

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

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Features :

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News Papers editorials

INDEX

The case for a board of peace and sustainable security	2
Trump Drops a Bomb, on U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing.....	4
Unlocking PSB Top Posts for Private Sector Bankers	6
India-Taliban Engagement.....	7
Model Youth Gram Sabhas.....	10
India's IT dream is at a crossroads	13
The case for energy efficiency	15
Challenges to Nuclear Restraint and India's Position	17
India's Reforms Moment in Science and Technology	19
Banking Law Amendment Streamlines Succession	21
AI and Jobs vs Work: The Economic Dimension.....	23
India's Forests Hold the Future	25
A Need for Nationwide SIR.....	28
The Malleable Code of Conduct (CoC)	31
New Mutual Funds Regulations on Total Expense Ratio (TER) and Brokerage Costs	33
In Brazil, COP30 and the moment of truth	35
Karnataka's menstrual leave policy: progressive step or symbolic gesture?	37
Why the nomination process needs reform.....	39
Reimagining labour laws for MSMEs	41
A blueprint for India's 'regulatory stack'	43
Tackling Maoist Insurgency	45
Abraham Accords: A New Geopolitical Balancing Act.....	48

The case for a board of peace and sustainable security

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Important International institutions, agencies and fora – their structure, mandate.

Introduction

The UN turns 80 with a sharp gap between ideals and structures. The Security Council **reacts to crises but does not sustain peace**. **Political engagement ends too soon**; conflicts persist, deals falter, transitions stall. **Instead of waiting for slow constitutional change**, the General Assembly can **create a Board of Peace and Sustainable Security (BPSS)** to provide **steady political accompaniment** and **link peacekeeping to achievable political paths**.

Issue with United Nations (UN)

1. **Episodic responses:** The UN moves from crisis to crisis. **Diplomacy starts late, ends early**, and once violence dips, **attention shifts away**, so fragile settlements **lose direction and momentum**.
2. **No continuity mechanism:** After mediation peaks, **no body stays engaged**. Without a standing anchor, **political accompaniment fades** and **early understandings are not carried into implementation**.
3. **Peacekeeping–politics gap:** Missions **stabilise security** but often **lack a linked political roadmap**. Without sustained negotiation and monitoring, **transitions stall even with troops present**.
4. **Reform bottleneck:** Security Council reform is **necessary but slow**. **Waiting first is a mistake**. Under **Article 22**, the General Assembly can **create new subsidiary bodies (like the BPSS)** to strengthen action **without challenging Council primacy** or altering the Charter.

For detailed information on **UNSC Reforms** [read this article here](#)

Board of Peace and Sustainable Security (BPSS) as solutions

1. Purpose and scope of the BPSS

- A **Board of Peace and Sustainable Security (BPSS)** would fill the **institutional void** that undermines conflict resolution..
- A **Board of Peace and Sustainable Security (BPSS)** would work **during and after conflict**, where UN political presence is low. It would **not** do early warning, **not** intrude on sovereignty, and **not** rival the Council.
- **Use political tools, not force:** It would reinforce **national dialogue**, accompany **peace agreement implementation**, coordinate **regional diplomacy**, and ensure **peacekeeping links to achievable political pathways** rather than becoming indefinite holding missions.
- **Fit within the UN system:** Working with the **Secretary-General** and the **Security Council**, the BPSS would **subsume the Peacebuilding Commission** and align peacekeeping and peacebuilding with **clear political outcomes**.

2. Structure of the BPSS

- **Representative:** Membership would be a **rotating group of about two dozen states**, elected by the General Assembly for fixed terms.
- **Regional bodies as participants:** **Regional balance** would be guaranteed across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West Asia. Organisations from these regions would be **participants, not observers**.
- **No vetoes:** The board would rest on **participation**, not privilege.
- **Agenda items:** It could be introduced only by a **UN member-state**, a **regional organisation**, or the **Secretary-General**. **Civil society** would have **consultative** input, **no voting**.

3. Working mechanism of the BPSS

- **A working body:** The BPSS would **stay engaged when others leave**, **track commitments** after the spotlight moves on, and **preserve institutional memory** between mandate renewals. It would reduce drift in long engagements.
- **Modest form, real impact:** The mandate looks small but shapes outcomes. It delivers disciplined political accompaniment, builds continuity without expansion, and coordinates actors without confrontation. States keep sovereignty; societies gain confidence that peace will not be dropped.
- **Core principle:** Peace lasts when political deals earn legitimacy through governance, inclusion, and responsible leadership. The board links security to political reality and ties missions to achievable political paths.

Way forward

1. **Legal step:** The General Assembly should **use Article 22 now** to create the BPSS and fix the **lack of political continuity from war to peace**.
2. **Regional role:** Guarantee fair regional balance. Make regional organisations full participants, not observers, to anchor decisions in local realities.
3. **Coordination and respect:** Work with the Secretary-General and the Security Council. Fold in the Peacebuilding Commission to avoid overlap. Coordinate without confrontation. Respect sovereignty at all stages
4. **Accountability and learning:** Publish brief progress notes, share lessons across cases, and adjust tactics quickly. Use simple, shared indicators to measure political traction, not just security calm.

For detailed information on **On the shortcomings of UN** [read this article here](#)

Conclusion

Meaningful reform can **begin now** by creating a Board of Peace and Sustainable Security that restores **continuity, context, and momentum** to UN engagement. This board would **not rewrite power balances**, but

it would **strengthen the UN's capacity to manage conflict responsibly**. Institutions are built **not for moments but for processes**. The UN once understood this; it can **understand it again—by innovating where it still can**.

Question for practice:

Examine how creating a Board of Peace and Sustainable Security under UNGA Article 22 can address the UN's lack of post-conflict political continuity without challenging Security Council primacy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Trump Drops a Bomb, on U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -security And GS Paper 2- international relations

Introduction

Recently, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the United States will resume nuclear weapons testing after a 33-year moratorium. The announcement followed Russia's claim of a successful test of a nuclear-capable cruise missile and came the same day as Mr. Trump's meeting with China's President Xi Jinping. The details remain unclear, but the shift signals a major change in U.S. nuclear posture with wide global implications.

Consequence of Resuming Nuclear Weapons Testing by US

- 1. Arms-race risk and alliance strain:** Speculation of a renewed arms race grows. U.S. allies may doubt extended deterrence and take extra precautions, including revising defence plans.
- 2. Erosion of 50 years of controls:** The moratorium acted as restraint despite the CTBT not entering into force. Breaking it weakens non-proliferation habits built over decades, and others may cite the precedent to test.
- 3. NPT's "grand bargain" undercut:** Nuclear states promised disarmament; non-nuclear states promised restraint. Testing appears the opposite of disarmament and invites non-nuclear states to re-evaluate their choices.
- 4. Strain on existing and pending treaties**
 - **New START cliff:** The treaty capping U.S.–Russia strategic warheads expires in February 2026; testing would make a successor harder to negotiate and verify.
 - **CTBT and broader norms:** While not in force, CTBT commitments and the wider normative fabric are pressured as others cite U.S. actions to proceed.
- 5. Regional security ripple effects**
 - **Asia cascade:** If China resumes testing, India may also consider testing. Pakistan would likely respond, raising instability in South Asia.

- **Nuclear use as a 'tactical' option:** Most leaders today did not see World War II or Hiroshima. This distance can make 'tactical' nuclear options seem more acceptable.

6. **Environmental downsides:** The U.S. already relies on simulations and non-explosive validation. Underground tests risk leakage and groundwater harm, and site readiness would take time.

International Treaties and Initiatives

1. **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):** Signed in 1968 and in force since 1970, the NPT is the cornerstone of non-proliferation efforts.

Three-part bargain:

- States without nuclear weapons agree not to acquire them.
- The five nuclear-weapon states (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States) agree to pursue disarmament.
- All states agree to cooperate on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

2. **IAEA Safeguards:** Non-nuclear weapon states that are NPT members have legally binding safeguards agreements with the IAEA to verify that nuclear materials are not diverted for military purposes.

3. **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT):** This treaty bans all nuclear explosions, but has not yet entered into force because not all required states have ratified it.

4. **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW):** This treaty, which entered into force in 2021, prohibits states from developing, testing, producing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, using, or threatening to use nuclear weapons.

5. **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU):** The IPU promotes the role of parliaments in achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world by urging them to work with their governments to eliminate nuclear weapons from security doctrines.

6. **Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI):** A group of 12 countries, established by Australia and Japan, that promotes practical actions to advance NPT objectives. It focuses on transparency, strengthening the review process, and developing verification measures.

7. **UN Security Council Resolution 1540:** This resolution requires all states to take and enforce effective measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their materials to non-state actors.

8. **New START:** It is a U.S.–Russia treaty limiting strategic nuclear arms, called Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, signed in Prague on 8 April 2010 and entered into force on 5 February 2011.

Way forward

1. **No-First-Use Pledge:** At the NPT review, states should adopt a binding no-first-use commitment to lower alert levels and rebuild trust.

2. **Focused Great-Power Talks:** The U.S., Russia, and China should open trilateral arms-control

negotiations before New START expires, creating a **template others can join**.

3. **Reinforce Testing Restraint:** All nuclear states should reaffirm the moratorium and expand transparency on subcritical experiments to prevent misinterpretation.

4. **Assurance and Crisis Channels:** Strengthen consultations and hotlines to reduce fear, deter adjustments, and manage incidents.

5. **Verification and Public Accountability:** Invest in monitoring tools and reporting to the UN, restoring confidence in the non-proliferation bargain.

Conclusion

Resuming U.S. nuclear testing risks **eroding core norms, spurring competitive tests, and destabilising multiple regions**. It **weakens the NPT bargain, complicates New START follow-ons**, and **invites a costly arms race**. The safer path is **renewed dialogue, verifiable limits**, and a **collective No-First-Use pledge—rebuilding credibility** before the window for prudent restraint closes.

Question for practice:

Examine the likely impacts of a U.S. resumption of nuclear weapons testing on the CTBT/NPT framework, New START negotiations, and security dynamics in Asia.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Unlocking PSB Top Posts for Private Sector Bankers

Introduction

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) of the Government of India recently announced revised/consolidated guidelines for the selection of Whole-Time Directors of the Public Sector Banks (PSBs), reigniting the 'public vs. private' debate.

Features of the Revised Guidelines

- The revised Guidelines, inter alia, seeks to open one of the Managing Directors (MDs) posts at State Bank of India (SBI), and MD and one of the Executive Directors (EDs) positions at the remaining 11 PSBs, to be selected from other public sector financial institutions and professionals from private sector.
- The Guidelines aim "to have uniform sequencing of eligibility criteria and to align the same with the changing banking industry."
- The Guidelines aim to recruit candidates for the PSB top positions through defined processes as and when the positions fall vacant.
 - Earlier, the private sector bankers held positions of Chairman & MD (CMD) in two Nationalized Banks (NBs); however, they were 'cherry-picked.'
- **Eligibility criteria**
 - a) If the stated goal of the experiment (if so) is to bring in technically knowledgeable professionals, then the minimum qualification should have been fixed at a higher level instead of being just a graduate.

- b) The specified positions are open to the eligible candidates irrespective of the 'size' of the banks, as normally represented by their balance sheets, they have managed, as there are considerable differences between the size of SBI or NBs and NPvBs, let alone OPvBs.
- c) As for the one open position of SBI MD, para 2.4 (B) (II) mentions "Candidates eligible under public sector position."

Challenges

- An eligible candidate from a small bank might find it difficult to manage a bank sufficiently bigger than that s/he had handled, whereas the opposite may not be true.
- It is not clear whether "public sector" means all types of public sector enterprises, including both the physical and financial sectors or even the government sector.

Way Forward

- **Assimilation of new entrants:** As for PSBs, it is widely acknowledged that they are more 'special' than PvBs owing to their massive social responsibility which includes tighter priority sector benchmarks, greater involvement in financial inclusion, etc.
- **Acceptance of new entrants:** Acceptance by employees would be another key factor for success, especially if the new CEO/ED from PvBs, brings about changes in the existing work force and culture.
- The private bankers should agree to compromise the salary to come to public sector given the contribution one can make in giving new direction to a behemoth.

Conclusion

It is a welcome, but baby, step to transfuse private banking culture into PSBs. However, its success would depend on its envisaged goal, which is yet fuzzy. And in this exercise, banking 'regulations,' instead of minor changes in the top management composition, would be paramount.

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

India-Taliban Engagement

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

Introduction

India is weighing deeper contact with Kabul while guarding security and leverage. Pakistan-Taliban tensions, the Taliban Foreign Minister's India visit, and India's plan to upgrade its Kabul mission shape this moment. The core issues are India's **security**, **\$3 billion** development stake, and **regional balance**. Engagement offers access, but recognition carries costs. India must read Afghanistan's **economic collapse**, **humanitarian strain**, and **jihadist networks** clearly before fixing long-term choices.

Challenges faced by the Taliban

1. **Fragile control:** The Taliban claim improved security, but their hold over a diverse, war-weary country is not settled. Power is centralised under a **reclusive Kandahar-based leader** while Kabul administrators run daily affairs, creating rigid control and limited accountability.

2. **Economic collapse:** Afghanistan's economy has **shrunk by about one third** since the takeover.
3. **Humanitarian strain:** Revenue, jobs, and services are weak, and **around 22.9 million people** require humanitarian assistance, which keeps communities in a constant emergency.
4. **Social costs of women exclusion:** Girls are barred from schooling beyond the primary level, and women are largely removed from workplaces. These policies reduce household income, lower productivity, and damage long-term recovery and social stability.
5. **Persistent jihadist ties and IS-K threat**
 - Despite public assurances, ties endure with foreign jihadist groups.
 - The **Haqqani network** is embedded in the state.
 - A **UN monitoring report** notes **al-Qaeda** safe houses and training camps and calls the Taliban the **primary partner** of foreign terrorist groups such as **al-Qaeda, Pakistani Taliban, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba**, and the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan**.
 - **Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K)** rejects Taliban rule and remains the most active armed challenger.
 - If domestic pressures rise, these networks could resurface openly.
6. **Narrow political base:** A **Pashtun, men-only leadership** governs a multi-ethnic society. Limited inclusion and mounting economic stress could revive latent networks and push the country back toward wider violence and regional spillover.
7. **Narcotics transition:** The **poppy ban** has cut incomes for many farming households. This shock risks pushing communities toward other illicit activities, including **methamphetamine** production and trafficking.

Its implications on India

1. **Development interests:** India invested about **\$3 billion** between 2001 and 2021. These assets, goodwill, and unfinished projects remain exposed to Afghanistan's internal stability, access to officials, and the basic functioning of state services.
2. **Counter-terror priority:** The Taliban promise that Afghan soil will not host anti-India groups. At the same time, documented ties with **foreign jihadist networks** keep the security environment uncertain. This sustains a persistent terrorism and infiltration risk for India.
3. **Recognition choice:** **Russia recognises the Taliban** and **China has exchanged ambassadors**. If India recognises Kabul, it could unlock cooperation and improve access, but it would also confer **legitimacy** and **diminish leverage** to influence behaviour. If India holds back, it risks shrinking diplomatic space as others move ahead.
4. **Regional posture:** Seeing the Taliban simply as a counter to Pakistan has costs. It can make regional ties more hostile, and if armed groups grow stronger, **India's safety and image** can suffer.
5. **Narcotics spillover:** Growth in **synthetic drugs** and trafficking routes via the region can strain India's **law-enforcement** and **public-health** systems.

Way Forward

1. Sustain Diplomatic Engagement while Withholding Formal Recognition:

- Maintain a functional full embassy, regular high-level exchanges, and technical partnerships, without immediate formal recognition of the Taliban.
- Uphold conditional engagement, demanding assurances against the use of Afghan territory for terrorism targeting India, and keeping dialogue channels open for real-time intelligence sharing and security cooperation.

2. Expand Targeted Development and Humanitarian Diplomacy:

- Continue needs-based development projects (**healthcare, water, rural infrastructure, education**), responding to urgent Afghan requirements and building grassroots goodwill.
- Invest in humanitarian aid (**food, medicine, earthquake support**) and publicly visible projects to counter Chinese and Pakistani influence, reinforce soft power, and stabilize communities.

3. Strengthen Counter-terrorism Cooperation:

- Institutionalize intelligence exchange, joint investigations, and security sector capacity-building based on India's **2011 Strategic Partnership Agreement** with Afghanistan.
- Intensify cross-border **anti-narcotics** collaboration and border management to tackle trafficking and radicalization risks.

4. Secure Economic Connectivity & Cooperation:

- Expand alternative trade and transit corridors, notably via **Chabahar Port**, revitalize the **Air Freight Corridor**, and develop resource-sector partnerships with robust contractual safeguards.
- Explore investments in **minerals, water resource management**, and sectoral modernization to create mutual incentives for regional stability.

5. Balance Principles & Realpolitik:

- Engage with the regime on the basis of practical security and development needs, without losing sight of India's advocacy for **inclusive governance, minority protection, and women's rights**.
- Use **multilateral forums** to pressure for more inclusive policies and broader international engagement.

Conclusion

India should deepen contact but **avoid premature recognition**. Protect the **\$3 billion** stake, prevent **terror use of Afghan soil**, and watch **jihadi networks** closely. Use targeted aid, connectivity, and regional coalitions to build leverage. Balance **security needs** with **basic freedoms** to support stability that serves Afghans and India alike.

Question for practice

Examine the key challenges faced by the Taliban regime and their implications on India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Model Youth Gram Sabhas

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -issues and challenges pertaining

to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Introduction

Gram Sabha is the **constitutional foundation** of grassroots democracy under **Article 243A**. It represents **every registered voter** and enables **direct, participatory** decisions on budgets and local plans. Yet public awareness and youth aspiration remain low. The **Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)** turns civics into a lived experience for students, building **leadership, accountability**, and **community-focused problem-solving** in simple, hands-on ways.

Need for Model Youth Gram Sabhas

1. **Foundational yet overlooked:** Gram Sabha is the base of local democracy, but it stays invisible in public talk and civic learning. Its role needs fresh attention.
2. **Curriculum gap:** Schools highlight Parliament and global forums, while Panchayati Raj receives little space. Students miss how village decisions actually happen.
3. **Aspiration deficit:** Few youths imagine leading as **Sarpanch** or **ward member**. Without relatable exposure, local leadership feels distant and unglamorous.
4. **Participation and accountability:** Low attendance weakens deliberation on budgets and plans. Early, hands-on exposure can build habits of participation and demand for accountability.

Initiative taken (Model Youth Gram Sabha- MYGS)

In 2025, the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, with the **Ministry of Education**, **Ministry of Tribal Welfare**, and the **Aspirational Bharat Collaborative**, launched **Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)**. It is strongly aligned with the vision of **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which underscores the need for curriculum and pedagogy to instill in students a deep respect for **Fundamental Duties** and **constitutional values**, along with a strong sense of **national belonging**.

Its key objectives are to:

- **Educate students** about the Panchayati Raj System – Introduce students to the **three-tier Panchayati Raj** framework established through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment**.
- **Encourage participation** – Motivate students to engage in **Gram Sabhas** and local governance processes.
- **Develop leadership skills** – Foster a sense of responsibility and leadership among youth toward strengthening **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
- **Promote understanding of local issues** – Provide a platform for students to discuss and analyze real-life governance challenges at the **grassroots** level.

The core vision of MYGS is aimed to:

- Foster **active, empathetic, and informed** citizenship among youth, rooted in constitutional values and democratic principles.
- Instill values of **inclusivity, consensus building, justice, and equity**. Empower students to become socially responsible individuals.
- Build important life skills such as **leadership, participation, communication, critical thinking**, etc., among students.
- Strengthen awareness of **local governance structures** and **Localized Sustainable Development Goals**.
- Empower students to become socially responsible individuals committed to **national integration** and development.

Structured implementation (three steps)

- **Teacher training** by **National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs)**.
- **Mock Gram Sabha sessions** on sanitation, water, education, and budgeting.
- **Competitions and scaling** with **prizes and certificates**.

Module and pedagogy (MLJP)

The MYGS Module follows **MLJP—Meaning, Learning, Joy, Pride**. It includes:

- **NLMT Guide** with roles, processes, and step-by-step facilitation.
- **Teacher Facilitation Module** that is pictorial and user-friendly.
- **Evaluation Framework** with **pre/during/post** indicators and differential metrics to recognize exemplary schools.

Funding and recognition

- Each participating school gets **₹20,000 (one-time)** for logistics and refreshments. Students receive **certificates** from the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- **Regional winners** get a **token cash award** for school development; **national top three teams** receive **large cash prizes**. **Logistics** for national teams are supported.

Significance of Model Youth Gram Sabhas

1. **Reconnecting youth with local democracy:** It links students to village decision-making. They work with **agendas, budgets, and resolutions**, making grassroots democracy concrete and credible.

2. Building practical civic skills: Role-play develops **public speaking, critical thinking, negotiation, and consensus**. Students learn **due process, record-keeping**, and how to turn ideas into **resolutions**.

3. School–Panchayat bridge: Regular sharing of student proposals creates a steady channel between schools and **Gram Panchayats** for follow-up.

4. Sharper local solutions: Simulations turn village issues (sanitation, water, education) into **structured plans and budgets** that can be acted on.

5. Values and NEP 2020 alignment: Activities nurture **Fundamental Duties, inclusion, transparency, and accountability**. They build **pride in being Indian** and encourage **sustainable, community-centred** solutions.

6. Pipeline of local leaders: Early exposure to Panchayati Raj makes participation **aspirational**. Students gain confidence to engage in **Gram Sabhas** and later serve in **PRIs** and community bodies.

7. Stronger accountability in Panchayats: Regular student scrutiny of plans and spending raises expectations from local bodies. **Feedback, clear minutes, and public sharing of proposals** promote responsible governance.

Challenges of Model Youth Gram Sabhas

1. Teacher preparedness: Training quality can vary across regions. Simple tools and continued support are needed to keep facilitation consistent.

2. Student participation over time: The simulation must become part of school culture to keep students engaged year-round.

3. Linkage with real governance: Students should see their proposals reflected in actual Gram Sabha actions. Without visible follow-through, motivation drops.

4. Resources and logistics: Remote and tribal schools may lack funds, internet, or staff time. Regular monitoring is harder where access and capacity are limited.

5. Monitoring and feedback: **Clear indicators** and timely feedback are essential to improve sessions. Without structured reviews, practices drift and quality declines.

6. Inclusivity and reach: Scaling beyond selected schools is challenging. Ensuring language, context, and local issues are represented fairly needs sustained attention too.

Way forward

1. Expansion: After Phase 1, roll out to **all State government schools** with clear state-wise timelines and support.

2. Institutionalisation: Notify boards to count **MYGS as co-curricular credit**; embed in **teacher training and annual school calendars**.

3. Evidence: Use simple **digital portals** to publish student plans; run **annual follow-up studies** tracking participation, skills, and later **PRI/community engagement**.

Conclusion

MYGS restores Gram Sabha to **everyday democratic practice**. It turns students into informed participants who **deliberate, budget, and resolve**. With **scaled training, structured modules, fair incentives**, and

curriculum integration, local participation can become **aspirational and continuous**, strengthening **Panchayati Raj** and nurturing citizens ready to serve a **Viksit Bharat**.

Question for practice

Discuss how the Model Youth Gram Sabha strengthens grassroots democracy and outlines its key challenges and the way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's IT dream is at a crossroads

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 - Indian economy.

Introduction

India's IT sector still drives growth and aspiration, but the model is changing fast. **Layoffs, AI-led automation, visa costs, and tight client budgets** are reshaping work. The sector must shift from **scale to skill**, and from **services to solutions**. Clear **policy support**, large-scale **upskilling**, and fair **worker transitions** are essential to protect jobs and sustain momentum.

Current Status of IT Sector in India

- 1. GDP contribution and outlook:** The IT sector contributed **around 7.5%** of GDP in FY23, with projections to reach **~10% by 2026**.
- 2. Employment scale:** The sector employs **nearly 6 million** people.
- 3. Export revenue trajectory:** Export revenue is predicted to reach **\$224 billion in FY25**. According to a NASSCOM report, total IT revenue could **surpass \$300 billion in FY26**.
- 4. Domestic digital adoption:** With **over 760 million** internet users, domestic demand for digital products and services is a major growth driver.
- 5. Government supports:** Key enablers include **67 Software Technology Parks of India (STPIs)**, **100% FDI**, and the **National Policy on Software Products (NPSP)**.

Major Concerns of IT Sector in India

- 1. Layoffs signal structural change:** Firms are trimming quietly through **"silent layoffs"** such as performance-linked exits and delayed promotions. **Over 50,000** jobs may go by year-end. Global cuts add pressure (**Amazon ~14,000; Meta ~8,000**).
- 2. Automation reshapes routine work:** **AI** now handles reporting, coordination, and basic coding. **Agentic AI** performs multi-step tasks, lifting productivity and shrinking team sizes.
- 3. Visa costs push localisation:** Higher **H-1B** costs and tariff threats make onsite deployment of low- and mid-level roles uneconomic, so firms hire more **locally overseas**.

4. Clients demand lean: Budgets in the **U.S. and Europe** are tight. Buyers want **cloud, cybersecurity, and generative-AI** outcomes from **smaller, expert teams**.

5. The old “assembly line” model fades: Mass hiring with basic coding and quick deployment no longer works. Clients seek **complete solutions, fast delivery, strong architecture, and solid security**.

6. Skills gap at mid-career: Many advanced through managerial tracks rather than **deep technical** skills. **Legacy stacks** (e.g., **SAP ECC, mainframes, non-cloud tools**) lose value as AI covers many routine tasks.

7. Social and career insecurity: Experienced workers are leaving, fresh graduates face long waits, and companies rush to retrain. A once-stable sector now brings income shocks, and many workers lack strong safety nets during this transition.

Way forward

1. Mass AI upskilling: Make **AI literacy** the baseline. **TCS trained ~550,000** in basic AI and **~100,000** in advanced skills. This scale should be the **norm** through public-private action.

2. Job-ready education: Move beyond rote coding. Teach **machine learning, product thinking, and ethics in AI**. Build **communication, collaboration, and critical thinking**. Graduates must be **job-ready for AI, cloud, data, and cybersecurity**.

3. Product and deep-tech push: Support **AI startups, deep-tech labs, and innovation hubs**. Shift from only services to products that create higher value and new jobs.

4. Stable rules and global access: Give policy clarity on **data, trade, and compliance**. Work with partners to **ease visas** so firms can deploy talent where needed.

5. Fair transitions and support: For large layoffs, **mandate 6–9 months’ pay as a cushion**. Offer **career counselling, mental-health help, and retraining subsidies** so workers can re-enter quickly.

6. Coordinated execution: Align **government, industry, and campuses** on timelines and metrics. Track outcomes and **course-correct**.

Conclusion

India’s IT base is strong, but the certainty is gone. The path forward is **skills first, product-led growth, clear rules, and worker protection**. If these steps scale now, the sector can move from **manpower to mindpower** and stay globally competitive in the **AI age**.

Question for practice:

Examine the major concerns facing India’s IT sector and suggest key measures that can help strengthen it in the age of AI.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The case for energy efficiency

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3-infrastructure-energy

Introduction

India has expanded clean power quickly, yet **grid emissions have risen**. **Non-fossil capacity now exceeds 51%**, but the **grid emission factor increased**. The paradox stems from a **capacity-generation gap** and an **evening-peak timing mismatch** that keeps **coal on call**. Progress now requires putting **energy efficiency first** and adding **flexibility** through storage, smarter tariffs, and demand-side tools..

Current status of India's clean energy

1. India's Power Capacity

Non-fossil fuel sources (renewable energy, hydro, and nuclear): **256.09 GW – over 51 % of the total**.

Fossil-fuel-based sources: **244.80 GW – about 49 % of the total**.

Within renewables:

Solar power – 127.33 GW

Wind power – 53.12 GW

2. Achievement:

- India has already achieved one of its major **COP26 Panchamrit goals — to have 50 % of installed electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030** — five years early.
- India has already **cut emissions intensity by 33% (2005-2019)**

3. Global rankings: India is ranked **4th in total renewable energy capacity globally**, **3rd in solar capacity**, and **4th in wind power capacity**.

4. Continued reliance on coal: Despite the growth in renewables, **over 66% of electricity generation still comes from coal-fired power plants**.

Major Concern Related to India's Clean Energy

1. Capacity-generation gap: Non-fossil sources are ~50% of installed capacity, yet renewables (with hydro) delivered only 22% in 2023-24. Low capacity factors keep coal dominant. This widens the capacity-delivery divide. Demand intensifies the shortfall.

2. Evening peak deficit: Solar output falls after sunset while household demand rises, pushing coal plants to meet night and peak loads.

3. Flexibility gap in dispatch: The grid cannot quickly shift or store power to match changing demand. Storage is limited and demand-shifting is weak, so coal plants are used as fast “shock absorbers,” especially in the evening.

4. Network and land constraints: Slow expansion of transmission corridors and land access delays integration of new clean projects at the required pace.

5. **Slow RTC scaling:** Round-the-Clock renewable supply is cheaper than new coal, but scale-up lags due to financing, siting, and grid readiness.

6. **Emissions rebound:** The grid emission factor rose from 0.703 to 0.727 tCO₂/MWh (2020–21 to 2023–24), reflecting coal-heavy balancing during growth.

Way forward

1. **Put efficiency first:** Energy efficiency is the “**first fuel.**” It reduces demand before supply is built and **flattens evening and night peaks**, lowering coal dispatch. Scale efficient **fans, air-conditioners, and motors**, and embed efficiency in **buildings and industry**.

2. **Support infrastructure:** Efficiency must work hand-in-hand with clean supply. India should **expand transmission networks, invest in energy storage, and streamline land access** for renewables.

3. **Policy alignment:** Policymaking should prioritise **integration of efficiency, renewables, and flexibility** across all sectors.

4. **Strengthen demand-side flexibility:** To unlock the full potential of clean energy, India must take six clear actions:

- **Enable virtual power plants** — Allow homes and offices to connect batteries to the grid, helping it glide through peak demand hours.
- **Accelerate appliance efficiency standards** — Shift markets toward **4- and 5-star products** and continuously raise benchmarks.
- **Support small and medium enterprises (SMEs)** — Encourage adoption of **efficient motors, pumps, and industrial processes** through targeted assistance.
- **Adopt flexible pricing** — Design **time-of-day tariffs** that reward consumers who shift usage to periods of high renewable availability.
- **Introduce scrappage incentives** — Replace **old, energy-guzzling equipment** with new, efficient technologies.
- **Allow DISCOMs to procure energy services** — Facilitate procurement of “**electricity services**” like **green cooling** powered by RTC clean power, rather than just purchasing raw electricity.

Conclusion

India has the **capacity**; now it must unlock **delivery and timing**. Put **efficiency first**, scale **RTC renewables and storage**, expand **transmission**, and **align demand with clean supply**. These steps will cut **coal-time peaks**, lower the **GEF**, and turn clean capacity into **clean generation**—reliably, affordably, and at scale.

Question for practice:

Discuss the major concerns in India’s clean energy transition and suggest the way forward to make the power system cleaner and more efficient

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Challenges to Nuclear Restraint and India's Position

Source: The post “Challenges to Nuclear Restraint and India's Position” has been created, based on “Restraint has a half life” published in “Indian Express” on 1st November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -3- Science and technology

Context: The global consensus against nuclear testing, sustained for over three decades, is weakening. The voluntary moratorium on testing, not mandated by any binding international treaty, was upheld largely because it was politically convenient and morally persuasive. However, with growing geopolitical competition and technological advances, this restraint now appears to have a limited “half-life.” India, as a responsible nuclear power, faces the challenge of reassessing its position amid this shifting landscape.

Challenges to Global Nuclear Restraint

1. Erosion of Political Consensus

- a. The post-Cold War nuclear restraint rested more on political will than legal obligation.
- b. The voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing was maintained as long as it suited the strategic convenience of major powers.
- c. Today, this moral consensus is fraying as nations prioritize renewed deterrence credibility.

2. Shifts in Major Powers' Nuclear Postures

- a. **United States:** Discussion under the Trump administration about resuming testing reopened a long-settled debate. While advanced simulations have replaced actual tests, U.S. experts now question whether such models can indefinitely ensure reliability.
- b. **Russia:** Has revived activity at its Arctic test sites, signaling preparation for potential new tests.
- c. **China:** Expanding its nuclear arsenal, constructing new missile silos, and increasing fissile material production — openly questioning arms control regimes.
- d. These developments collectively undermine the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) framework.

3. Technological Evolution and Strategic Necessity

- a. Since 1998, technology, materials, and delivery systems have advanced. Missiles like Agni-V and submarine-launched systems are now operational, requiring validation for accuracy, reliability, and miniaturization.
- b. Newer, multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) demand higher assurance levels that computer modeling alone may not provide.
- c. The next generation of deterrence systems thus faces pressure for renewed empirical testing.

4. Weakening of Arms Control Architecture

- a. The CTBT, though adopted in 1996, has not entered into force due to non-ratification by key states (including the U.S. and China).
- b. Its uncertain future has left the nuclear order “in limbo,” with restraint now dependent solely on political choice rather than treaty obligation.
- c. The stability of the nuclear order has shifted from shared conviction to temporary convenience, eroding global trust.

5. Credibility Crisis in Deterrence

- a. When major powers doubt the sufficiency of their own self-restraint, others are likely to follow suit.
- b. The absence of credible verification mechanisms heightens mistrust, prompting states to consider renewed tests to ensure deterrent credibility.

India's Position in the Changing Nuclear Landscape

1. India's Historical Commitment to Restraint

- a. India's nuclear tests in 1998 symbolized strategic maturity and national confidence.
- b. The voluntary moratorium that followed represented India's recognition of the moral dimension of restraint while affirming credible minimum deterrence and a **No-First-Use (NFU)** policy.
- c. India's approach demonstrated that responsible nuclear behavior could coexist with strategic assertion.

2. Current Strategic Environment

- a. With major powers reconsidering testing, India cannot ignore the potential impact on its own deterrence credibility.
- b. Technological shifts and new delivery systems (Agni-V, SLBMs) necessitate reassessment of reliability and readiness.
- c. If India's adversaries resume testing, maintaining unilateral restraint indefinitely could put India at a relative disadvantage.

3. The Dilemma of Deterrence vs. Restraint

- a. India must navigate between two imperatives:
 - i. Preserving its image as a responsible nuclear power committed to global non-proliferation norms.
 - ii. Ensuring the reliability of its deterrent in an evolving threat environment.
- b. Resuming tests could erode India's international standing, invite sanctions, and undermine its claim to responsible leadership.
- c. Yet, continuing restraint without assurance of credibility risks deterrence obsolescence.

4. Testing within India's Ethical and Strategic Framework

- a. Any future decision must align with India's principles of **credible minimum deterrence** and **NFU**.
- b. Testing, if ever necessary, should aim at deterrence credibility, not power projection or showmanship.
- c. The **focus must remain on preparedness**, not provocation and on assurance, not aggression.

5. The Need for Open and Informed National Debate

- a. Decisions of such magnitude require transparent, informed discussion among scientists, policymakers, and citizens.
- b. India's nuclear decisions should emerge from consensus, not reaction, grounded in national security, science, and moral responsibility.

Way Forward

1. **Reaffirm Responsible Nuclear Posture:** Continue to uphold restraint as a strategic strength while enhancing technological reliability through advanced simulations and subcritical experiments.
2. **Invest in Indigenous Capability:** Strengthen modelling and validation capacities to reduce dependence on physical testing.

3. **Reassess Security Environment:** Conduct periodic strategic reviews considering developments in China, Russia, and the U.S.
4. **Diplomatic Engagement:** Lead efforts to revive global dialogue on the CTBT and arms control, positioning India as a stabilising power.
5. **Maintain Moral Leadership:** Balance deterrence credibility with India's long-standing advocacy for disarmament and peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion: The longevity of nuclear restraint is not guaranteed—it has a half-life shaped by global politics, technological change, and strategic mistrust. As the world edges toward renewed nuclear competition, India must act prudently: reaffirming its moral authority while remaining strategically prepared. The future of restraint will depend not merely on treaties but on the conviction and credibility of responsible powers like India.

Question: With the global consensus on nuclear restraint showing signs of erosion, critically examine the challenges to the existing nuclear order. In this context, discuss how India should recalibrate its nuclear policy to balance deterrence credibility with responsible restraint.

India's Reforms Moment in Science and Technology

Source: The post “India's Reforms Moment in Science and Technology” has been created, based on “India's Reforms Moment in Science and Technology” published in “Hindustan Times” on 1st November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -3- Science and technology

Context: The global technological landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Geopolitical alliances are being redrawn, supply chains are being weaponised, and economic borders are tightening. In this emerging order, **technological sovereignty has become synonymous with national sovereignty**. India's pragmatic response under the Narendra Modi government has been to lay the foundation for a **modern innovation economy**—expanding its **digital public infrastructure (DPI)**, opening strategic sectors like **defence and space** to private enterprise, and nurturing the **world's third-largest start-up ecosystem**.

Now, with the launch of the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** and the **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund**, India is poised for a transformational reform moment in science and technology.

Current State of India's Science and Technology Ecosystem

1. In 2024, India's total **R&D expenditure** stood at about **\$18 billion**, less than one-twentieth of China's \$450 billion and below Israel's \$25 billion.
2. To achieve leadership in critical technologies, India targets **\$200 billion in R&D investment by 2035**—roughly **3% of projected GDP**.
3. The country's **scientific base**—IITs, IISc, and research labs—has made major strides in advanced R&D, producing more postgraduates than undergraduates and improving both scale and quality.

Achievements and Strengths

1) Institutional Excellence

- a) **IIT Madras:** Created the world's most detailed 3D images of the human foetal brain (10× sharper).
 - b) **IIT Kanpur:** Developed an artificial heart prototype at one-seventh the cost of global leaders.
 - c) **IIT Bombay:** Pioneered **CAR-T cell therapy** for cancer, cutting treatment costs for Indian patients by 90%.
 - d) **IISc Bengaluru:** Designed a **brain-inspired analog computing platform** with 16,500 conductance states—advancing AI computing.
- 2) **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** India's DPI has already shown how visionary policy, executed at scale, can transform governance and enable inclusive innovation.
 - 3) **Start-up Momentum:** With over 100,000 start-ups, India is nurturing a robust ecosystem for deep-tech ventures and R&D-based entrepreneurship.

Challenges in India's Science and Technology Sector

1. **Chronic Underinvestment in R&D:** India's R&D spending remains below 1% of GDP, among the lowest for major economies. Achieving the 3% target by 2035 requires substantial increases in **public and private investment**.
2. **Low Private Sector Participation:** Industry contributes only about **one-third** of India's total R&D expenditure, while globally, private enterprise contributes **two-thirds or more**.
3. **Fragmented Institutional Framework:** Research remains scattered across multiple ministries and agencies, leading to overlap, inefficiency, and slow coordination.
4. **Limited Commercialisation of Research:** Indian academia often stops at publication rather than productisation. Weak **industry-academia linkages** impede conversion of innovations into marketable technologies.
5. **Brain Drain and Talent Utilisation:** Despite a large talent pool, limited research funding and infrastructure drive many top scientists abroad.
6. **Risk Aversion and Bureaucratic Delays:** Excessive regulation, slow approvals, and fear of audit scrutiny create a **risk-averse culture** that stifles experimentation and breakthrough innovation.
7. **Underdeveloped Deep-Tech Ecosystem:** Sectors such as semiconductors, quantum computing, and biotechnology remain nascent due to lack of sustained funding and long-term strategy.

Major Policy Reforms and Institutional Innovations

1. **Ease of Doing Research:** The government has introduced a new framework simplifying approvals, promoting autonomy, and empowering scientists. This reform has been described as **India's "1991-style liberalisation moment" for research**.
2. **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)**
 - a. It is modelled on the **U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)**.
 - b. **₹50,000 crore** investment over five years to fund **basic and applied research** across universities, labs, and industries.
 - c. Encourages **industry collaboration**, interdisciplinary projects, and funding for research clusters.
3. **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund**
 - a. **₹1-lakh-crore fund** to catalyse private-sector-led R&D.
 - b. Provides **long-term, low-cost financing**—including equity and hybrid instruments—to corporates, start-ups, and FROs (Foundations for R&D Organisations).
 - c. Focus on **strategic and emerging technologies:** semiconductors, quantum computing, biotech, space, energy, and defence.

4. Professionalised Management

- a. Managed by **independent experts** from finance, industry, and technology—not by bureaucrats.
- b. **Ensures efficient and merit-based decision-making** for innovation investments.

5. Industry–Government Synergy: The ANRF and RDI Fund present a **historic opportunity** for India's government, academia, and industry to **co-innovate across sectors**, fostering a deep-tech ecosystem.

Significance and Transformational Potential

1. The reforms can **unlock India's innovation potential** similar to the U.S. post-World War II scientific transformation driven by "*Science: The Endless Frontier*" (1945).
2. By integrating **public funding, private entrepreneurship, and academic excellence**, India can achieve technological **self-reliance and global competitiveness**.
3. These measures align with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, where innovation and excellence in science are central to national prosperity.

Way Forward

1. **Adopt a National Mission Approach:** Treat R&D as a **strategic national priority**, demanding conviction and courage across ministries.
2. **Encourage Risk-Taking in Research:** Recognise that **failures are stepping stones** to innovation; avoid a blame culture that inhibits experimentation.
3. **Strengthen Academia–Industry Linkages:** Establish joint research funds, innovation clusters, and shared IP frameworks.
4. **Build Intellectual Property and Human Capital:** Shift focus from contract R&D to **proprietary innovation**; nurture IP ownership by Indian firms.
5. **Effective Implementation and Monitoring:** Timely execution and measurable outcomes must guide policy delivery.
6. **Global Partnerships:** Leverage collaboration with the U.S., Japan, EU, and others for advanced tech research while ensuring **strategic autonomy**.

Conclusion: India's reforms in science and technology mark the beginning of a new era of innovation-driven growth. With the **ANRF** and **RDI Fund**, India has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to **transform its research ecosystem**, achieve **technological sovereignty**, and secure a leading place in the global innovation order. If the government, industry, and academia act in concert—with courage, efficiency, and vision—this could become India's **"1991 moment" for science and technology**, heralding a truly **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.

Question: India's recent policy reforms such as the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund mark a turning point in the country's science and technology ecosystem. Discuss the key challenges and opportunities these reforms present for achieving technological self-reliance.

Banking Law Amendment Streamlines Succession

Source: The post "**Banking Law Amendment Streamlines Succession**" has been created, based on "**Banking Law Amendment Streamlines Succession**" published in "The Hindu Businessline" on 4th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -2- Economy

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Introduction: The **Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025** has brought a major reform in India's banking and succession framework. Effective from this month, the amendment introduces flexibility and clarity in the **nomination process** for bank deposits and locker contents. The new law ensures faster asset transfer, quicker claim settlements, and reduced inheritance disputes.

Background

1. Earlier, depositors could nominate **only one person** for bank deposits, lockers, and safe custody articles under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, and the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.
2. This single-nominee model often caused **inheritance disputes, delay in settlements**, and the need for **succession certificates**.
3. A large number of **unclaimed deposits** accumulated in banks due to unclear or outdated nomination instructions.

Key Features of the Amendment

1. The new amendment allows depositors to **nominate up to four individuals**, reflecting diverse family arrangements.
2. It enables smoother asset distribution and ensures that the depositor's wishes are respected after death.
3. Two distinct nomination models have been introduced to cover both monetary and physical assets.

Two Distinct Nomination Models

1. **Simultaneous Nomination (for deposits like savings, term, and recurring accounts)**
 - a. The depositor specifies exact percentage shares for each nominee.
 - b. The total must add up to 100 percent.
 - c. Funds are released proportionally and immediately to all nominees.
2. **Sequential or Successive Nomination (for lockers and safe custody facilities)**
 - a. The depositor lists nominees in a specific priority order.
 - b. The next nominee becomes eligible only if the previous one is unavailable.
3. This dual system ensures both transparency and fairness in the asset transfer process.
4. It eliminates ambiguity and ensures that physical and financial assets are passed on according to clearly recorded intentions.

Operational Framework and Implementation

1. The **Ministry of Finance** will issue the **Banking Companies (Nomination) Rules, 2025**, to provide operational details and prescribed forms for making, cancelling, or modifying nominations.
2. All **commercial and co-operative banks must implement** these rules uniformly across their systems.
3. Banks will be required to update their **core banking software**, revise documentation, and **train staff** before the **November 1, 2025** deadline.
4. For customers, adding or changing nominations will remain a **simple and accessible process** involving only standard forms.

Benefits and Implications

1. The amendment reduces legal complications by providing **clear, documented succession instructions**.
2. It helps in the **faster settlement of claims** and reduces the number of unclaimed deposits in the banking system.
3. It minimises disputes among heirs by recording the depositor's intent transparently.
4. It ensures **uniform and standardised claim processing** across public, private, and co-operative banks.
5. It enhances **investor protection** by linking with the **Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)** and improving governance practices.
6. The reform aligns with broader goals of strengthening banking governance and improving depositor confidence.

Challenges

1. Banks must ensure **timely technical upgrades** and proper staff training to implement the changes effectively.
2. Public **awareness campaigns** will be essential to educate depositors about the new multiple-nominee provisions.
3. Coordination among legal heirs will still be needed to prevent posthumous disputes.
4. The transition must be closely monitored to avoid administrative bottlenecks and ensure uniform compliance.

Conclusion: The **Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025** represents a **progressive step** in India's financial and legal landscape. By allowing multiple nominees and defining clear asset-sharing mechanisms, it promotes depositor protection and ensures family financial security. The amendment not only streamlines regulatory procedures but also brings a **humane and practical shift** in India's approach to succession planning. It marks an important move towards **modernising banking governance** and ensuring that succession after death is handled with clarity, fairness, and compassion.

Question: The Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025 marks a paradigm shift in India's banking and succession framework. Discuss how the introduction of multiple nominee models can enhance financial security, reduce legal disputes, and promote better governance in the banking sector.

AI and Jobs vs Work: The Economic Dimension

Source: The post "AI and Jobs vs Work: The Economic Dimension" has been created, based on "AI and Jobs vs Work: The Economic Dimension" published in "The Hindu Businessline" on 4th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -2- Economy

Introduction: The rapid expansion of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has fundamentally altered the nature of employment and productivity worldwide. Global corporations, such as Amazon, have begun large-scale job cuts, signaling an era where **machines increasingly replace human labour**. The key issue is not merely **job loss**, but the **need to redefine work and income** in a technology-driven economy.

Background

1. Historically, major technological shifts — from the **Industrial Revolution** to the **digital revolution** — have disrupted employment but created new forms of work.
2. AI represents a similar transformation, but its **speed and scope** are far greater.
3. Across economies, private firms are deliberately reducing staff to enhance productivity and profits.
4. Even governments are prioritizing automation and cost efficiency over traditional job creation.

Economic and Social Consequences

1. **Employment Reduction:** The number of people employed is expected to decline sharply, especially in the private sector.
2. **Social Impact:** Job losses lead to **insecurity, inequality, and emotional distress** among workers.
3. **Economic Fallout:** Lower employment reduces **aggregate demand**, leading to **lower profits and excess capacity**.
4. **Political Implications:** Rising unemployment could provoke **social unrest** and challenge political stability.
5. **Wage Compression:** Increasing investor competition and profit pressures are leading to **lower wage growth and shorter contracts**.

The Scale of the Problem

1. In 1900, the global population was about **1 billion**; today it exceeds **8 billion**.
2. Assuming a 40% workforce, nearly **3.2 billion people** are employed or seeking work.
3. Even if 400 million people are unemployed, **3.2 billion people** still compete for limited work opportunities.
4. This imbalance is comparable to the **Industrial Revolution's 65% decline in employment** over 25 years — but is now occurring **within a decade** due to AI.

AI and Productivity Dynamics

1. AI has caused **massive displacement of labour**, similar to how railways disrupted road transport.
2. It has improved productivity but also **weakened income distribution** and widened wealth inequality.
3. The earlier public-private consensus on productivity and welfare is eroding, with firms prioritizing **efficiency over employment**.

Challenges

1. **Technological Displacement:** AI-driven automation threatens to replace millions of routine and cognitive jobs, leaving limited alternatives.
2. **Skill Mismatch:** The workforce lacks the advanced digital and analytical skills required to adapt to AI-based industries.
3. **Inequality and Polarisation:** AI amplifies **income and opportunity gaps**, concentrating wealth among those controlling technology.
4. **Inadequate Policy Response:** Governments continue to **promise jobs** rather than designing policies that create diverse **income opportunities**.
5. **Informalisation of Work:** Increased reliance on **short-term and gig contracts** can undermine social security and job stability.
6. **Low Labour Productivity in Public Sector:** Government employees often enjoy **inflation-indexed pay** without performance linkage.

7. Decline in Aggregate Demand: As jobs shrink, reduced incomes weaken consumption, affecting overall economic growth.

8. Weak Social Protection Systems: Lack of robust unemployment benefits or retraining programs exacerbates vulnerability.

The Way Forward

1. **Shift Policy Focus from Employment to Work:** Governments must focus on **income creation**, not merely job numbers. Aggregate demand can only rise with sustainable income, not just employment statistics.
2. **Promote Self-Employment and Flexibility:** Encourage individuals to transition from **Form 16 (employee)** to **Form 16A (self-employed)** through incentives for entrepreneurship and freelancing.
3. **Adopt Short-Term, Productivity-Based Contracts:** Replace lifetime job models with **contractual and performance-linked employment** to maintain flexibility.
4. **Link Pay to Productivity:** Introduce **performance-based pay systems** across both private and public sectors to reward efficiency.
5. **Reskill and Upskill Workforce:** Implement large-scale **AI literacy and skill development programmes** to prepare workers for new industries.
6. **Encourage Remote and Gig Work Models:** Promote **work-from-home**, freelancing, and hybrid arrangements to expand participation in the economy.
7. **Reform Labour Laws and Safety Nets:** Update labour regulations to include **gig and platform workers**, ensuring basic income security and benefits.
8. **Public Awareness and Policy Integration:** Policymakers must integrate **AI impact assessments** in every major economic reform to ensure inclusivity.

Conclusion: The rise of AI represents a **paradigm shift in the global labour economy**, redefining what “work” means in the 21st century. Rather than clinging to the outdated promise of full employment, governments must **reimagine economic structures** that ensure equitable income distribution. By focusing on **self-employment, skill development, productivity, and income assurance**, societies can adapt to technological change without sacrificing economic security. The transition from **jobs to work** is not a loss — it can be a **path toward liberation, innovation, and resilience** in the age of AI.

Question. AI is not merely reducing jobs but redefining the very nature of work. Discuss the economic and social challenges arising from AI-driven automation and suggest measures to ensure inclusive growth.

India's Forests Hold the Future

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 -Environment.

Introduction

India's forests now anchor the climate and development agenda. The revised Green India Mission targets **restoration of 25 million hectares by 2030** and an additional **carbon sink up to 3.39 billion tonnes CO₂e**. Progress since 2015 shows expanded cover and mission support, but future gains depend on **ecology-first design, community leadership, capable field teams, effective CAMPA use, and real convergence** with agroforestry and watershed programmes so restoration delivers resilience—not just plantation numbers.

Current Status of Afforestation in India?

Target: India target, to restore **25 million hectares** of degraded forest and non-forest land by **2030** (revised Green India Mission (GIM)).

Carbon sink pledge: India also aims to create an additional up to 3.39 billion tonnes CO₂e carbon sink by decade-end.

Implementation (2015–2021): From **2015–2021**, afforestation covered **11.22 million hectares**, with **₹575 crore** disbursed to **18 states**.

Cover change: India's forest and tree cover is 25.17%, far below the 33% target of the 1988 National Forest Policy.

India's forests provide ecosystem services valued at over **₹130 trillion annually**, sustaining most rural livelihoods

Global standing (GFRA-2025): India ranks **9th** in total forest area and **3rd** in *net annual forest area gain* worldwide.

Major Concern Related to Afforestation in India

1. **Declining ecological effectiveness:** A 2025 study by IIT Kharagpur with IIT Bombay and BITS Pilani found a 12% fall in photosynthetic efficiency of dense forests due to rising temperatures and drying soils. Planting more trees will not ensure stronger carbon sinks.

2. **Weak community participation and legality:** Nearly 200 million people rely on forests, and the Forest Rights Act (2006) empowers their management. Yet many plantation drives bypass claims and consent, eroding trust and legitimacy.

3. **Capacity gaps in implementation:** The revised GIM promotes native, site-specific species, but many field teams lack ecological expertise. Training institutes exist in Uttarakhand, Coimbatore, and Byrnihat, yet capability is uneven.

4. **Financing bottlenecks and under-utilisation:** CAMPA holds about ₹95,000 crore, but utilisation is inconsistent; Delhi used 23% of approved funds between 2019 and 2024. GIM has modest allocations and relies heavily on CAMPA.

5. **Fragmented alignment across programmes:** The blueprint links restoration to agroforestry, watershed missions, and CAMPA, but turning this integration into on-ground practice remains difficult. Policy-practice gaps slow outcomes.

6. **Quantity-over-quality plantations and monocultures:** Area-driven targets encourage single-species planting, lowering biodiversity, water security, and climate resilience.

Initiative Taken

Central initiatives

1. Revised Green India Mission (GIM):

It plan to **restore 25 million hectares by 2030** and build an additional carbon sink by decade-end.

It expands focus to **Aravalli Hills, Western Ghats, mangroves, and Himalayan catchments**.

Programme convergence: Seeks tighter links with the **National Agroforestry Policy, watershed initiatives, and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)** to support restoration at scale

2. National Afforestation Programme (NAP): It focuses on **ecological restoration of degraded forests** and improving livelihoods, using a three-tier structure (SFDA-FDA-JFMC), and supporting activities like soil-moisture conservation, fencing, micro-planning, awareness, and monitoring.

3. Forest Fire Prevention & Management (FFPM) Scheme: It provides dedicated support for **prevention, preparedness, and management of forest fires**, so that regenerated areas and new plantations are protected.

4. MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes): Announced in Union Budget 2023-24, MISHTI aims to restore/afforest about **540 sq km of mangroves** across 9-11 coastal States/UTs over five years. It does this mainly through convergence of CAMPA, MGNREGS and other schemes, and it stresses local community/EDC/VSS involvement because mangroves are both a bio-shield and a high-carbon ecosystem

5. Aravalli Green Wall Project : Run by MoEFCC, this project tries to build a 1,400-km, ~5-km-wide belt of plantations and restoration along the Aravallis in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi to stop desertification, improve biodiversity, and protect NCR from dust.

State initiatives

1. Tamil Nadu: Nearly **doubled mangrove cover in three years**, strengthening carbon storage and coastal protection.

2. Himachal Pradesh: Biochar programme launched to generate **carbon credits** and **reduce fire risks**.

3. Uttar Pradesh:

- **Planted over 39 crore saplings this year;** exploring ways to connect **village councils to carbon markets**.

- **Green Chaupal platform** to mobilise village-level plantation and maintenance with a **Gram Harit Nidhi (village green fund)** and monthly meetings for awareness and micro-plan execution.

4. Odisha: Joint Forest Management Committees integrated into **planning and revenue-sharing**, improving participation and compliance.

5. Chhattisgarh: Biodiversity-sensitive plantations and revival of **barren cattle shelters** by planting **mahua**, aligning ecology with **tribal livelihoods**.

Way forward

1. **Community leadership:** Recognise and empower FRA rights-holders, and involve them in planning, planting, and monitoring from the start to build trust and ownership.
2. **Ecology-first design:** Prioritise native, site-specific species and diversify plantings so restoration improves biodiversity and drought resilience, not just canopy.
3. **Capacity building:** Train frontline staff through institutes in Uttarakhand, Coimbatore, and Byrnihat to deliver ecology-sensitive work.
4. **Smarter finance:** Deploy CAMPA funds for participatory planning, maintenance, and adaptive management rather than one-time planting.
5. **Transparent tracking:** Publish dashboards on survival rates, species mix, fund use, and community participation.
6. **Market linkages:** Scale biochar and connect local bodies to credible carbon markets for upkeep.
7. **Institutional alignment:** Ensure that GIM's planned convergence with agroforestry, watershed missions, and CAMPA becomes operational on the ground, with states executing one coordinated restoration plan.

Conclusion

As India looks to Viksit Bharat 2047, forests are future capital. If India restores 25 million hectares with community leadership, native species, clear public tracking, and honest use of CAMPA funds—and if the Centre, states, local bodies, civil society, and researchers work as one—GIM can become a national movement and reshape restoration worldwide.

Question for practice:

Examine the major concerns in India's afforestation, and explain the key Central and State initiatives and the way forward under the revised Green India Mission.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A Need for Nationwide SIR

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -Representation of People's Act

Introduction

India's electoral roll is now a dynamic national database. Precision is vital. After a contentious Bihar drive, a nationwide Special Intensive Revision (SIR 2.0) has been announced. It is presented as paperless, people-friendly, and robust. Yet a core weakness remains: duplicate voter entries. This is not usually fraud. It is a procedural lapse when people shift residence. SIR 2.0 must close this gap through clear rules, timely action, and smart use of technology.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a focused, time-bound exercise conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to update and verify the accuracy of electoral rolls.

Electoral revisions are of 3 types:

- **Summary Revision:** Annual revision of electoral rolls for routine maintenance; no door-to-door verification.
- **Intensive Revision:** Major overhaul of electoral rolls; includes door-to-door verification.
- **Special Revision:** Undertaken in exceptional cases such as missed areas, large-scale errors, or legal/political exigencies.

Unlike routine summary revisions, which are annual and involve only minor updates, an intensive revision involves full, fresh preparation of electoral rolls through house-to-house verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to ensure that:

- All eligible citizens are included in the electoral rolls.
- Ineligible or duplicate entries are removed.
- The voter list is accurate, inclusive, and transparent.

SIR Legal Backing

SIR is anchored in the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**, which requires accurate and up-to-date electoral rolls and prohibits duplication. SIR is the operational drive that applies these statutory duties at scale so that each elector has only one valid entry.

Core prohibitions.

- **Section 17** bars a person from being registered in more than one constituency.
- **Section 18** bars multiple entries within the same constituency. These provisions make duplicate listings a legal violation.

Movement and updating of entries (change of residence).

- **Section 22(b)** enables transposition within the same constituency when a voter shifts residence.
- **Section 23(2)** governs inclusion in a new constituency after a move and requires the new ERO, once satisfied, to inform the previous ERO, who must strike off the old entry. The law expects these steps to be accurate, prompt, and simultaneous.

Administrative responsibility: The Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) carry the primary responsibility to execute transposition, inclusion, and deletion correctly to prevent duplicates.

Procedure Followed for Change Requests

The EC has consolidated change-of-residence and correction provisions in **Form 8**. Address updates fall into **four types**:

- (I) No change in constituency or polling station.
- (II) Same constituency, different polling station.
- (III) New constituency within the same State.
- (IV) New constituency in a new State.

Type IV moves most often create double entries when deletion at the previous place lags behind inclusion at the new place.

Form 6 is for fresh inclusion; if a voter hides an existing registration, it is a false declaration and a legal violation. Accountability is shared by the applicant and the officials who verify.

Digital backbone

- The roll runs on **ECINet**, a nationwide digital system managed by **C-DAC, Pune**. Every voter has a unique **EPIC** number, which supports a single verifiable entry.
- **ECINet** can detect duplicates, flag inconsistencies, and enable corrections through authorised verification. It should also retain a traceable update history to show what changed, when, and by whom.

Major Concern Related to SIR

1. **Persistent duplicate entries**: Many voters are listed twice when they shift homes. Names get added at the new address but are not deleted from the old roll. This weakens public trust.
2. **Administrative delay**: Detection tools exist, but action is slow. Deletion and coordination lag between Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), so errors stay in the system.
3. **EPIC-linked inconsistencies**: Duplicates appear with different EPICs or sometimes the same EPIC in two places. Both situations point to weak end-to-end checks during updates.
4. **Verification gaps**: When Form 6 is used for fresh inclusion without declaring an existing registration, it creates unlawful duplication. Verification should catch false declarations.
5. **Accountability shortfalls**: Primary responsibility lies with the concerned EROs. Without clear ownership and timely follow-through, even a paperless SIR cannot deliver credibility.
6. **Credibility risks**: Ongoing duplication invites judicial questions and public criticism.

Way forward

1. **Pre-clean the roll before SIR 2.0 begins**: The EC should flag suspected duplicates, verify them, and delete outdated entries so the drive starts from a clean baseline.
2. **Software-led validation**: ECINet should auto-flag potential duplicates, verify them through software-led checks, strike off the older entry immediately, and record every change with who approved it and when.

3. **ECINet as a reliable public utility:** The platform must be intuitive, stable, and responsive for administrators and citizens, so corrections happen smoothly.

4. **Integrate Aadhaar:** Seamless Aadhaar checks should strengthen uniqueness and reduce duplication through clear, auditable workflows.

5. **Real-time grievance redressal with a feedback loop:** A live, trackable dispute window should replace queues, and its insights should feed a self-correcting system that prevents repeat errors.

Conclusion

SIR 2.0 must not become another bureaucratic ritual. The law already prohibits duplication, and the platform can detect it. The missing link is timely deletion, ERO coordination, and accountable follow-through. If ECINet is used to its full potential—pre-cleaning data, validating in real time, retaining audit history, integrating for independent checks, and resolving disputes promptly—future SIRs will be unnecessary. Electoral rolls will stay accurate, updated, and verifiable by design. This is how trust in India's elections is secured

For detailed information on **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls – Significance & Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Question for practice:

Discuss the major concerns in SIR 2.0 and the key steps needed to ensure a clean, accurate, and duplication-free electoral roll.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The Malleable Code of Conduct (CoC)

UPSC Syllabus–GS Paper-2– Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.

Introduction

India's Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is meant to keep campaigns dignified and elections fair, yet it lacks statutory force. As politics, technology, and campaigning tactics evolve, loopholes, slow enforcement, and resource gaps strain its effectiveness. The code is respected publicly, yet routinely tweaked on the ground. Strengthening legal backing, sharpening enforcement, and building technical capacity are now essential to protect electoral integrity.

About Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

Model Code of Conduct- The Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for political parties and candidates to maintain decorum in their campaigning. It lays down a list of dos and don'ts for leaders and parties ahead of elections.

Duration of Model Code of Conduct- The MCC comes into force from the date the election schedule is announced until the date that results are out.

Legal Enforceability of MCC- MCC does not have any statutory backing. It has come to acquire strength in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the EC. Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the IPC 1860, CrPC 1973, and RPA 1951.

Penalties for its violation- If the Election Commission finds a party or candidate in violation of the Model Code of Conduct, it can take measures from issuing a warning to ordering an FIR against the concerned party or candidate.

Concern Related to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

1. **Lack of legal enforceability:** The MCC is election commission's moral sanction to get political parties and candidates to fall in line. But the norms of the Model Code of Conduct are flouted due to lack of legal backing.
2. **Distorted level playing field:** Pre-poll grants and project launches tilt voter choice toward incumbents. Presenting freshly announced benefits as extensions of "ongoing" programmes keeps them technically within the rules, yet it undermines the code's intent and spirit. For example- Disbursements under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana (MMRY) in Bihar began on September 26, 2025, with elections scheduled for November 6
3. **Ineffectiveness in Curbing Malpractices:** The MCC has failed to prevent electoral malpractices such as hate speech, fake news, money power, booth capturing, voter intimidation and violence.
4. **Challenges from evolving technologies:** MCC norms are also being increasingly challenged by new technologies like **AI based deepfakes**, and social media platforms that enable faster and wider dissemination of misinformation and propaganda.
5. **Vague Clauses:** Some MCC clauses, such as maintaining the 'purity of the election process', are subjective and can be misinterpreted.
6. **Reliance on Political Cooperation:** The MCC's effectiveness depends on the cooperation from political parties and governments. Parties and governments often indulge in the violation of MCC. **For ex-** Hate Speeches during election campaigning.
7. **Slow Enforcement:** Elections run on tight schedules, but legal action is slow. The EC cannot investigate and penalize every tactical breach in real time.
8. **Lack of Enforcement capacity of Election commission:** ECI suffers from the shortage of functionaries for the effective implementation of the MCC.
9. **Interference with Governance:** ECI is criticized for the early application of MCC as it imposes limitations on policy decisions, public spending, welfare schemes, transfers, and appointments.
10. **Lack of Awareness and Compliance:** The provisions of the Model code of conduct is not widely known or understood by voters, candidates, parties, and government officials.

Way forward

1. **Legalisation proposal :** Consider the 2013 Standing Committee recommendation to give the MCC a statutory basis.

2. **Strengthen election laws** : Use the **RPA 1951** more decisively for corrupt practices like bribery and fund misuse, aligning procedures with MCC norms.

3. **Empower the ECI**: Under **Article 324**, prioritize firm, law-anchored enforcement over ad-hoc management of the code.

4. **Fast-track courts**: Create special fast-track mechanisms to adjudicate MCC cases swiftly during the election window.

5. **Tech-ready MCC & capacity**: Update clauses for social media and AI misuse; expand EC's digital forensics, monitoring, and platform-coordination capability.

6. **Strict neutrality**: Apply the MCC consistently and transparently across parties and candidates to sustain public trust.

Conclusion

The MCC protects electoral fairness but, without statutory backing, swift adjudication, and tech-ready safeguards, it remains pliable. Giving it legal force, time-bound enforcement through fast-track courts, stronger EC capacity, and neutral, transparent application can restore the level playing field and public trust.

For detailed information on **Model Code of Conduct** [read the article here](#)

Question for practice:

Examine the key concerns with the Model Code of Conduct and the way forward to make it more effective in the tech era.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

New Mutual Funds Regulations on Total Expense Ratio (TER) and Brokerage Costs

Source: The post “New Mutual Funds Regulations on Total Expense Ratio (TER) and Brokerage Costs” has been created, based on “New Mutual Funds Regulations on Total Expense Ratio (TER) and Brokerage Costs” published in “The Hindu Businessline” on 06th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -3- Economic Development

Context: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed changes in the Total Expense Ratio (TER) and brokerage fee structure for mutual funds to increase transparency, protect investors, and align costs with fund performance. These reforms focus on reducing investor burden while streamlining fund house expenses.

About Total Expense Ratio (TER)

- **Definition:** TER is the **total cost charged by a mutual fund** to manage and operate an investment scheme, expressed as a **percentage of the fund's average assets under management (AUM)**.
- **Components:** It includes **management fees, administrative costs, distribution expenses, registrar fees, and marketing costs**.

- **Significance:** A higher TER reduces investor returns, while a lower TER indicates more cost-efficient fund management. SEBI regulates TER to ensure transparency and prevent excessive charges to investors.

About Brokerage Fee

- **Definition:** Brokerage fee is the **transaction cost paid by mutual funds to brokers** for buying and selling securities in the market.
- **Types:** It applies to both **cash market transactions** and **derivatives trades**.
- **Purpose:** Lower brokerage helps reduce overall fund expenses, contributing to a smaller TER and better investor returns.

Proposed Changes in TER Structure

- SEBI plans to **remove the additional 5 basis points (bps)** charge earlier allowed to AMCs.
- Revised TER slabs:
 - Up to ₹500 crore AUM – 2.5% (active), 2% (passive)
 - ₹500–₹700 crore AUM – 2% (active), 1.75% (passive)
- TER will decline as AUM increases, benefiting larger fund houses.

Changes in Brokerage Fees

- Brokerage for cash market transactions reduced from **12 bps to 2 bps**, and for derivatives from **5 bps to 1 bps**.
- All other expenses are to be charged on an actual basis.
- The move aims to reduce high bundled brokerage and research fees that burden investors.

Impact on AMCs, Brokers and Investors

- **AMCs:** Profit margins expected to fall by **15–20 bps**, forcing efficiency and cost control.
- **Brokers:** May experience lower income initially, but higher AUM could lead to more trades, offsetting losses over time.
- **Impact on Investors:**
 - Lower TER means reduced costs and better returns.
 - Example: For a ₹1 lakh investment, a 1% TER cut can save **₹150–₹200** annually.
 - Removal of exit load and transaction cost reduction directly benefit investors.
- **Industry Perspective**
 - Large fund houses are optimistic about managing the cost through efficiency and distribution improvements.
 - The rising AUM base will help absorb the impact in the medium term. Overall, it is seen as a positive, investor-centric reform.

Challenges

1. **Reduced AMC Profitability:** Smaller AMCs may face financial strain due to lower TER caps, affecting operational sustainability.
2. **Brokerage Pressure:** Sharp cuts in brokerage rates could hurt small and mid-sized brokers who depend on transaction volumes.

3. **Operational Adjustments:** Fund houses need to redesign their fee structures, impacting short-term operations.
4. **Possible Quality Reduction in Research and Advisory:** Unbundling brokerage and research services might lead to reduced access to quality market research.
5. **Implementation Complexity:** Ensuring compliance and uniform adoption across the industry may pose regulatory challenges initially.

Way Forward

1. **Phased Implementation:** Gradual rollout of TER and brokerage reforms can help smaller AMC's and brokers adapt.
2. **Encouraging Technological Efficiency:** Leveraging fintech and automation can reduce costs and compensate for reduced margins.
3. **Transparency and Investor Education:** Clear disclosures and investor awareness programs can build trust and understanding of cost structures.
4. **Balanced Regulation:** SEBI can periodically review the caps to ensure that investor protection does not compromise market sustainability.
5. **Promoting Competition and Scale:** Encouraging consolidation and operational collaboration among smaller AMC's to achieve economies of scale.

Conclusion: The new SEBI proposals mark a progressive shift toward a more transparent and investor-friendly mutual fund regime. While challenges exist for AMC's and brokers, the long-term benefits—lower investor costs, higher accountability, and stronger market discipline—make this reform a crucial step in deepening India's mutual fund ecosystem.

Question: What do new SEBI regulations on TER and brokerage costs mean for mutual funds and investors?

In Brazil, COP30 and the moment of truth

Source: The post "In Brazil, COP30 and the moment of truth" has been created, based on "In Brazil, COP30 and the moment of truth" published in "The Hindu Businessline" on 06th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -3-Environment

Context: The 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), to be held in **Belém, Brazil**, represents a crucial opportunity for the global community to shift from rhetoric to concrete climate action. The summit's location in the **Amazon rainforest**, one of the planet's most vital ecosystems, highlights the urgency of preserving nature and tackling the climate crisis.

Background

1. Brazil has a long history in climate diplomacy. It hosted the **Earth Summit in 1992**, which led to the Conventions on **Climate Change, Biological Diversity, and Combating Desertification**.
2. These agreements laid the foundation for global commitments to reduce **greenhouse gas emissions** and promote **sustainable development**.
3. Today, three decades later, COP30 returns to Brazil to renew the world's commitment to climate action amid worsening global warming and deforestation.

Significance of COP30 in Brazil

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1. The **Belém Summit** in the Amazon is intended to be a “**COP of Truth**”, where leaders move beyond speeches to implement genuine actions.
2. It reflects Brazil’s leadership in demonstrating that **courage and political will** can yield real climate results.
3. Brazil has already made progress by **halving deforestation in two years**, showing that tangible results are achievable.

Key Initiatives and Proposals

a) Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF)

- It is an **investment fund** (not a donation mechanism) to preserve forests.
- It rewards countries and communities that protect forests — a **win-win model** for sustainable finance.
- Brazil has announced a **\$1 billion investment**, encouraging other nations to follow.

b) Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)

- Brazil aims to **cut emissions by 59% to 67%** across all sectors.
- It encourages all nations to submit and effectively implement their NDCs.

c) Energy Transition

- Brazil’s energy mix is already **88% renewable**, among the world’s cleanest.
- The country is also leading in **biofuels, wind, solar, and green hydrogen** development.
- Revenue from oil production will be redirected toward an **equitable energy transition**.

d) Declaration on Hunger, Poverty, and Climate

- To address the link between **climate change and inequality**, Brazil plans to launch this declaration at COP30, recognizing that **adaptation and social justice** must go hand in hand.

Need for Reform in Global Climate Governance

- Current multilateral systems, especially the **UN Security Council**, have failed to address global crises effectively.
- Brazil advocates for the creation of a **UN Climate Change Council** under the **UN General Assembly**, ensuring accountability, equity, and stronger coordination in climate action.
- The principle of **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)** must remain the foundation of all agreements.

Challenges

1. **Inadequate Financing:** Developing countries still lack access to promised climate finance such as the **\$100 billion per year** commitment, limiting their ability to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts.
2. **Implementation Gaps:** Many countries make ambitious commitments at COPs but fail to deliver due to weak political will and fragmented policy execution.

3. **Global Inequality:** The Global South bears the brunt of climate change despite contributing the least to global emissions, while developed nations delay meaningful financial and technological support.
4. **Dependence on Fossil Fuels:** The world's continued reliance on coal, oil, and gas impedes the transition to renewable energy and contradicts emission reduction goals.
5. **Institutional Weakness:** The UNFCCC and related mechanisms lack enforcement powers, resulting in slow progress and diluted accountability.
6. **Social and Adaptation Challenges:** Vulnerable populations face hunger, migration, and livelihood loss due to climate impacts, while adaptation programs remain underfunded and poorly integrated.

Way Forward

1. **Fulfilment of Climate Finance Commitments:** Developed nations must honour and enhance their financial pledges to ensure predictable and accessible funding for developing countries.
2. **Strengthening Multilateral Institutions:** Establishing a **UN Climate Change Council** can improve coordination, enforce accountability, and prevent policy stagnation in global negotiations.
3. **Technology Transfer and Capacity Building:** Greater cooperation for sharing clean technologies and building institutional capacity in the Global South is crucial for equitable progress.
4. **Integrating Climate Action with Social Justice:** Climate policies should be designed to simultaneously address **poverty, hunger, and inequality**, ensuring a just and inclusive transition.
5. **Accelerating Energy Transition:** Governments should phase out fossil fuel subsidies and redirect investments toward renewables, green hydrogen, and sustainable infrastructure.
6. **Ensuring Accountability and Transparency:** Periodic reviews, monitoring frameworks, and measurable NDC targets must be implemented to track progress and ensure compliance.
7. **Empowering Indigenous and Local Communities:** Local populations, especially in the Amazon, should be recognized as key stakeholders and beneficiaries in conservation and adaptation efforts.

Conclusion: COP30 in Brazil stands as a **moment of truth** for global climate governance. It symbolizes both urgency and opportunity — to protect the Amazon, accelerate the energy transition, and ensure climate justice. The success of COP30 will depend on whether world leaders can match their promises with concrete, collective action.

Question: Discuss the significance of COP30 and the need for real global climate action.

Karnataka's menstrual leave policy: progressive step or symbolic gesture?

Source: The post “Karnataka’s menstrual leave policy: progressive step or symbolic gesture?” has been created, based on “Karnataka’s menstrual leave policy: progressive step or symbolic gesture?” published in “The Hindu” on 07th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -1- Society

Context: Karnataka has become the first state in India to introduce **one day of paid menstrual leave per month** for all **women employees**, covering both government and private sectors. Approved by the **Karnataka Cabinet**, this policy is being hailed as a **progressive measure** recognising menstrual health as a **legitimate workplace concern**, while also sparking debate on its adequacy and potential impact.

Background and Significance

1. The policy aligns with the **principles of gender equity** and **affirmative action** enshrined in the Constitution.
2. It follows global and domestic precedents — similar provisions exist in **Odisha, Bihar**, and other countries such as **Japan, Finland, and South Korea**.
3. Karnataka's initiative applies to **government offices, educational institutions, and private organisations**.
4. Earlier recommendations had suggested **two days of leave**, but the **government approved one day**.

Rationale Behind the Policy

1. Recognises menstruation as a **biological and health-related condition**, not merely a private issue.
2. Aims to **improve workplace inclusivity**, ensuring **women's well-being** and **productivity**.
3. Acknowledges **severe menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea)**, **PCOD/PCOS**, and **menorrhagia**, which affect working women's performance and mental health.
4. Seen as a **women's right** — part of preserving health, dignity, and workplace equity.

Key Features

1. **One day of paid leave per month** for all women employees.
2. Applies uniformly to **both government and private sectors**.
3. Part of Karnataka's efforts toward a **gender-just workplace** and **inclusive labour policy**.

Concerns and Criticisms

1. **Adequacy of the Leave:** Many experts argue that **one day is insufficient**, given that menstrual pain can last **two to three days**. Some doctors and women's groups had initially recommended **two days of leave**.
2. **Risk of Stigma and Workplace Bias:** There are concerns that **menstrual leave may reinforce gender stereotypes**, discouraging employers from hiring women. It could lead to **"benevolent discrimination"** or **unequal opportunities**.
3. **Medical vs Policy Focus:** Doctors emphasise that the focus should be on **managing menstrual disorders medically** rather than relying solely on leave. Issues such as **endometriosis, PCOS, or hormonal imbalances** need healthcare access, not just workplace relief.
4. **Equity and Inclusion:** Critics fear that **additional leave for women** could be perceived as **inequitable** in mixed-gender workplaces. There are calls for **sensitisation programmes** to normalise menstruation as a health issue, not a disability.

Way Forward

1. **Comprehensive Menstrual Health Policy:** Integrate **medical care, awareness, and sanitation facilities** at workplaces and schools.
2. **Review of Leave Duration and Flexibility:** Periodic review to determine if **two days of leave** or **flexible options** would be more effective.
3. **Workplace Sensitisation:** Conduct awareness campaigns to **reduce stigma** and promote **gender-sensitive environments**.
4. **Healthcare Integration:** Ensure access to **gynecological care, counselling, and diagnostic support** for women with severe menstrual conditions.

5. **Balanced Implementation:** Ensure that the policy **empowers women** without **reinforcing gender bias** in hiring or career progression.

Conclusion: Karnataka's menstrual leave policy represents a **progressive acknowledgment of women's physiological needs** and a step toward **inclusive workplace reform**. However, its true impact will depend on **effective implementation, awareness-building, and supportive healthcare measures**. To move beyond symbolism, the policy must evolve as part of a **comprehensive menstrual health and gender equity framework**, ensuring both **dignity and equality** for women at work.

Question: Examine how menstrual leave policies contribute to women's empowerment and workplace inclusivity. What challenges could arise in their acceptance and implementation in Indian society?

Why the nomination process needs reform

Source: The post "Why the nomination process needs reform" has been created, based on "Why the nomination process needs reform" published in "The Hindu" on 07th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper -2- Polity & Governance

Context: The **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951** lays down that only **qualified candidates** can contest elections. However, over time, the **nomination process** has become **overly technical and rigid**, with procedural scrutiny often overshadowing the **substantive qualifications** of candidates. This imbalance has led to controversies, litigation, and questions over the fairness of electoral democracy.

Background

1. The **Returning Officer (RO)** holds extraordinary discretionary powers during nomination scrutiny.
2. Under **Sections 33 to 36 of the RPA, 1951** and the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**, the RO may **reject nomination papers** if they are deemed invalid due to procedural or technical defects.
3. However, this scrutiny, meant to ensure integrity, has evolved into a **complex bureaucratic exercise** that sometimes undermines **voters' choice** and **democratic participation**.

Issues with the Current Nomination Process

1. Excessive Procedural Rigidity

- Even **minor technical errors** — such as missing details, incomplete forms, or filing delays by minutes — can lead to rejection.
- The **focus has shifted from verifying substantive qualifications** (e.g., citizenship, age, criminal record) to **punishing technical lapses**.
- Example: Rejection of nominations for trivial mistakes like **wrong columns left blank or incorrect formatting**.

2. Discretionary Powers and Lack of Safeguards

- ROs exercise **wide discretion**, often with **limited oversight or appeal mechanisms** before elections.
- While intended to prevent fraudulent candidates, these powers have **enabled arbitrary decisions** and potential **misuse**.

- Candidates sometimes lose the opportunity to contest **even before the public vote is cast**, undermining democracy.

3. Inconsistent Standards and Legal Uncertainty

- Courts have occasionally intervened to correct wrongful rejections, but **inconsistencies in interpretation** persist.
- For instance, in the **2019 elections**, several nominations were rejected due to **technical oversights**, not because candidates were unqualified.

4. Lack of Proportionality

- The system lacks balance — even **genuine candidates acting in good faith** can be disqualified for **minor errors**.
- The process places **form over substance**, focusing on paperwork rather than genuine eligibility.

5. Erosion of Voters' Right to Choose

- When nominations are rejected on flimsy grounds, **voters are denied the right to choose among all eligible candidates**.
- This undermines the **democratic principle of free and fair elections** enshrined in the Constitution.

Comparative Perspective and Best Practices

1. **UK:** Nominations are verified administratively, not through judicial-style scrutiny.
2. **Germany and Australia:** Allow correction of minor errors before the deadline, ensuring inclusivity and fairness.
3. **Canada:** Provides a **48-hour correction period** for defective nominations.
4. These models focus on **substance, fairness, and transparency**, unlike India's technical and punitive system.

Proposed Reforms

1. Digital and Automated Scrutiny

- Introduce a **digital nomination and verification system** using **facial recognition, ID, and online validation tools**.
- Allows real-time correction of errors before the final submission deadline.
- This reduces clerical mistakes and prevents arbitrary rejections.

2. Limiting Discretionary Powers

- Define **clear, objective guidelines** for ROs to prevent misuse of authority.
- All rejections should be accompanied by a **written justification** and **subject to appeal** within a short time frame.

3. **"Substantial Compliance" Principle:** Adopt a **substantial compliance standard**, where minor clerical errors do not invalidate nominations if core requirements are met.

4. Transparency and Accountability: Establish a **public digital record** of accepted and rejected nominations with reasons, enabling transparency and judicial review.

5. Training and Capacity Building: Provide **specialised training** to ROs and election staff to ensure uniform application of rules and uphold democratic fairness.

Way Forward

1. The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** must modernise the process, balancing **integrity with accessibility**.
2. A **graded system** distinguishing **fatal errors** (false declarations, ineligibility) from **minor procedural mistakes** should be institutionalised.
3. Collaboration with **law and technology experts** can help evolve a **21st-century nomination framework** that ensures both **procedural rigor and electoral inclusion**.

Conclusion: India's nomination process, though rooted in fairness, has become **burdened by procedural formalism**. The current system prioritises **technical correctness over democratic participation**, often disqualifying legitimate candidates and disenfranchising voters. **Reform must shift focus from paperwork to principles**, ensuring that only substantive disqualifications bar candidacy. A transparent, technology-driven, and humane approach is essential to uphold the **spirit of democracy and the voters' right to choose**.

Question: Discuss the challenges in India's electoral nomination process under the Representation of the People Act, 1951. How can reforms in scrutiny procedures strengthen electoral democracy and uphold the voter's right to choose?

Reimagining labour laws for MSMEs

Source: The post "**Reimagining labour laws for MSMEs**" has been created, based on "**Reimagining labour laws for MSMEs**" published in "The Hindu Businessline" on 08th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Context: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) form the **backbone of India's economy**, employing over **70% of the workforce** and keeping supply chains dynamic. The **Shram Shakti Niti 2025** recognises the vital role of MSMEs in generating employment and driving production. However, India's consolidated labour codes, while progressive, often impose **uniform compliance burdens** unsuitable for small firms. A **tailored Employment Relations (ER) Code** has been proposed to bridge this gap — bringing MSMEs under the fold of protection while maintaining operational flexibility and proportional compliance.

Context and Rationale for Reform

1. India consolidated nearly **50 labour laws** into four codes — on **Wages, Social Security, Industrial Relations, and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)**.
2. These reforms primarily address large enterprises with robust administrative systems.
3. MSMEs, on the other hand, rely on **trust-based, informal relationships** and operate with limited resources and administrative capacity.
4. Applying identical compliance procedures to both small and large enterprises leads to a **structural mismatch** that discourages formalisation.

- Thus, the next logical step is a **dedicated ER Code** for small establishments, balancing **protection, flexibility, and practicality**.

Key Features of the Proposed Employment Relations (ER) Code

- Applicability:** Designed for enterprises employing **up to 50 workers**, easing compliance requirements.
- Work Councils:** Establishment-level councils comprising employer and employee representatives. It is empowered to decide on **working hours, safety norms, leave, and benefits** through mutual agreements.
- Advisory Labour Department:** The government's role would shift from punitive enforcement to **guidance, mentorship, and feedback**.
- Digital Integration:** It links enterprises and Work Councils with **EPFO, ESIC, and DGFASLI** databases and enables tracking of employment records, social security benefits, and compliance digitally.
- Incentive-Based Compliance:** Verified digital records of fair practices could qualify firms for **tax relief or credit incentives**, promoting voluntary compliance and formalisation.

Benefits of the ER Code

- Encourages Formalisation:** Brings small firms under formal labour protection systems.
- Ensures Flexibility:** Simplifies compliance while ensuring workers' rights are protected.
- Strengthens Collaboration:** Promotes dialogue between employers and employees through Work Councils.
- Improves Transparency:** Digital monitoring enhances accountability and reduces corruption.
- Boosts Efficiency:** Reduces administrative costs and allows enterprises to focus on productivity.
- Facilitates Inclusive Growth:** Formalising MSMEs leads to broader social security coverage and stable employment.

Challenges in Implementation

- Digital Divide:** Many small enterprises, especially in rural areas, lack the infrastructure and skills for digital compliance.
- Administrative Capacity:** Labour departments may face difficulties transitioning from enforcement to an advisory role.
- Awareness and Training:** Both employers and workers may require **capacity building** to understand and utilise the ER framework.
- Resistance to Change:** Informal enterprises accustomed to minimal regulation might initially resist registration and digital procedures.
- Uniform Adoption:** Ensuring consistent implementation across States could be challenging due to differing labour practices.
- Resource Constraints:** Establishing and maintaining Work Councils may require financial and institutional support for smaller units.

Way Forward

- Pilot Implementation:** Launch the ER Code in selected MSME clusters before a national rollout to refine its structure.

2. **Digital Enablement:** Provide low-cost digital tools and training for MSMEs to file compliance records and maintain employee data.
3. **Capacity Building:** Train labour officers and MSME owners to adopt a facilitative, partnership-based approach.
4. **Incentivise Compliance:** Link good employment practices with **tax credits, easier credit access, and procurement advantages**.
5. **Collaborative Governance:** Encourage continuous dialogue among government, industry bodies, and workers' associations.
6. **Gradual Expansion:** Once successful, extend the ER Code framework to larger enterprises to foster participatory and collaborative labour governance.

Conclusion: A differentiated **Employment Relations Code** can serve as a cornerstone of India's next labour reform wave — one that acknowledges the **unique rhythm and character of MSMEs**. By blending **digital transparency, flexible compliance, and partnership-based governance**, it can formalise employment without burdening small enterprises. Such reform aligns with the **Shram Shakti Niti 2025's vision** of transforming the Ministry of Labour from a regulator into a **facilitator of inclusive growth**. Strengthening MSMEs is ultimately about **strengthening labour protection** itself — ensuring that economic growth and worker welfare progress together.

Question: Discuss how a tailored Employment Relations Code (ER Code) can strengthen labour protection while promoting flexibility and growth in India's MSME sector.

A blueprint for India's 'regulatory stack'

Source: The post "A blueprint for India's 'regulatory stack'" has been created, based on "A blueprint for India's 'regulatory stack'" published in "The Hindu Businessline" on 08th November 2025.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Governance, Transparency & E-Governance

Introduction: As India deepens its digital governance ecosystem, the next frontier of reform lies in **regulatory transformation**. The proposed **Regulatory Stack (RegStack)** aims to make regulation **predictable, transparent, and humane**, turning compliance from a maze into a mirror that reflects a state that is **trustworthy, efficient, and ethical**. Conceived as a **centrally sponsored digital infrastructure**, RegStack can harmonize governance functions across ministries, municipalities, and regulators, mirroring the success of India's *Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)* such as Aadhaar, UPI, and Jan Dhan.

Need for Regulatory Reform

1. India's regulatory landscape remains **fragmented, paper-heavy, and discretionary**, especially in local governance (construction permits, property registrations, waste management, etc.).
2. Bureaucratic opacity and procedural friction increase **delays, corruption, and rent-seeking**.
3. RegStack seeks to **digitally transform** the compliance ecosystem, ensuring that regulation is **applied uniformly, verifiably, and transparently**, reducing dependence on physical verification and subjective approvals.

Core Objectives of RegStack

1. **Simplify compliance:** Make regulation easy to apply, track, and verify digitally.

2. **Enhance accountability:** Ensure transparency and auditability of every regulatory transaction.
3. **Reduce friction:** Limit discretionary power, making governance predictable and impartial.
4. **Build trust:** Move from a “presumption of suspicion” to a “presumption of honesty.”

Key Components and Structure

RegStack is envisioned as a **four-layer interoperable digital architecture**:

1. **Identity & Authorisation Layer:** Uses **Aadhaar, PAN, and enterprise identifiers** to authenticate citizens and firms across interactions.
2. **Rule Engine Layer:** Encodes legal and regulatory provisions into **machine-readable logic**, allowing automatic real-time compliance checks.
3. **Data Exchange Layer:** Enables ministries and local bodies to share verified data securely, preventing redundant documentation and ensuring **auto-clearances** once one agency approves.
4. **Audit & Oversight Layer:** Maintains **immutable, traceable records** of all regulatory actions, strengthening both accountability and transparency.

Implementation Strategy

- **Pilot Phase:** Begin with **100 municipal pilot cities**, digitising select regulatory processes such as **building plan approvals and vendor licensing**. Implement in coordination with **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** and **Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)**.
- **Mission Approach:** Launch a **RegStack Mission** under MeitY to coordinate standards, technical support, and training. Gradually expand to **high-compliance sectors** like tourism, transport, and retail.
- **Integration:** Link RegStack with existing bodies such as **pollution control boards, labour departments, and land registries** for unified governance.

Philosophical Foundation

- Moves from “**regulation through suspicion**” to “**regulation through compliance**.”
- Trust becomes **programmable**—once compliance is verified digitally, regulators can focus on exceptional cases rather than routine checks.
- Encourages **ethical governance** where citizens and enterprises are presumed honest until proven otherwise.

Advantages of RegStack

1. **Transparency:** Real-time data sharing reduces information asymmetry.
2. **Predictability:** Automated decisions minimise human discretion.
3. **Efficiency:** Cuts the time and cost of compliance for citizens and enterprises.
3. **Accountability:** Immutable digital records deter corruption.
4. **Interoperability:** Integrates local and central regulations seamlessly.
5. **Scalability:** Can be extended to multiple sectors beyond municipalities.

Challenges and Concerns

1. **Digital Exclusion:** Smaller municipalities and citizens in rural areas may face access or literacy barriers.

2. **Cybersecurity Risks:** Centralised regulatory databases could become targets for breaches.
3. **Institutional Resistance:** Bureaucratic inertia may slow down digital adoption.
4. **Algorithmic Bias:** Automated systems could produce unfair outcomes without human oversight.
5. **Capacity Constraints:** Ministries need technically skilled staff to maintain and audit digital rule engines.
6. **Ethical Oversight:** Automation cannot fully replace human discretion in sensitive domains like health or the environment.

Way Forward

1. **Phased Rollout:** Begin with low-risk regulatory areas before expanding to complex sectors.
2. **Build Capacity:** Train officials, regulators, and local bodies in **digital rule encoding** and data governance.
3. **Strengthen Cybersecurity:** Ensure **robust encryption, anonymisation, and data-sharing protocols**.
4. **Hybrid Oversight:** Combine **algorithmic processing with human supervision** in high-stakes decisions.
5. **Legal Coherence:** Establish a **National RegStack Secretariat** to standardise frameworks and ensure inter-ministerial consistency.
6. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Include industry, citizens, and civil society in feedback loops to maintain transparency and trust.

Conclusion: The proposed **RegStack** represents the next major leap in India's digital governance evolution, transforming regulation from a maze of discretion into a **system of trust, transparency, and traceability**. By digitising compliance, embedding ethics into code, and fostering accountable automation, RegStack can help India build a state that is **confident, capable, and citizen-centric**. The goal is not to reduce regulation but to **refine it**, making governance **predictable, impartial, and humane** in the digital age.

Question: Discuss how India's proposed Regulatory Stack (RegStack) can enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in governance while reducing compliance burden.

Tackling Maoist Insurgency

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Internal security

Introduction

India has sharply weakened the Maoist movement through a combined push on **security, development, and rights**. Still, the **core grievance—inequality and deprivation** in tribal, forest, and remote districts—persists. **Leadership losses, mass surrenders, and falling violence** mark clear gains. But unless gaps in **education, health, nutrition, land, and livelihoods** close, the **ideological spark** may endure. The task now is to **lock in security gains while delivering tangible improvements** that reach every settlement.

Maoist insurgency in India

It began after **Naxalbari (1967)** and is driven by Maoist ideology that seeks to undermine the state through **armed rebellion** and parallel structures. It claims to fight for the **marginalised**, especially tribal communities, but employs **violence, extortion, infrastructure sabotage, and recruitment**.

It spread across the “**Red Corridor**”—Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Security forces, public assets, and democratic processes have been routine targets.

Current status of Maoist Insurgency

Leadership weakened: Maoist leadership has been decimated, and the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army is severely weakened.

Cadre losses and surrenders: This year till October 29, the **South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)** records 333 Maoists killed, 398 arrested, and 1,787 surrenders.

Territorial contraction: The number of **LWE-affected districts** has shrunk to **11 (MHA)**, marking a sharp contraction of operational space.

Violence trend: Incidents fell from **1,936 (2010)** to **374 (2024) (-81%)**. Deaths fell from **1,005 (2010)** to **150 (2024) (-85%)**.

Gains happened: These gains reflect an **integrated and holistic approach** led by the Centre and signal the potential of **police and CAPFs** to defeat an insurgency.

Underlying concerns

1. Core grievances: People joined the Maoists to defend marginalised communities. Injustice from inequality, deprivation, and political exclusion still shapes daily life. Without redress, anger remains. Security gains alone cannot fix these social deficits. People want fair access to services and dignity.

2. Uneven development: Growth is strong but uneven. Rural, tribal, and forest areas lack steady access to land, schools, health care, and livelihoods. India ranks lowest in the G20 in per-capita GDP and in PPP terms. The Gini coefficient shows only modest change. Many benefits fail to reach remote hamlets.

3. Poor human development: Many LWE districts trail state and national averages. Malkangiri’s HDI is **0.37** against Odisha’s **0.579**. In Gadchiroli, about **one-third** of under-five children are stunted or wasted, and **over 60%** of women of reproductive age are anaemic. Roads, banks, ITIs, and Eklavya schools exist, yet education, health, and nutrition outcomes remain weak.

4. Tribal rights and resource pressure: Tribal regions carry the costs of mining and projects. Forest Rights Act implementation is **slow**. Weak rights delivery breeds distrust.

5. Risk of ideological return: If injustice and exclusion continue, organised mobilisation may surface again, possibly in altered forms.

Government response

1. Security

- **National Policy & Action Plan (2015):** This provides the core multi-pronged strategy, combining area domination, targeted intelligence, development support, and rights delivery under one coordinated framework.

- **Security-Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme:** The Centre reimburses states for key counter-LWE costs, including operations, training, rehabilitation of surrendered cadres, and community policing, ensuring steady funding for the front line.
- **Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS) and Fortified Police Stations:** SIS strengthens intelligence branches and special forces, while fortified police stations harden vulnerable nodes; together they improve response times and officer safety in remote zones.
- **Financial Choke using NIA/ED:** Focused probes cut extortion and logistics chains, reducing the insurgency's ability to procure arms, move funds, and intimidate local contractors.

2. Infrastructure & Connectivity

- **Road Requirement Plan-I (RRP-I):** Strategic roads in core LWE states open access for security movement and bring markets, health, and schooling closer to isolated habitations.
- **Road Connectivity Project in LWE Areas (RCPLWE):** Complementing RRP-I, this project links interior villages to district hubs, protecting both routine service delivery and build-out of welfare assets.
- **Telecom Saturation Projects:** New towers and backhaul upgrades extend mobile coverage, enabling 112/ambulance access, digital payments, e-governance, and better operational coordination.
- **Special Central Assistance (SCA):** Flexible district funds close last-mile gaps—small bridges, solar lights, anganwadi repairs, and PHC upgrades—so citizens see tangible, near-term improvements.

3. Rights, Inclusion & Community Trust

- **Aspirational Districts (MHA-monitored):** Focused tracking of outcomes in priority LWE districts aligns line departments and accelerates problem-solving at the field level.
- **Skills & Education Stack (ITIs/SDCs/EMRS):** Local skilling and residential schooling raise employability and reduce youth vulnerability to recruitment.
- **Rehabilitation of Surrendered Cadres:** Time-bound benefits, training, and placement support ease reintegration and signal credible alternatives to violence.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan:** Saturation of personal amenities in tribal villages—paired with road, mobile, and finance access—converts security gains into everyday welfare, deepening trust.

Way Forward

1.Focus on Development- The successful implementation of development projects in Andhra Pradesh and Telanganareduced Maoist insurgency. Thus we must focus more on the effective implementation of development projects.

2. Strengthen Local Governance- Empowering local governments to address grievances and deliver public services effectively, as seen in the Panchayati Raj system's success in reducing Naxalism in West Bengal, can help build trust between communities and authorities.

3. Enhance Security Forces' Capabilities: Provide specialized training and better equipment to security personnel, similar to the Greyhounds force in Andhra Pradesh, which proved effective in countering Maoist insurgency due to their specialized training and local knowledge.

4. Encourage Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution: Engage in meaningful dialogue with Maoist groups to address their grievances, similar to the peace talks between the Indian government and Naga insurgents, which led to a ceasefire and reduced violence in the region.

5. Foster Community Engagement: Involve local communities in decision-making processes and development projects, as seen in the success of the Janmabhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh, where community participation helped build trust and reduce Maoist influence.

6. Ensure Accountability and Transparency- Strengthen measures to prevent corruption and human rights abuses, as demonstrated by the National Human Rights Commission's interventions in cases of alleged human rights violations by security forces, which can help restore public trust in government institutions.

Conclusion

Security pressure has **reduced violence, shrunk territory, and fractured leadership**. Durable peace now requires **education, health, nutrition, land and forest rights, and decent work** in affected villages. If **security operations** stay firm and **human development** accelerates, LWE can end sustainably—**fewer attacks and fewer reasons** for anyone to return to violence.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's multi-pronged strategy has weakened the Maoist insurgency, and discuss the remaining socio-economic challenges that must be addressed to ensure lasting peace.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Abraham Accords: A New Geopolitical Balancing Act

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 -International relation.

Introduction

Kazakhstan has joined the Abraham Accords, a U.S.-brokered framework that normalised ties with Israel. The step is **symbolic and strategic**. It comes during **President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan's** visit to Washington, where the United States is seeking renewed influence in Central Asia amid Russian and Chinese pull. It also **revives momentum** for the Accords after a slowdown linked to the Gaza crisis.

The Abraham Accords

The Accords are a **diplomatic framework** that opened **normal relations between Israel and several Muslim-majority countries**.

Members include the **United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan is the **first post-Soviet** state to join.

The goal is practical **cooperation in diplomacy, trade, technology, and security**. The move extends the **Accords' reach from West Asia into Central Asia** and signals that expansion is again possible.

For detailed information on **Abraham Accords** [read this article here](#)

Relevance of Kazakhstan's Entry into the Abraham Accords

1. **Multi-vector fit:** Kazakhstan follows a **multi-vector** policy. It balances relations with Russia, China, the West, and regional partners. Joining the Accords formalises its **bridge role** between Israel and Muslim states, and between East and West.
2. **Economic match:** Kazakhstan wants to diversify beyond oil and extractives. Israel brings strengths in agricultural technology, water management, renewable energy, and cybersecurity. These areas align with Kazakhstan's diversification goals.
3. **U.S. signalling:** The decision shows the **United States remains relevant** in shaping alignments across the Muslim world. It offers visible diplomatic movement when expansion had slowed during the Gaza crisis.

Impacts

1. **For Kazakhstan:** The step deepens cooperation with Israel and **strengthens ties with Washington**. It raises Kazakhstan's diplomatic profile and supports its image as a **trusted bridge** across regions.
2. **For the United States:** Washington gains **renewed visibility** in Central Asia and can show the Accords are **still growing**. It creates space to engage key actors in West Asia while keeping attention on a framework the U.S. champions.
3. **Possible next entrants:** **Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan** are in talks. Their potential entry keeps the expansion track active and builds on Central Asia's quiet but steady links with Israel.
4. **Political narrative:** For President Donald Trump, adding a new member supports the story that the Accords can expand. The **long-term target remains Saudi Arabia**, but **Saudi Arabia** reiterated that it will **not move forward without progress on Palestinian statehood**.

Regional Dynamics Shift

1. **Great-power balance:** Central Asia faces a **shrinking Russian orbit** and a **strong Chinese economic pull**. Kazakhstan's move helps the **U.S. re-enter** this competition for influence and standards in the region.
2. **Trans-Eurasian linkages:** The Accords can connect **Central Asia's resources and trade routes** with **Gulf capital and Israeli technology**. This creates a wider economic and diplomatic network that links West Asia and Central Asia.
3. **Counter-extremism angle:** A broader circle of **pro-U.S. Muslim-majority partners** can coordinate against extremism and **state-sponsored ideological threats**, including those tied to Iran.

Constraints and Risks

1. **Security exposure:** Ties bring exposure. There were **Iran-linked plots in Almaty** targeting Israeli and Jewish institutions. Kazakhstan must keep **firm vigilance** while maintaining openness.
2. **Political limits:** **Saudi normalisation** still depends on **progress on Palestinian statehood**. This puts a

ceiling on rapid expansion of the Accords.

3. **Regional sensitivities:** Kazakhstan must preserve balanced ties with **Russia and China**. It needs careful messaging to **domestic and regional audiences**.

4. **Evolving U.S. Engagement:** Separate U.S. moves—such as a planned meeting with **Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa**—signal a wider repositioning in West Asia and Central Asia. This introduces **uncertainty** but also **openings** for diplomatic leverage.

Way forward

1. **Broaden participation:** Draw in **Azerbaijan** and other **Central Asian nations**. There should also be a clear pathway for Saudi Arabia that depends on visible progress on Palestinian statehood.

2. **Remove legacy legal barriers:** Repeal or permanently waive **Jackson-Vanik** and **Section 907** to enable deeper trade, assistance, and cooperation. The **U.S. Congress** has introduced legislation to repeal the Jackson-Vanik Amendment following Kazakhstan's accession.

3. **Raise executive-level engagement:** Address the gap that **no sitting U.S. President has visited Central Asia**; use invitations (e.g., **Samarkand**) to signal commitment.

4. **Coordinate through partners.** Partners should coordinate through existing relationships to convert diplomacy into outcomes. The United States, Gulf states, and Israel should **promote business links, people-to-people exchanges, and technological cooperation** so that the Accords become the foundation of a durable regional order.

Conclusion

Kazakhstan's accession **reaffirms existing ties** with Israel but sends a larger signal. The Accords now **extend into Central Asia**, linking resources, routes, capital, and technology. If partners avoid legal and political bottlenecks and keep engagement steady, the framework can evolve into a **trans-Eurasian platform** for practical cooperation and balanced influence.

Question for practice:

Discuss the strategic and geopolitical significance of Kazakhstan's entry into the Abraham Accords.

Source: [India today](#) , [Atlantic council](#)