technologies.
2. It is intended to **promote transparency and responsibility in international trade** while preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
3. The **Arrangement allows participating states** to exchange information and retain discretion in licensing, implementation, and enforcement.
4. In **2013, it was expanded to include controls on “intrusion software”** designed to bypass security measures or conduct surveillance.
5. Despite these updates, **the framework still largely treats exports as physical transfers, leaving software and cloud services** in regulatory grey areas.

Issues with the Current Arrangement:

1. **Consensus Limitation:** The **Arrangement is consensus-based**, so any member can block changes, limiting its adaptability.
2. **Legislative Dependence:** **Implementation depends on national legislation**, resulting in inconsistent application and loopholes.
3. **Technological Evasion:** **Cloud services and digital technologies can bypass traditional export controls**, posing risks of human rights abuses and surveillance.
4. **Regulatory Ambiguity:** Many **technologies remain unregulated** due to ambiguity over whether software delivered remotely constitutes an export.

Need for Reform:

1. **Expanded Coverage:** The Arrangement should explicitly **cover digital infrastructure, cloud services, AI, and real-time control systems**.
2. **Human Rights Safeguards:** Licensing criteria **should include end-use considerations and human rights safeguards**.
3. **Binding Compliance Framework:** A **binding framework with minimum standards, licensing denial mechanisms, and cross-border supervision** is necessary to ensure compliance.

Challenges to Reform:

1. **Sovereignty Concern:** Some states may resist stricter controls due to **concerns over sovereignty, innovation, and economic competitiveness**.

2. **Technical Complexity:** Mapping cloud services to existing control categories is **complex and requires technical expertise**.
3. **Coordination Requirement:** National authorities **must coordinate to monitor global digital service** transfers effectively.

Way Forward:

1. **End-Use & Human Rights Controls:** Introduce end-use and human rights-based controls for cloud services and AI technologies.
2. **Monitoring & Standards:** Implement real-time monitoring, shared blacklists, and technical interoperability standards.
3. **Adaptive Regulation:** Adopt sunset clauses and fast-track mechanisms to update control lists regularly.
4. **Corporate Compliance Incentives:** Encourage corporate compliance through incentives and human rights due diligence frameworks.

Conclusion: The Wassenaar Arrangement remains a critical tool for conventional arms control but is increasingly inadequate for modern digital technologies. Reforming the framework is essential to ensure operational relevance, protect human rights, and prevent misuse of emerging technologies. A pragmatic approach balancing security, innovation, and accountability is necessary for an effective global export control regime.

Question: Examine the relevance of the Wassenaar Arrangement in the era of digital technologies and AI, and suggest measures to strengthen global export controls

Pakistan's role in Terrorism and related International Challenges

Source: The post “Pakistan's role in Terrorism and related International Challenges” has been created, based on the article “An anti-terror role that defies logic” published in “The Hindu” on 30th September 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas - Linkages of Organized Crime with Terrorism.

Context: Pakistan has long been accused of providing safe havens and logistical support to terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). Its role in cross-border terrorism and regional instability has repeatedly drawn international attention, raising questions about the effectiveness of global counter-terrorism mechanisms.

Pakistan's Role in Terrorism:

1. **Terror Shelter:** Pakistan continues to harbor terrorists, including UN-designated individuals like Hafiz Saeed. The country's law enforcement and intelligence agencies have often been complicit or passive in countering these groups.
2. **Strategic Manipulation:** Pakistan leverages its military and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) networks to support terrorist operations while publicly projecting itself as a responsible global actor.
3. **Diplomatic Maneuvering:** By influencing UN committees such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee, Pakistan exploits gaps in international oversight, often blocking measures against itself.

Challenges for the UN and Global Community:

1. **Credibility Gap:** Pakistan's election to lead key UN committees despite evidence of terror links undermines the UN's impartiality and commitment to counter-terrorism.
2. **Geopolitical Pressures:** Powerful nations often shield Pakistan for strategic or economic reasons, complicating enforcement of sanctions and accountability.
3. **Humanitarian and Economic Dilemmas:** International funding, like IMF loans, sometimes faces scrutiny due to concerns about potential misuse for terror financing.

Implications for India:

1. **Security Threats:** Pakistan-based groups have orchestrated attacks like Pulwama, directly threatening Indian security and public safety.
2. **Diplomatic Constraints:** Pakistan's influence in UN bodies often limits India's capacity to push for international sanctions or actions against terrorists.
3. **Global Narrative:** Pakistan attempts to shape narratives around terrorism and regional stability, potentially deflecting blame onto India or justifying its proxy strategies.

Measures for India:

1. **Strategic Diplomacy:** Leverage alliances within the UN and other multilateral forums to counter Pakistan's influence and highlight its terror links.
2. **Counter-Terrorism Policies:** Strengthen intelligence sharing, cybersecurity measures, and targeted sanctions against Pakistan-based entities.
3. **International Engagement:** Conduct proactive campaigns involving global media, academia, and diaspora to expose Pakistan's role in terrorism.
4. **Humanitarian and Strategic Balancing:** Ensure India's participation in humanitarian missions and UN processes to assert credibility while monitoring Pakistan's activities.

Conclusion: Pakistan's dual strategy of sponsoring terrorism while projecting itself as a responsible global actor poses significant challenges for India and the international community. A combination of strategic diplomacy, robust intelligence measures, and international advocacy is essential for India to counter Pakistan's influence and strengthen global counter-terrorism efforts.

Question: Critically examine Pakistan's role in global terrorism and the challenges it poses to India and the UN. Suggest measures for India to counter these challenges.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

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

Introduction

Time is running out to meet the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)**. Countries must work together faster to achieve targets on **poverty, hunger, health, education, climate, and equality**. **South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)** helps countries **share low-cost, easy-to-copy solutions** to common development problems. SSTC supports practical action based on **solidarity, mutual respect, and shared learning**.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

1. **South-South cooperation** occurs when countries in the Global South – along with institutions and civil society organizations – exchange knowledge, technology and resources to solve common problems.
2. **Triangular cooperation:** This links Global South partners with a Northern country or a multilateral agency. The third partner adds finance or technical support, while Southern partners lead. This model amplifies good practice and strengthens trust and accountability.
3. **Origins and recognition:** SSTC was **formalised under BAPA (1978)**. The UN **adopted September 12** as the **International Day for SSTC**, keeping focus on shared learning and partnership.
4. **Users and sectors:** Governments, international organisations, academics, social partners, civil society, and the private sector use SSTC across **decent work, lifelong learning, agriculture, human rights, urbanisation, health, climate change, social protection, and jobs**.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Achievements

1. **Global funds and reach:** Over three decades, **47 governments** contributed to the **United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation**. These initiatives worked in **over 70 countries** and **benefited people in 155 nations**.
2. **Financing aligned to Zero Hunger (SDG 2):** In 2024, the **World Food Programme (WFP)** mobilised **US\$10.9 million** from **Global South countries** and the **private sector** for **SSTC projects** aligned with **Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger**.
3. **Other action:**
 - **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) pool funds** for **rice fortification** and **supply chain optimisation in Nepal**,
 - **A UN India Development Fund project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)** show a shared commitment to action.

India's role for SSTC

1. **Development Partnership Administration:** India(MEA) set up the **Development Partnership Administration** in the Ministry of External Affairs. It plans and delivers **country-led, demand-driven** development cooperation. This gives SSTC an institutional base.
2. **India-UN Development Partnership Fund:** Since 2017, the **India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund** has financed **over 75 demand-driven projects** across **56 developing countries**, with a focus on **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** and **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**.
3. **Digital diplomacy:** India shares **digital public infrastructure** such as **Aadhaar** and **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**. These tools are **low-cost** and **scalable**. Partners can adapt them to local needs.
4. **Voice of the Global South:** India **hosted the Voice of the Global South Summits** to bring Southern priorities together. It also led the push in its **G20 presidency** to secure the **African Union's permanent membership**. This amplifies Global South concerns in decision-making forums.

5. **India-WFP partnership:** India works with the **World Food Programme (WFP)** to design and test solutions. Joint work includes **Annapurta (Grain ATM)**, **supply-chain optimisation** in the **Public Distribution System**, **women-led Take-Home Ration**, and **national rice fortification**. These improved food security in India and offer **replicable models** for other countries.

Challenges to SSTC

1. **Funding stress:** Support for humanitarian and development sectors is **reducing**. This **hampers pilot projects, scaling, and long-term capacity-building**.
2. **Institutional and learning gaps:** Many countries lack infrastructure, strong agencies, and trained people. New solutions are hard to absorb well.
3. **No common framework:** Because there is no shared global framework, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability stay weak.
4. **Neutrality issues:** SSTC is strongest when **Southern partners lead** and work by **solidarity, mutual respect, and shared learning**. If cooperation looks **donor-driven or politicised**, trust falls.

Way forward

1. **New opportunities and innovation:** The **2025 UN Day theme** is “**New Opportunities and Innovation through SSTC**.” Countries should **try new ideas** and **back them with strong institutions**.
2. **Finance and accountability:** Make **more finance** available for **demand-driven projects**. Build **accountability and learning** into every programme from the start. This helps projects **improve, repeat, and grow**.
3. **Broader coalitions:** Keep **triangular partnerships** active. Work closely with **civil society, the private sector, and local communities**. Keep cooperation **people-centred** and focused on real needs.
4. **Focus areas for impact:** Give priority to **food security, nutrition, and resilience**. India is **deepening regional and global work** in these areas. This keeps SSTC **practical, scalable, and outcome-oriented**.
5. **Emerging areas to include:** Bring **digital economy, AI regulation, and climate financing** under SSTC. Share **low-cost, adaptable tools** and simple **rules-of-thumb** across countries. This widens impact while keeping solutions **easy to use and copy**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) supports the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, and **explain India's role in strengthening SSTC**.

Source: The Hindu

India's demographic shift - Bridging the generation gap

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 -Society- Social issues.

Introduction

India is ageing faster than before. **At least 1 in 10 Indians is 60+ today; nearly 1 in 5 by 2050.** This change **strains family care, pensions, housing, and health systems.** It also **exposes a digital gap that can isolate elders.** The task is clear: protect dignity, cut loneliness, and keep daily connections. Families, communities, and policy must work together. Patient digital help, intergenerational spaces, and reliable income support can turn tension into trust.

Status of Ageing Population in India

- 1. Rising numbers:** Elderlies are projected to grow from **100 million (2011) to 230 million (2036)** and to **nearly 20% by 2050.**
- 2. Dependency ratio:** Up from **10.9% (1961) to 14.2% (2011)** and is projected to increase to **15.7% (2021) and 20.1% (2031).**
- 3. The HelpAge India survey** covered **5,700 respondents** across **10 cities** (**70% youth aged 18–30; 30% elders aged 60+**). Youth described elders as **“wise” (51%)** and **“respectable” (43%)**, but also as **“lonely” (56%)** and **“dependent” (48%)**. This shows a **contrast between respect in words and limited support in practice.**
- 4. Family as the anchor:** Most youth expect family living in old age (88%), and most elders do or plan to live with family (83%).

Impact of this demographic shift

Social Challenges

- 1. Social Neglect-** Elderlies are increasingly being neglected by the younger generation due to various social reasons such as western education, globalisation, nuclear families, and a **digital gap** that limits communication and shared time.
- 2. Abuse of the elderly population-** Elderlies in India face various forms of abuse such as physical, sexual, psychological or financial. They suffer from emotional harm that emerges from verbal or emotional abuse.
- 3. Intersection of Caste and Elderly-** The lower caste elderly have to keep on working for livelihood even at old age due to financial issues. While for the upper caste elderlies, good jobs become less available and they hesitate to take menial jobs which creates a feeling of ‘worthlessness’ amongst them.
- 4. Feminisation of ageing-** The life of elderly widows is riddled with stringent moral codes of the society. Social bias against elderly women results in unjust allocation of resources, neglect, abuse, exploitation, gender-based violence, lack of access to basic services and prevention of ownership of assets.
- 5. Invisible and unheard:** Many elders **feel left out of decisions** at home—often **told the plan, not asked.** This creates a sense of being **invisible and unheard**, which **widens emotional distance** within families.

Economic and Financial Challenges

1. Lack of Income & Poor financial status- According to PFRDA report on Financial Security of India's elderly, a large elderly population which remains outside the pension safety net. Furthermore, the pension provided to them remains very low for their proper sustenance.

2. Low funding by the government- India spends only about 1% of its gross domestic product on pensions. India's income support systems in their current form remain incapable of catering to the old age population.

3. Lack of housing and other basic amenities- The housing available to a majority of the senior citizens are sometimes inappropriate and unsuitable to their requirement.

Health Issues and Challenges

1. Rise in age-related chronic illness- According to the Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI) in 2021, One in five elderly persons in India has mental health issues and around 75 per cent of them suffer from a chronic disease.

2. Increasing need for geriatric care- Increased health-related expenses for the treatment of diseases like Non-Communicable diseases, cataract, hearing loss etc. creates financial problem for the elderly population.

Government initiative to overcome this issue

1. National Policy for Older Persons (2011): The policy aims to encourage individuals to make provisions for their own and their spouse during old age, to bring non-governmental organizations for caring for older persons and to provide healthcare facilities to the elderly.

2. Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS): The scheme provide an old-age pension for persons above the age of 60 years belonging to the BPL category..

3. PM Vaya Vandana Yojana: The scheme aims to provide social security during old age. It also protects elderly persons aged 60 and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.

4. Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana: The scheme provides Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to the BPL category..

5. Senior care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) Initiative and SAGE portal: It aims to help startups interested in providing services for elderly care..

Way forward

1. Family and community actions :

- Turn **respect into daily support**: schedule a **weekly chat**, a **no-phone meal**, and a **teach-and-learn** session (digital basics from youth; life skills from elders).
- Build **community day-centres**, **youth volunteer clubs**, and **local check-ins**.
- Design **intergenerational spaces** so that even when care homes are used, **family links stay active**.
- **Channel willingness** : With 75% of youth **willing to support elder initiatives**, create **structured roles** (library helpers, clinic escorts, digital buddies) so **intent becomes weekly action**.

2. Formalization of caregiving economy- According to a NITI Aayog report, healthcare offered at home can replace up to 65 per cent of unnecessary hospital visits and reduce hospital costs by 20 per cent. Well-trained caregivers possessing empathetic outlook towards elderly need to be provided formal and better work place conditions. Recognition of “home” as a place for providing care and as a “place of work” for caregivers will be the first step towards elderly care.

3. Comprehensive policy on home based care- This policy must include within its ambit the streamlining of vocational training, nomenclature, roles, and career progression of the caregivers. It must also streamline the registry of caregivers, ensure transparency and accountability and establish grievance redressal mechanisms.

4. Passage of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019- The next session of the parliament must aim to pass this bill which seeks to regulate home-based care for older people.

5. Strengthening pension systems- The government must allocate a special budget for the elderly population to strengthen the pension systems through better funding and coverage.

6. Replication of Switzerland’s time bank initiative- Under this initiative, the younger generation start to save ‘time’ by taking care of senior citizens. Later, they can use the saved ‘time’ when they get old, sick, or in need of someone to take care of them. This initiative must be applied to Indian setup.

7. Raising of retirement age- India should raise the retirement age in the future, in a phased manner so as not to jeopardize opportunities for younger generations.

8. Proactive government policies- The Government should proactively work on lifestyle modification, non-communicable disease management, vision and hearing problem management, and accessible health care of the elderly population in India.

Question for practice:

Examine how India’s ageing population affects intergenerational relations and suggest practical steps to bridge the generation gap.

Source: The Hindu

