

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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**Features :**

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

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## AI anxiety can turn into an advantage for Atmanirbhar India

**Source:** The post “AI anxiety can turn into an advantage for Atmanirbhar India” has been created, based on “AI anxiety can turn into an advantage for Atmanirbhar India” published in “Indian Express” on 02nd March 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Science and technology**

**Context:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a transformative technology that can accelerate productivity, efficiency, and economic growth. Although AI creates fears about job losses and inequality, historical experience shows that technological change ultimately generates new opportunities. With proper policies, India can convert AI anxiety into a major advantage for achieving Atmanirbhar Bharat.

### AI and Economic Growth

1. Artificial Intelligence is expected to significantly improve productivity and accelerate economic development across sectors.
2. Many experts believe that AI represents an inflection point in human progress, similar to the impact of the internet.
3. The theory of creative destruction proposed by Joseph Schumpeter explains that new technologies replace outdated systems but create higher efficiency and long-term growth.
4. Countries and industries that fail to adopt AI risk falling behind in global competition.
5. Over time, technological change expands the economy and creates new jobs requiring higher skills and better wages.

### AI and Employment Concerns

1. There is concern that AI may displace workers in several sectors, especially in routine jobs.
2. Kristalina Georgieva has warned that a large proportion of jobs may be affected by AI adoption.
3. However, leaders such as Mukesh Ambani argue that AI will generate new employment opportunities in India.
4. Similar fears existed when computers were introduced during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi, but computerisation ultimately strengthened India's economy.
5. Some workers may face short-term losses, but the overall economy is likely to benefit in the long run.
6. Skill development and reskilling programmes are necessary to help workers transition to new roles.

### AI and Inequality

1. Early adopters of AI technology are likely to gain more benefits in the short run.
2. High investment and energy requirements create barriers for developing countries.
3. However, technology usually becomes cheaper over time, making it accessible to more people.
4. India has shown its ability to create low-cost technological solutions through innovations like UPI and space achievements like Chandrayaan-3.
5. India can develop affordable AI solutions for the Global South and reduce inequality.

### AI and Agriculture

1. Agriculture employs about 46 percent of India's workforce, making it highly important in the AI transition.
2. AI can improve precision farming by optimising inputs such as water and fertilisers.
3. AI can also enhance efficiency in logistics, storage, marketing, and food processing.
4. Government initiatives such as AgriStack aim to integrate AI into the agricultural ecosystem.

5. AI has the potential to increase productivity and farmer incomes rather than simply replace labour.

### Challenges

1. India currently lags behind major powers like the US and China in AI research, investment, and infrastructure.
2. The high cost of AI development and large energy requirements may limit rapid expansion.
3. Job displacement in the short term may create social and political pressure.
4. Inequality may increase if only skilled workers and large companies benefit from AI adoption.
5. Data privacy, data ownership, and regulatory issues remain unresolved.
6. India risks becoming only a consumer of foreign AI technologies instead of building its own ecosystem.

### Way Forward

1. India must invest heavily in AI research, infrastructure, and innovation through public-private partnerships.
2. The government must expand skill development and reskilling programmes to prepare workers for AI-driven jobs.
3. Social protection measures should be provided to workers affected by automation.
4. India must create a clear regulatory framework addressing data ownership, privacy, and ethical AI use.
5. Indigenous AI models and applications must be developed to ensure technological self-reliance.
6. India should focus on developing low-cost AI solutions that can be scaled across the Global South.
7. Collaboration between government, industry, and academia is essential for building a strong AI ecosystem.

**Conclusion:** Artificial Intelligence represents a process of creative destruction that will disrupt existing systems but create new opportunities. If India adopts proactive policies, invests in skills and innovation, and builds indigenous capabilities, AI anxiety can become a major strength. In this way, AI can support inclusive growth and help India achieve true Atmanirbhar Bharat.

**Question:** “Artificial Intelligence can transform India’s economy despite fears of job losses.” Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

### **Strait of Hormuz oil flows dry up: How this affects India, and the options ahead**

**Source:** The post “Strait of Hormuz oil flows dry up: How this affects India, and the options ahead” has been created, based on “Strait of Hormuz oil flows dry up: How this affects India, and the options ahead” published in “Indian Express” on 02nd March 2026.

### **UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations**

The recent escalation of conflict involving Iran, United States and Israel has severely disrupted energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most critical oil transit chokepoint. Since India depends heavily on energy imports routed through this passage, any disruption has significant economic and strategic implications.

### **Importance of the Strait of Hormuz**

1. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
2. It handles nearly one-fifth of global liquid petroleum consumption and a large share of global LNG trade.
3. Approximately 15 million barrels of crude oil pass through the strait every day.

4. Even if alternative pipelines are fully utilised, around 9% of global oil demand would remain structurally at risk if the strait is closed.

## Impact on India

### I. Oil Imports

1. Around half of India's crude oil imports, roughly 2.5–2.7 million barrels per day, pass through the strait.
2. India is the world's third-largest oil consumer and imports more than 88% of its crude requirement.
3. A disruption would increase oil prices, and every \$1 per barrel increase could raise India's annual import bill by \$1.8–2 billion.
4. Although India has crude inventories of over 10 days and some fuel stocks, sustained disruption would increase economic pressure.

### II. LPG and LNG Vulnerability

1. India imports 80–85% of its LPG needs, mostly from Gulf countries via Hormuz.
2. India does not maintain strategic LPG reserves at the same scale as crude oil reserves.
3. Around 60% of India's LNG imports also transit through the strait.
4. Unlike crude oil, LPG and LNG have limited spot market availability, making them more vulnerable during prolonged disruption.

### Likely Price and Market Impact

1. Brent crude prices have already risen sharply due to geopolitical tensions.
2. In the event of prolonged disruption, oil prices could rise above \$100 per barrel.
3. Even a short-term closure of one to two weeks could create tanker congestion and logistical backlogs lasting several weeks.
4. However, experts believe a complete and prolonged blockade is unlikely due to international military presence and global economic consequences.

### India's Near-Term Options

1. India can draw from its strategic petroleum reserves to cushion short-term supply shocks.
2. Indian refiners can accelerate spot purchases from non-Hormuz regions.
3. India can increase sourcing from countries such as Russia, the United States, West Africa, and Latin America.
4. The availability of Russian cargoes in floating storage in the Indian Ocean region provides additional flexibility.
5. Diversification of supply sources reduces the risk of a sustained supply crisis.

### Challenges

1. India's high import dependence makes it structurally vulnerable to external shocks.
2. LPG and LNG imports have thinner structural buffers compared to crude oil.
3. Rising oil prices would increase inflation and widen the current account deficit.
4. Prolonged geopolitical instability in West Asia could disrupt supply chains beyond energy.
5. Shipping insurance costs and war-risk premiums would further increase import costs.

### Way Forward

1. India must further diversify its crude and gas import sources to reduce dependence on any single transit route.

2. The country should expand its strategic petroleum reserves and explore creating strategic LPG storage capacity.
3. Long-term contracts with alternative suppliers should be strengthened to ensure energy security.
4. India must accelerate the transition towards renewable energy and domestic energy production to reduce import dependence.
5. Diplomatic engagement with Gulf countries and major powers should be strengthened to ensure stability in critical maritime routes.
6. Energy efficiency measures and demand management strategies should be promoted to reduce vulnerability to price shocks.

**Conclusion:** The disruption in the Strait of Hormuz highlights the fragility of global energy supply chains and India's dependence on external energy sources. While India has short-term buffers and diversified sourcing options, prolonged disruption would strain the economy. Strengthening energy security through diversification, strategic reserves, and clean energy transition is essential for safeguarding India's long-term economic stability.

**Question:** Discuss how disruptions in West Asian conflicts involving Iran, United States, and Israel can impact India's economy.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Sixteenth Finance Commission — Misses and Concerns

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

### Introduction

The Sixteenth Finance Commission worked with unusual flexibility because its terms of reference flowed directly from constitutional provisions. It examined both **vertical devolution** and **horizontal devolution**. It retained the States' share at **41%**, yet important design choices and omissions have raised concerns about constitutional balance, effective transfers, and equalisation across States. The core issue is not only the percentage share but the overall structure of fiscal transfers.

### Constitutional Role and Background of the Sixteenth Commission

#### 1. Duty under Articles 270 and 280:

Articles 270 and 280 of the Indian Constitution establish the framework for India's fiscal federalism.

Article 270 mandates the distribution of net tax proceeds (divisible pool) between the Centre and States, while

Article 280 provides for the constitution of a Finance Commission every five years to recommend the manner of this distribution and grants-in-aid.

**2. Shift after the Fourteenth Commission:** The share of States increased from **32% to 42%** because State plan grants, which were about **3% of the divisible pool**, were discontinued. It was later reduced to **41%** due to the change in the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

3. **Centre's concern over fiscal space:** The Centre expressed concern about reduced fiscal space after the increase to 42%.

4. **Retention of 41% share:** The Sixteenth Commission retained **41%**, giving it a semi-permanent character.

#### What the Sixteenth Finance Commission Misses

1. **No clear recommendation on cesses and surcharges:** Non-shareable cesses and surcharges should be limited and for specific purposes. The Commission made no direct recommendation to restrict their increase.

2. **Grand bargain proposal instead of correction:** It recommended a 'grand bargain' (paragraph 7.67) between the Centre and States saying that 'States would agree to a smaller share in the resulting larger divisible pool, with no loss of revenues to either side' provided the Centre agreed to merge a large part of the cesses and surcharges in the regular taxes.

3. **Weak assertion of constitutional responsibility:** The Commission did not clearly state that the steep increase in cesses and surcharges was not warranted or not in the spirit of the Constitution.

4. **Discontinuation of revenue deficit and specific grants:** It stopped revenue deficit grants and did not recommend State-specific or sector-specific grants. This reduced an important balancing tool.

5. **No adjustment for GST reforms:** It did not factor in the revenue-reducing impact of major GST reforms undertaken in **September 2025**.

6. **Optimistic growth assumption:** It assumed **11% nominal GDP growth for 2026-27**, higher than the Budget estimate of **10%**, which may lead to overestimation of projections.

#### Major Concerns in Design and Outcomes

1. **Effective transfers show decline:** Transfers as a share of the Centre's pre-transfer gross revenue receipts were **27.0%, 27.2%, and 28.3%** in the 11th, 12th, and 13th periods. They rose to **35.6%** in the 14th and fell slightly to **34.4%** in the 15th. For **2026-27**, the estimate is **32.7%**, indicating a decline.

2. **Centre's response after 14th Commission:** The Centre increased non-shareable cesses and surcharges, reduced its share in centrally sponsored schemes, and did not accept some sector-specific and State-specific grants recommended by the Fifteenth Commission.

3. **Introduction of contribution criterion:** A new efficiency criterion was added based on a State's share in total GSDP. The square root of GSDP was used to reduce excessive impact.

4. **Production efficiency versus fiscal efficiency:** GSDP depends on movement of capital and labour and market concentration. It does not directly measure fiscal effort.

5. **Opposite use of GSDP in formula:** Lower per capita GSDP increases share under income distance. Higher per capita GSDP increases share under contribution. This creates internal tension.

6. **Dropping tax effort criterion:** The fiscal discipline or tax effort criterion was removed, even though it directly measured fiscal efficiency.

7. **Purely judgemental weight changes:** Weights of some criteria were altered without objective justification.

8. **Distributional losses and gains:** Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan lost share compared to the Fifteenth Commission. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, and Goa also lost. Gains among richer States were not uniform.

### Way Forward

1. **Use Article 275 for needs-based transfers:** Grants for State-specific needs can equalise standards in health and education. These should not be confused with revenue deficits.

2. **Restore normatively determined revenue gap grants:** If devolution formula changes cause losses, revenue gap grants can neutralise them.

3. **Limit and earmark cesses and surcharges:** These should remain finite and purpose-specific rather than merged into general funds.

4. **Balance performance and equalisation:** Efficiency concerns of richer States can be accommodated while still protecting the equalisation objective.

5. **Devolution alone cannot capture cost and need differentials:** India's highly differentiated States require tools beyond formula-based devolution to address variations in costs and service needs.

### Conclusion

The Sixteenth Finance Commission retained the **41% share** but allowed effective transfers to decline. It avoided a firm position on rising cesses and discontinued revenue gap grants. The contribution criterion created internal inconsistencies. Equalisation remains essential in a diverse federation. Fiscal design must protect constitutional balance, fairness, and objective determination of States' share.

### Question for practice:

Examine the major misses and concerns associated with the Sixteenth Finance Commission, particularly in relation to vertical and horizontal devolution, effective transfers, and the equalisation objective.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Skill India as Herculean Challenges, Galgotian Blunders

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

### Introduction

India's demographic dividend, which ends by **2040**, offers a rare opportunity to transform the country into a global skill hub. Yet vocational education remains deeply neglected, with only **1.3% of secondary students enrolled**, compared to nearly **50% in the European Union and China**. Despite ambitious targets under the National Education Policy 2020, weak financing, fragmented schemes, and repeated implementation failures have created a gap between aspiration and reality.

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## Major Concerns Related to India's Skill Mission

- 1. Low Vocational Participation:** Only **1.3% of secondary students** are enrolled in vocational streams, while several EU countries and China have nearly **50% participation**.
- 2. Limited Financial Commitment:** Vocational education receives around **2% of education budgets globally**, but **China and Germany spend 11%**, showing stronger policy commitment.
- 3. Fragmented Financing Structure:** There is no publicly available consolidated data because training schemes are spread across multiple Ministries.
- 4. Inconsistent Budget-Based Strategy:** Skill policy depends heavily on yearly Budget announcements. Schemes celebrated one year are forgotten the next.
- 5. Poor Scheme Utilisation:** The FY2026 internship scheme used only **5% of allocated funds**, showing design and execution failure.
- 6. Financial Impropriety and Weak Accountability:** The Comptroller and Auditor General of India audited the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (2015–22) and found serious lapses. **94.5% bank accounts were invalid**, and only **41% trainees received placement**.
- 7. Quantity Over Quality:** The short-term skill ecosystem focused on numbers rather than outcomes, producing limited employment results.
- 8. Supply-driven government financing:** Skill programmes remain largely government-funded with limited employer ownership and weak industry responsibility.

## Structural Gaps in the Present System

- 1. Weak employer engagement:** Industry participation remains limited, and employers do not own the skill development process, making the system largely state-driven.
- 2. Institutional drift in National Skill Development Corporation:** The National Skill Development Corporation began as a non-banking finance company, later funded training partners, and now primarily implements government schemes, showing deviation from its original market-based role.
- 3. No stable financing framework:** Skill funding remains vulnerable to political and Budget cycles instead of being based on a sustainable and insulated financial model.
- 4. Absence of real-time labour market information:** Periodic skill-gap studies continue, but a proper labour market information system has not materialised, weakening demand-based planning.

## Initiatives Taken

- 1. NEP 2020 vocational target:** The policy aims to expose **50% learners to vocational education by 2025**, though the emphasis on “exposure” reflects limited depth of integration.
- 2. PMKVY as flagship programme:** PMKVY aimed to build a public-private short-term skill ecosystem through large-scale government financing.

3. **Internship scheme (FY2026):** The scheme attempted to connect training with industry exposure but suffered from weak utilisation and ineffective design.

#### What Should Be Done?

1. **Shift Part of PMKVY Funding to Skill Loans:** Instead of operational grants, over ₹10,000 crore annually can be extended as skill loans using a framework similar to educational loans, increasing student choice while managing risks like non-performing assets.

2. **Introduce trainee-based skill vouchers:** Public funds should follow the trainee rather than institutions, improving accountability and competition, as successfully implemented in **Singapore and Croatia**.

3. **Use vouchers for AI, digital and green transitions:** Skill vouchers can support **AI-led transition**, promote digital and green skills, enhance women workforce participation, and provide foreign language training for global labour markets.

4. **Adopt payroll-linked skill levies (Reimbursable Industry Contribution):** More than **90 countries** use levy-based systems, including **Germany, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and several Latin American countries**, ensuring sustainable financing insulated from political cycles.

5. **Link firm contribution to reimbursement:** Contributions based on payroll and firm size should be returned after training, making employers responsible for skill development and shifting the system from government-financed to employer-owned.

6. **Build real-time labour market information system:** Online job boards should share aggregate data with safeguards, and AI-based modelling should guide planning through the National Career Service portal instead of relying on periodic skill-gap studies.

#### Conclusion

India's demographic dividend closes by **2040**, leaving limited time for reform. The present model suffers from weak financing, poor accountability, and limited employer ownership. A shift to skill loans, vouchers, industry levies, and real-time labour data can create a demand-driven system. Without course correction, the opportunity to become a global skill capital may be lost.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the major challenges facing India's Skill Mission and evaluate the structural reforms needed to transform it into a demand-driven and employer-owned skill development system before 2040.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### India's Transformation into a Global Health Powerhouse

**Source:** The post "India's Transformation into a Global Health Powerhouse" has been created, based on "India's Transformation into a Global Health Powerhouse" published in "Indian Express" on 03rd March 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Science and technology**

**Context:** India has transformed from a country battling endemic diseases into a global health powerhouse through universal health coverage, digital innovation, pharmaceutical strength, and expanded medical infrastructure. Flagship programmes such as Ayushman Bharat, the National Health Mission, and large-scale immunisation drives have strengthened healthcare access and improved public health outcomes. India has also emerged as the “Pharmacy of the World,” supplying affordable medicines and vaccines globally while advancing biotechnology and medical education.

### Key Pillars of India’s Health Transformation

#### Universal Health Coverage

1. The Ayushman Bharat programme aims to provide universal health coverage, especially to socio-economically disadvantaged populations.
2. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana provides ₹5 lakh per family annually for secondary and tertiary care and covers the bottom 40 percent of the population as well as senior citizens above 70 years.
3. Over 434 million Ayushman cards have been issued, significantly reducing catastrophic health expenditures for families.
4. Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have expanded primary healthcare services, with over 1.84 lakh centres operational across urban, rural, and tribal areas.
5. The PM–Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission is strengthening public health labs, critical care blocks, and block-level health units to enhance pandemic preparedness.

#### Digital Health and Technology

1. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission has created over 863 million digital health IDs to enable secure and interoperable medical records.
2. Artificial intelligence tools are being integrated into diagnostics, record management, tuberculosis monitoring, and diabetic retinopathy screening.
3. Drone-based delivery initiatives are improving last-mile connectivity in hilly and remote regions.

#### Strengthening Public Health Outcomes

1. The National Health Mission has significantly reduced maternal mortality, under-five mortality, and tuberculosis incidence.
2. The Universal Immunisation Programme covers millions of newborns and pregnant women annually with free vaccines.
3. Mission Indradhanush has reduced the number of zero-dose children and improved immunisation coverage.
4. A nationwide HPV vaccination programme has been launched to prevent cervical cancer among adolescent girls.

#### Pharmaceutical and Biopharma Leadership

1. India is the third-largest pharmaceutical producer by volume and supplies 20 percent of global generic medicines.
2. It provides 55–60 percent of UNICEF’s vaccines and over 70 percent of global anti-retroviral medicines.
3. Indigenous vaccine development during COVID-19 demonstrated India’s research and manufacturing capability.
4. The bioeconomy has grown significantly and is projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030.

#### Affordable Medicines and Medical Tourism

1. The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana provides quality generic medicines at 50–90 percent lower prices through thousands of outlets.
2. The AMRIT initiative supports affordable tertiary care medicines and implants.
3. Medical tourism has expanded substantially, and new integrated medical hubs have been announced to boost this sector.

### Expansion of Medical Education

1. The number of medical colleges and seats has increased significantly over the past decade.
2. There are now 23 AIIMS institutions and more than 2,000 medical colleges across the country.
3. MBBS and postgraduate seats have expanded to meet growing healthcare demands.

### Challenges

1. Significant disparities in healthcare access still exist between urban and rural areas, particularly in remote and tribal districts.
2. There is a persistent shortage of specialist doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff in several regions.
3. Although government schemes have reduced costs, out-of-pocket health expenditure remains high for many households.
4. Public health infrastructure in some areas faces issues of maintenance, quality control, and equipment shortages.
5. The rising burden of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer is increasing long-term healthcare costs.
6. Digital health initiatives face concerns related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and digital literacy.
7. Dependence on imported active pharmaceutical ingredients for certain drugs creates supply chain vulnerabilities.
8. Emerging infectious diseases, climate change, and antimicrobial resistance pose long-term systemic risks.

### Way Forward

1. The government should further strengthen primary healthcare by ensuring adequate staffing, quality standards, and regular monitoring across all health centres.
2. Public health expenditure should be increased gradually as a percentage of GDP to reduce out-of-pocket expenses and improve service delivery.
3. Greater focus should be placed on preventive healthcare, lifestyle awareness campaigns, and early screening for non-communicable diseases.
4. Investments in medical education and skill development should continue to bridge human resource gaps in underserved areas.
5. Strong data protection laws and cybersecurity frameworks should support the expansion of digital health infrastructure.
6. Domestic manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices should be promoted to ensure self-reliance.
7. Public-private partnerships should be expanded in research, biotechnology, telemedicine, and medical tourism.
8. Continuous monitoring, cooperative federalism, and evidence-based policymaking should guide implementation to sustain long-term progress.

**Conclusion:** India's transformation into a global health powerhouse is rooted in universal health coverage, digital innovation, pharmaceutical leadership, and institutional expansion. With over 1.84 lakh primary health centres, 863 million digital health IDs, and strong vaccine and medicine manufacturing capacity, India has

positioned itself as a model of affordable and inclusive healthcare. As the country advances toward the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, it is poised to play a leading role in global public health governance and health equity.

**Question:** Discuss the role of Ayushman Bharat in advancing Universal Health Coverage in India. Highlight its achievements and limitations.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

## Israel, the U.S. and a War to Build a Unipolar West Asia

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International Relation.

### Introduction

In February 2026, even as nuclear negotiations were close to success under Omani mediation, **the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran**, killing its Supreme Leader and senior officials. The timing showed that the issue was not only nuclear control. It signalled a broader attempt to remove Iran's regime and **reshape the regional balance of power in West Asia**.

### Iran as the Last Strategic Challenger in West Asia

- 1. Iran as the only revisionist power:** Iran is seen as the only state in West Asia openly challenging Israel's supremacy. Many Arab states host American bases or depend on U.S. aid, but **Iran continues to resist this regional order**.
- 2. Nuclear deal versus broader security concerns:** In 2015, President Barack Obama aimed to restrict Iran's nuclear programme for regional stability. However, Israel opposed the deal because its concern included **Iran's conventional strength and advanced missile capability**.
- 3. Demand for total disarmament:** Israel demanded that any agreement include Iran's missile programme and support to militias. Iranian leaders viewed this as surrendering their **last deterrent**, making acceptance unlikely.
- 4. Regime change as geopolitical gain:** With Iraq, Libya and Syria weakened, Iran remains the last major independent force. If the Islamic Republic falls, **West Asia would move toward a unipolar order centred on Israel, fully backed by Washington**.

### A War of Regime Change, Regional Escalation and Strategic Uncertainty

- 1. From diplomacy to decapitation:** On February 27, Oman's Foreign Minister stated that Iran had committed not to build a nuclear bomb. Within hours, strikes began and Iran's top leadership was killed, showing that **force replaced diplomacy**.
- 2. Decapitation without ground invasion:** Iran is about 70 times bigger than Israel and protected by mountains. Since no country is willing to invade, Israel adopted a **decapitation strategy** by targeting top leaders.

3. **Limits of military shock:** In June 2025, after a 12-day war, Iran reorganised and retaliated. In February 2026, even after the killing of its Supreme Leader, the regime did not collapse, proving that **leadership assassination does not guarantee regime change**.

4. **From limited war to regional conflict:** Unlike the earlier war, Iran expanded its response by striking American bases across the Persian Gulf and Israel. This marked a shift from bilateral conflict to **regional confrontation**.

5. **Closure of the Strait of Hormuz:** Iran announced the shutting of the Strait of Hormuz, through which **one-third of global energy supply flows**. This move widened the war and created global economic risk.

6. **Strategic imbalance and uncertainty:** The U.S.–Israel alliance has strong conventional superiority. However, military strength alone does not ensure victory, as Iran’s strategy is to prolong conflict and deny a quick triumph.

### Implications of this War

1. **Regional destabilisation:** The conflict has drawn Gulf monarchies into tension and risks turning into a cross-Gulf war. West Asia is facing **one of its most dangerous phases since the Second World War**.

2. **Global economic shock:** Disruption of Hormuz threatens global energy trade and oil markets. Major importers such as **India face serious economic risks**.

3. **Exhaustion of defence systems:** A prolonged conflict could exhaust missile defence shields protecting American bases and Israel. This would increase regional vulnerability.

4. **Collapse of diplomacy:** The war began despite active negotiations. The U.S. withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018, and again force replaced talks in 2025 and 2026, weakening trust in diplomatic solutions.

5. **Erosion of international norms:** The war was described as “pre-emptive,” yet there was no evidence of an imminent Iranian attack. The killing of top leaders during negotiations raises serious concerns about **respect for international law**.

### Conclusion

This conflict is not limited to nuclear concerns. It reflects a larger attempt to reshape West Asia’s balance of power. However, Iran’s resistance and regional escalation show that regime change through force is uncertain and risky. If the war continues, it may deepen instability, damage global order, and leave the region more divided than before.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how the Israel–U.S. war against Iran reflects an attempt to reshape West Asia’s balance of power, and examine its regional, strategic and global implications.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Legal framework that governs maritime conflict

**Source:** The post “legal framework that governs maritime conflict” has been created, based on “Was US legally right in sinking Iranian ship? What framework governing maritime conflict says” published in “Indian Express” on 06th March 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations**

**Context:** The sinking of the Iranian warship **IRIS Dena** by a US submarine in international waters near **Sri Lanka** has raised significant concerns about the legality of the use of force at sea. Maritime conflicts are primarily governed by the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**, the **United Nations Charter**, and customary international law relating to naval warfare.

### Legal Framework Governing Maritime Conflict

#### (a) United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

1. UNCLOS regulates maritime zones, navigation rights, and resource use primarily during peacetime.
2. It does not contain detailed provisions governing the conduct of hostilities during armed conflict at sea.
3. Therefore, during conflicts, the law of naval warfare operates alongside UNCLOS.

#### (b) Law of Naval Warfare

1. Under customary international law, warships belonging to an enemy state can be considered legitimate military targets during armed conflict.
2. The presence of a warship in international waters does not grant immunity from attack if hostilities exist between the states involved.

#### (c) UN Charter Provisions

1. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against another state.
2. Article 51 allows states to use force in self-defence if an armed attack occurs.
3. Military action may also be authorised by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter.

#### (d) International Humanitarian Law at Sea

1. Naval warfare must follow principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction.
2. Attacks must be directed only at legitimate military targets and must avoid excessive harm.

### Arguments Supporting the Legality of the US Action

1. If the United States and Iran were already engaged in an armed conflict, the Iranian warship could legally be treated as a military target.
2. Warships are sovereign military assets and are generally considered lawful targets during hostilities.
3. The United States may justify the strike under the right to self-defence provided under Article 51 of the UN Charter.
4. The attack occurred in international waters, where no country exercises complete sovereignty.

### Arguments Questioning the Legality of the Strike

1. If the Iranian warship was on a peaceful passage and not engaged in combat operations, the attack could be considered unlawful.
2. The use of force without clear evidence of self-defence may violate Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

3. The absence of explicit authorisation from the UN Security Council raises concerns regarding unilateral military action.
4. Attacking a vessel outside an active conflict zone may be viewed as a significant escalation of the conflict.

### Strategic Implications

1. The incident expands the theatre of the US-Iran conflict beyond West Asia into the Indian Ocean region.
2. It raises maritime security concerns for regional powers such as **India**.
3. The episode highlights gaps in global maritime governance during armed conflicts.

### Way Forward

1. The international community should strengthen legal norms governing naval warfare to address grey areas in maritime conflicts.
2. Greater reliance on multilateral institutions such as the **United Nations Security Council** is required to regulate the use of force at sea.
3. Countries should enhance maritime confidence-building measures and communication channels to prevent accidental escalation.
4. Regional powers should promote cooperative maritime security frameworks in sensitive regions such as the Indian Ocean.
5. There is a need to reinforce adherence to international humanitarian law and ensure accountability for violations during maritime conflicts.

**Conclusion:** While the law of naval warfare allows the targeting of enemy warships during armed conflict, the legality of the strike on **IRIS Dena** ultimately depends on whether it can be justified under self-defence or as part of an ongoing conflict. The incident underscores the urgent need to strengthen international maritime governance and conflict-management mechanisms.

**Question:** In the context of the recent sinking of the Iranian warship IRIS Dena by a US submarine near Sri Lanka, discuss the legal framework governing maritime conflict in international waters. Was the action legally justified?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

### Strategy to secure critical minerals

**Source:** The post “Strategy to secure critical minerals” has been created, based on “Strategy to secure critical minerals” published in “BusinessLine” on 06th March 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3-Science and technology

**Context:** Critical minerals such as **Lithium, Cobalt, Copper and Rare Earth Elements** are essential for clean energy technologies, artificial intelligence infrastructure, advanced electronics, and defence systems. The rapid expansion of the green transition and AI-driven industries has significantly increased the global demand for these minerals. However, the supply chains are concentrated in a few countries, especially **China**, which creates strategic vulnerabilities for **India**.

### Importance of Securing Critical Minerals for India

1. Critical minerals are essential for manufacturing renewable energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicle batteries.

2. Securing these minerals is necessary for achieving India's climate commitments and net-zero emission targets.
3. Critical minerals are widely used in artificial intelligence hardware, semiconductors, and advanced electronic devices, which are vital for technological advancement.
4. Many defence technologies such as missiles, radar systems, and advanced aerospace equipment depend on these minerals, making them crucial for national security.
5. A secure supply of critical minerals can support India's industrial growth, manufacturing competitiveness, and economic development.

### Government Initiatives

1. The **National Critical Mineral Mission** aims to strengthen exploration, mining, and processing of critical minerals with an outlay of ₹34,000 crore over seven years.
2. The government has proposed the development of rare earth corridors to create integrated mining-to-processing value chains.
3. The Union Budget has provided exemption from Basic Customs Duty on capital goods used for processing critical minerals to encourage investment.
4. India is also securing overseas mineral assets through **Khanij Bidesh India Limited** partnerships with countries such as Australia, Argentina, and Chile.

### Challenges in India's Critical Mineral Sector

1. The global supply of critical minerals is highly concentrated in a few countries, particularly China, which dominates mining and refining activities.
2. India currently lacks large-scale commercially viable refining and downstream processing facilities for critical minerals.
3. Exploration, mining, and refining projects require large capital investments and have long gestation periods.
4. Global prices and demand for critical minerals are highly volatile, which discourages private sector investments.
5. Mining activities often lead to environmental degradation and social conflicts with local communities.

### Strategies to Strengthen India's Critical Mineral Supply Chain

1. The government should invest in developing domestic mining and refining infrastructure to create a complete value chain within the country.
2. Policy incentives such as concessional loans, production tax credits, and financial support for refinery construction should be provided to attract private sector investment.
3. The government can introduce revenue stabilization mechanisms such as contracts for difference and demand guarantees to reduce investment risks.
4. Artificial intelligence-based geological exploration should be promoted to improve mineral discovery rates and reduce exploration costs.
5. India should strengthen international partnerships and acquire mineral assets abroad to diversify supply sources.
6. Local communities should be encouraged to participate as stakeholders or co-investors in mining projects to ensure social acceptance.
7. Strong environmental and social safeguards should be implemented to ensure sustainable and responsible mining practices.

**Conclusion:** Securing critical minerals is essential for India's green transition, technological advancement, and strategic autonomy. A coordinated approach involving government support, private sector participation,

technological innovation, and international cooperation will be crucial for building a resilient and sustainable critical mineral supply chain.

**Question:** Discuss the importance of securing critical minerals for India and suggest strategies to strengthen India's critical mineral supply chain.

**Source:** BusinessLine

### Protecting Women's Rights Amid Conflict and Instability

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-** mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

#### Introduction

International Women's Day, observed globally on **March 8**, highlights the struggle for gender equality and women's rights. The **2026 theme** — "**Rights, Justice, Action: For All Women and Girls**" stresses the need for real progress. However, the world today faces growing conflicts, displacement, and instability. These crises increase violence, insecurity, and inequality for women and girls, making the protection of their rights a pressing global concern.

#### Global Conflicts and the Growing Vulnerability of Women

- 1. Rising global conflicts and instability:** Several regions of the world are facing armed conflicts and wars. These conflicts cause destruction of infrastructure, displacement of communities, and large numbers of civilian deaths, including many women and children.
- 2. Women and children as the most vulnerable:** Research and field studies show that **women and girls suffer disproportionately in wars** due to insecurity, displacement, economic collapse, and weakening of social protection systems.
- 3. Conflict intensifying existing gender inequalities:** Conflicts worsen pre-existing discrimination against women. Political instability and weak institutions reduce the capacity of states to protect women's rights.
- 4. Sexual violence used as a weapon of war: Rape and sexual violence have historically been used during wars to humiliate and subjugate the enemy,** making women deliberate targets in many conflicts.
- 5. Psychological trauma among affected women:** Women living in conflict zones frequently experience **depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** due to violence, displacement, and loss of family and livelihood.

#### Impacts of Conflict on Women and Girls

- 1. Rise in gender-based violence:** Armed conflicts significantly increase **gender-based violence**, including arbitrary killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced marriages.
- 2. Sexual violence as a deliberate tactic:** Sexual violence is often used systematically during conflicts. Women and girls are the primary victims, although men and boys can also face sexual violence, especially in detention contexts.

3. **Breakdown of rule of law and social structures:** Post-conflict societies often face increased violence because law enforcement weakens and weapons circulate widely. This situation normalizes violence and deepens discrimination.

4. **Trafficking and exploitation during conflicts:** The collapse of political and economic systems increases **trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labour**, particularly affecting women and girls.

5. **Disruption of essential services:** Conflicts disrupt **health care, education, and social support systems**, which has a severe and disproportionate impact on women and girls.

6. **Barriers to education for girls:** Fear of attacks and security threats prevent many girls from attending school. Many also assume caregiving responsibilities during crises.

7. **Health risks and reproductive challenges:** Disruption of **sexual and reproductive health services** increases risks of maternal mortality, severe injuries, unplanned pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

8. **Economic insecurity and loss of livelihood:** Women often lose employment opportunities, land, and productive assets during conflicts. Many must find alternative sources of livelihood to support their families.

9. **Gender dimensions of internal displacement:** Internally displaced women often lose housing, land, and livestock. Lack of property titles further weakens their economic security.

10. **Increased risks for displaced women:** Internally displaced women face **sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced recruitment, labour exploitation, and lack of reproductive health services**.

11. **Exclusion from decision-making:** Women and girls in displacement settings are often excluded from decisions related to relief distribution and community governance.

### International Frameworks for Protecting Women in Conflict

#### 1. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) :

- **Foundation of the framework:** The **United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on October 31, 2000**, forming the central international framework on **Women, Peace and Security**, which calls for protecting women during conflicts and ensuring their active participation in peacebuilding and decision-making.
- **Core framework principles of Resolution 1325:** The framework emphasises **women's participation in peace processes, gender perspectives in peacekeeping training, and gender mainstreaming in UN peace and security reporting systems**.

#### 2. Strengthening the framework through later resolutions:

- **Resolution 1820 (2008):** Addressed sexual violence in conflict.
- **Resolutions 1888, 1889, 1960:** Created institutional mechanisms such as the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Women's Protection Advisers, and monitoring systems.

- **Resolution 2242 (2015):** Linked sexual violence with terrorism.
- **Resolution 2331 (2016):** Highlighted links between trafficking, sexual violence, and organised crime.
- **Resolution 2467 (2019):** Promoted a survivor-centred approach and called for survivor support funds.

3. Additionally, the **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** provides the human rights foundation for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

### What Should Be Done

1. **Equal participation in peace negotiations:** Women must be included in peace talks, conflict prevention, and reconstruction processes because their participation makes peace agreements more durable.
2. **Stronger action by women's collectives and global institutions:** Women's organisations and international bodies should focus on concrete action rather than limiting efforts to conferences and slogans.
3. **Protection from violence and exploitation:** Women and children in conflict zones require stronger protection from **sexual violence, trafficking, and exploitation.**
4. **Ensuring access to essential services:** Providing **food, health care, education, financial assistance, and emotional support** is necessary to protect the rights and dignity of women affected by conflict.
5. **Recognising women as active peacebuilders:** Women have historically acted as **civil society leaders, human rights defenders, and participants in peacebuilding processes.**
6. **Using post-conflict recovery as an opportunity for reform:** Post-conflict reconstruction can transform social structures and norms, creating opportunities to strengthen women's human rights.

### Conclusion

Protecting women's rights in conflict situations remains a critical global challenge. Wars intensify violence, displacement, and inequality for women and girls. Despite strong international frameworks, implementation gaps persist. Ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace processes and strengthening protection mechanisms are essential for achieving justice, equality, and lasting peace in conflict-affected societies.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how global conflicts and instability affect women's rights and living conditions, and examine the international frameworks and measures needed to protect women in conflict situations.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Is the Supreme Court doing enough to tackle hate speech?

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-** Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant

provisions and basic structure.

## Introduction

Debate has intensified over whether the Supreme Court is doing enough to address hate speech. The issue resurfaced after petitions against Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** were redirected by the Court to the Gauhati High Court. Earlier, the Court also indicated that pending hate speech cases may be closed. These developments have raised questions about judicial responsibility, enforcement failures, and the broader legal framework needed to tackle hate speech effectively.

## What is Hate Speech?

- 1. Law Commission's description of hate speech:** The **Law Commission of India (267th Report)** describes hate speech as words, signs, or expressions that incite hatred against groups based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or other identities.
- 2. Indirect and subtle nature of hate speech:** Hate speech often does not openly call for violence. It may appear as prejudicial discourse that gradually marginalises communities.
- 3. Role of ambiguity and perception:** Hate speech sometimes appears as “dog whistles”, where statements are deliberately ambiguous. Speakers can deny harmful intent while still sending divisive signals.
- 4. Link with social power structures:** The harm of hate speech depends not only on words but also on social hierarchies. It often targets communities that are already socially or politically vulnerable.
- 5. Impact on democracy:** Hate speech deepens democratic deficits by reinforcing exclusion and discrimination against weaker groups.

## Existing Legal Framework on Hate Speech in India

### 1. Constitutional basis of regulating hate speech

- a. Freedom of speech and its limits:** The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech under **Article 19(1)(a)**, but this freedom is not absolute.
- b. Reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2):** The State can impose restrictions on speech to protect public order, morality, and other constitutional values. Hate speech is treated as a limitation on free speech because it can promote hatred, violence, and social disharmony.

### 2. Penal Provisions Addressing Hate Speech

- a. Indian Penal Code provisions:** Hate speech is mainly addressed through **Section 153A and Section 505 of the Indian Penal Code**.
- b. Section 153A – Promotion of enmity between groups:** This provision punishes acts that promote enmity between groups on grounds such as religion, race, language, residence, or place of birth.

**c. Punishment under Section 153A:** The offence carries imprisonment up to **three years**, which may extend to **five years if committed in a place of worship or religious assembly**.

**d. Section 505 – Statements causing public mischief:** This section criminalises statements, rumours, or reports that create fear, encourage offences against the state, or incite communities against each other.

**e. Punishment under Section 505:** The offence carries imprisonment up to **three years**, which may extend to **five years when committed in religious gatherings or places of worship**.

### 3. Election Law Provisions

**a. Role of election law in regulating hate speech:** The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** empowers the **Election Commission of India** to act against candidates who use hate speech during election campaigns.

### Supreme Court's Interventions

#### 1. Preventive framework against hate crimes

**Tehseen Poonawalla v. Union of India (2018):**

- **Guidelines to curb mob lynching and hate crimes:** The Supreme Court issued detailed directions to prevent mob lynching and related hate crimes and required States to appoint **nodal officers** to monitor such incidents.
- **Administrative responsibility for enforcement:** These nodal officers were tasked with preventing hate crimes and ensuring **prompt registration of offences by police authorities**.

#### 2. Judicial concern over rising hate speech (2022)

- **Recognition of a climate of hate:** The Court observed that a “**climate of hate prevails in the country**” and criticised the increasing misuse of religion in public discourse.
- **Direction for suo motu FIR registration (October 21, 2022):** Police authorities were directed to **register FIRs on their own in hate speech cases** without waiting for formal complaints.

### Limitations of the Supreme Court's Approach

#### 1. Weak implementation of judicial directions

- **Failure of enforcement by authorities:** Despite Supreme Court directives, hate speech incidents continue and authorities often fail to register FIRs or invoke appropriate legal provisions.
- **Reluctance to act against influential individuals:** Law enforcement agencies sometimes hesitate to proceed against persons who hold power or influence.

#### 2. Limited judicial monitoring of compliance

- **Closure of long-pending petitions:** The Court indicated that hate speech cases pending since **2021 may be closed**, while allowing petitioners to seek remedies in High Courts.
- **Example reflecting judicial restraint:** In the case concerning alleged communal remarks by **Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma**, the Court directed petitioners to approach the **Gauhati High Court**.

### 3. Reluctance to use stronger constitutional powers

- **Limited use of Article 142:** Critics argue that the Court has not consistently used its powers under **Article 142** to enforce compliance or ensure stronger action.
- **Absence of contempt proceedings:** Some observers believe the Court could initiate **contempt proceedings** against officials who fail to implement its directives.

## Recent Developments and Proposed Reforms

### 1. Recent Developments

#### a. Demand to recognise hate speech as a constitutional tort:

- Activists have urged the Court to treat hate speech as a **constitutional tort**, meaning the State can be held liable for violations of constitutional rights.
- **Meaning of constitutional tort:** It allows courts to hold the State responsible for the actions or inaction of its officials when constitutional guarantees are violated.

b. **Argument for greater accountability:** If authorities fail to prevent hate speech, the State could be required to compensate victims and acknowledge its failure.

### 2. Proposals for Stronger Criminal Provisions

a. **Law Commission recommendations:** The **267th Report (2017)** proposed adding two new penal provisions to address hate speech more clearly.

b. **Proposed Section 153C:** This section would punish threatening words or signs intended to cause fear or incite violence against groups based on religion, caste, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, or disability.

c. **Proposed Section 505A:** This section would criminalise threatening or derogatory expressions intended to provoke unlawful violence.

d. **Recommended punishments:** The proposals suggest imprisonment of up to **two years for Section 153C** and **one year for Section 505A**, along with fines.

e. **Committee recommendations for reform:** The **M.P. Bezbaruah Committee** and **T.K. Viswanathan Committee** also supported stronger provisions against hate speech.

### 3. Legislative Initiative at the State Level

a. **Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes Bill, 2025:** This proposed legislation seeks to create a dedicated legal framework to address hate speech and related crimes.

b. **Concerns about the proposed bill:** Critics argue the bill focuses mainly on injury or disharmony and does not sufficiently address structural discrimination caused by hate speech.

c. **Conceptual gaps in the bill:** Some definitions are considered broad and may lead to arbitrary application. These issues may require amendments after implementation.

### What Should Be Done

1. **Effective enforcement of existing laws:** Legal provisions already exist, but authorities often fail to apply them consistently.

2. **Accountability of state authorities:** Police and investigating agencies must act promptly and register cases without delay.

3. **Stronger judicial monitoring:** Courts may need to supervise compliance with their directions to ensure implementation.

4. **Addressing institutional inaction:** Bodies such as the **Election Commission** must exercise their powers when hate speech occurs during elections.

5. **Regulation of media amplification:** Hate speech often spreads quickly through media platforms. Mechanisms are required to prevent media systems from amplifying or commercialising such speech.

6. **Need for broader social consensus:** Legal measures alone cannot solve the problem. Society must resist stereotypes, propaganda, and divisive narratives that target vulnerable communities.

### Conclusion

Hate speech challenges constitutional equality, social harmony, and democratic values. The Supreme Court has issued important directions, but weak enforcement and institutional inaction limit their impact. Addressing the problem requires stronger implementation of laws, judicial oversight, accountability of authorities, and wider social resistance to divisive rhetoric that marginalises vulnerable communities.

### Question for practice:

Examine the nature of hate speech in India and evaluate the effectiveness of the Supreme Court's interventions in addressing it.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### India's Digital Public Infrastructure

Source: The post "India's Digital Public Infrastructure" has been created, based on "India's Digital Public Infrastructure" published in "PIB" on 07th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Science and Technology

**Context:** Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to **foundational digital systems that enable secure and seamless interaction between citizens, businesses and governments**. India has developed one of the **largest population-scale DPI ecosystems** by integrating digital identity, financial inclusion and connectivity, thereby transforming governance, welfare delivery and economic activity.

### Evolution of India's DPI Ecosystem

- I. Foundations through the JAM Trinity**
  - a. The **JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile)** created the foundational layer of India's DPI architecture.
  - b. **Aadhaar** provided a **biometric digital identity system**, with more than **144 crore Aadhaar numbers generated** and over **2707 crore authentication transactions in 2024–25**, enabling secure and portable identity verification.
  - c. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** expanded financial inclusion by increasing bank accounts from **14.72 crore in 2015 to 57.71 crore in 2026**, while deposits rose to **₹2.94 lakh crore**.
  - d. Rapid growth in **mobile connectivity**, with **85.5% households owning smartphones and 125.87 crore wireless subscribers**, ensured widespread access to digital services.
- II. Development of the India Stack:** India built an **interoperable digital architecture using open APIs**, enabling seamless integration of multiple services.
- III. Digital Economic Infrastructure**
  - a. **UPI** enabled instant digital payments and processed **21.7 billion transactions worth ₹28.33 lakh crore in January 2026**, making it the world's largest real-time payment system.
  - b. **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** improved transparency in government spending and enabled Direct Benefit Transfer, leading to **savings of over ₹4.31 lakh crore between 2015 and 2024**.
  - c. **ONDC** democratised e-commerce by connecting buyers and sellers through open networks, with **1.16 lakh sellers across 630+ cities**.
  - d. **Government eMarketplace (GeM)** digitised public procurement and processed **3.27 crore orders worth ₹16.41 lakh crore**.
- IV. Citizen Service Delivery Platforms**
  - a. **DigiLocker** provides a digital document wallet with **67.63 crore users and over 950 crore documents issued**.
  - b. **UMANG** offers access to **2400+ government services** through a single mobile platform.
  - c. **e-Courts** have improved transparency and accessibility through ICT-enabled judicial services.
- V. Health and Nutrition Platforms**
  - a. **CoWIN** managed over **220 crore COVID-19 vaccination doses** through real-time digital tracking.
  - b. **eSanjeevani** expanded telemedicine and has served **45.42 crore patients**.
  - c. Platforms such as **Aarogya Setu, NCD portal and POSHAN Tracker** support digital health monitoring and nutrition management.
- VI. Education and Skilling Platforms**
  - a. **DIKSHA** supports digital learning and has delivered **566 crore learning sessions**.
  - b. **Skill India Digital Hub** integrates training, certification and employment services.
- VII. Governance and Coordination Systems**
  - a. **e-Office** enables paperless governance and faster administrative decision-making.
  - b. **API Setu** facilitates secure data exchange with **over 8,000 APIs**.
  - c. **PM GatiShakti** supports integrated infrastructure planning through a GIS-based digital platform.

### Challenges in India's DPI Ecosystem

1. **Digital divide** continues to limit access for populations lacking digital literacy or reliable internet connectivity.
2. **Data privacy and cybersecurity concerns** arise due to the large volume of sensitive personal information processed through digital platforms.
3. **Institutional capacity constraints** at state and local levels sometimes hinder effective implementation of digital systems.
4. **Interoperability and coordination challenges** may occur when integrating multiple platforms across sectors and departments.
5. **Exclusion risks** may arise if authentication failures or technical errors prevent beneficiaries from accessing essential services.

#### Way Forward

1. The government should **strengthen digital infrastructure in rural and remote regions** to reduce the digital divide.
2. Robust **data protection frameworks and cybersecurity mechanisms** should be implemented to ensure privacy and trust.
3. **Capacity building of government officials and digital literacy programs for citizens** should be expanded.
4. Greater emphasis should be placed on **interoperability standards and open digital ecosystems** to ensure seamless integration.
5. Systems should incorporate **offline and assisted service delivery mechanisms** to prevent exclusion of vulnerable groups.

**Conclusion:** India's Digital Public Infrastructure demonstrates that **technology can be designed as a public good to promote inclusive development and efficient governance**. By integrating identity, payments and service delivery at a population scale, India has created a **globally relevant model for digital transformation**, although continued reforms are necessary to address challenges and ensure equitable access.

**Question:** Discuss the evolution of India's DPI ecosystem. Also examine the challenges associated with it and suggest measures to address them.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

### Key Interventions for Women's Economic Advancement

**Source:** The post "Key Interventions for Women's Economic Advancement" has been created, based on "Key Interventions for Women's Economic Advancement" published in "PIB" on 07th March 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3- Economy

**Context:** Women's economic empowerment is essential for **inclusive growth, poverty reduction and social development**. Over the past decade, India has adopted a **women-centric development approach**, focusing on improving women's access to **skills, credit, markets, technology and financial services** through various targeted schemes.

#### Key Interventions for Women's Economic Advancement

##### 1. Financial Security for the Girl Child

- a. **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)** was launched in 2015 under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign to encourage savings for the education and future needs of the girl child.

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- b. The scheme provides an **interest rate of 8.2% per annum with tax benefits under Section 80C**.
- c. Deposits can be made from **₹250 up to ₹1.5 lakh annually**, and the account matures after **21 years**.
- d. As of **December 2025**, **total deposits exceeded ₹3.33 lakh crore**, promoting long-term financial security for girls.

## 2. Rural Livelihoods and Collective Empowerment

- a. **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** mobilises rural women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and provides **credit, skill training and enterprise support**.
- b. Over **10.05 crore women have been organised into 90.9 lakh SHGs**, forming one of the world's largest women-led community networks.
- c. The scheme also deploys **Bank Sakhis, Krishi Sakhis and Pashu Sakhis** to strengthen financial access and agricultural productivity.
- d. **Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)** has supported **5.88 lakh rural enterprises**.

## 3. Technology-led Empowerment

- a. **NaMo Drone Didi Yojana** equips women SHGs with drones for agricultural services such as spraying fertilisers and pesticides.
- b. The scheme provides **80% central financial assistance up to ₹8 lakh** and specialised training for drone operation and maintenance.
- c. It improves farm productivity while creating **new income opportunities for rural women**.

## 4. Promotion of Women Entrepreneurship

- a. **Lakhpati Didi Scheme** aims to ensure that SHG members earn **over ₹1 lakh annually through sustainable livelihood activities**, with a target of **6 crore Lakhpati Didis**.
- b. **SHE-Mart**, announced in the Union Budget 2026-27, will establish **community-owned retail outlets in every district** to market products made by women SHGs.
- c. **Womaniya Initiative under Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** promotes women-led enterprises in public procurement, with **over 2 lakh women-led MSEs registered and orders worth more than ₹80,000 crore secured**.

## 5. Financial Inclusion and Credit Support

- a. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** provides **collateral-free loans up to ₹20 lakh**, enabling women to start or expand micro-enterprises.
- b. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** has enabled millions of women to open **zero-balance bank accounts**, facilitating direct benefit transfers and financial independence.
- c. **PM SVANidhi Scheme** provides **working capital loans to street vendors**, including women, with interest subsidies and digital incentives.
- d. **Stand-Up India Scheme** provides **loans from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore** to women entrepreneurs to establish enterprises in manufacturing, services and trading sectors.

## Challenges

1. **Low female labour force participation** despite increasing financial inclusion.
2. **Limited digital literacy and access to technology** in rural areas.
3. **Socio-cultural barriers and gender norms** that restrict women's participation in economic activities.
4. **Limited access to markets and value chains** for women-led enterprises.

5. **Credit access gaps and lack of collateral** for women entrepreneurs.

#### Way Forward

1. The government should **strengthen digital literacy and skill development programmes for women.**
2. Greater emphasis should be placed on **market linkages, value addition and supply chain integration for women-led enterprises.**
3. Financial institutions should **expand gender-sensitive credit policies and mentoring support** for women entrepreneurs.
4. There should be **greater convergence between SHGs, digital platforms and government procurement systems.**
5. Awareness campaigns should address **social barriers and encourage women's participation in economic activities.**

**Conclusion:** India's approach to women's empowerment has evolved from **financial inclusion to entrepreneurship and leadership.** Through schemes promoting savings, livelihoods, technology adoption and entrepreneurship, women are increasingly becoming **drivers of household prosperity and national development,** strengthening the vision of **Viksit Bharat by 2047.**

**Question:** Discuss the key government interventions for women's economic advancement in India. Highlight the challenges and suggest measures for improvement.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

### **Rights, justice, action for India's women farmers**

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1-** Role of women and women's organisation **And Gs Paper 3-** Agriculture

#### Introduction

International Women's Day on **March 8, 2026** calls for **equal rights and equal justice for women and girls.** The theme gains importance as **2026 is observed as the International Year of the Woman Farmer.** Although legal reforms such as **equal inheritance rights for daughters** exist, women farmers still face exclusion from land ownership, agricultural recognition, and access to institutional resources in India's agri-food systems.

#### Structural Exclusion of Women in Agriculture

1. **Land ownership concentrated in men's names:** Land and property in most rural households remain **registered in men's names,** despite legal reforms supporting daughters' inheritance rights.
2. **Social and legal barriers to women's land records: Patrilineal inheritance, social norms, limited legal awareness, and administrative hurdles** prevent women's names from appearing in land records.
3. **Lack of legal status as farmers:** Many women manage cultivation and deal with labourers and input dealers, yet they lack **legal recognition as farmers because land titles are absent.**

**4. Exclusion from institutional agricultural support:** Without land titles, women face barriers in accessing institutional credit, crop insurance, irrigation schemes, agricultural extension services, and climate-resilient technologies.

**5. Invisible contribution to agri-food systems:** Women contribute significantly to farming, yet **their access to and control over cultivable land remains abysmally low**, making their labour undervalued.

### Consequences of the Exclusion of Women Farmers in Agriculture

**1. Feminisation of agriculture due to male migration:** As men migrate for work, agriculture is increasingly “feminised,” with women taking responsibility for cultivation, risk management, and household food provisioning.

**2. Heavy workload without support systems:** Women face **high agricultural workloads, limited drudgery-reduction technologies, and absence of supportive care systems**, forcing them to balance farm work and household duties.

**3. Health problems from excessive work burden:** **Resource-poor women with heavy workloads experience serious health issues and micronutrient deficiencies**, especially during peak agricultural seasons.

**4. High malnutrition and anaemia among women:** India continues to face **persistently high anaemia rates among women of reproductive age**, along with widespread micronutrient deficiencies.

**5. Intergenerational effects on children:** **Maternal undernutrition and anaemia contribute to low birth weight, stunting, and impaired child development**, affecting the health of future generations.

**6. Low dietary diversity in rural households:** Rural diets remain **cereal-heavy and low in pulses, fruits, vegetables, and animal-source foods**, despite women’s role in producing food.

### Limitations of Existing Food Security and Agricultural Policies

**1. National Food Security Act framework:** India’s right-to-food framework is anchored in the **National Food Security Act**, which guarantees **subsidised cereals, supplementary nutrition, and maternity entitlements**.

**2. Uneven improvement in women’s nutrition:** Several States introduced **millets, local foods, and fortified staples**, yet **women’s nutrition outcomes remain uneven and anaemia trends remain worrying**.

**3. Cereal-centric food distribution systems:** Food transfers through the **Public Distribution System remain largely cereal-focused**, with uneven inclusion of pulses, millets, and nutrient-dense foods.

**4. Overburdened frontline workers affecting programme quality:** Heavy responsibilities on frontline workers reduce **programme effectiveness and community awareness about nutrition and entitlements**.

**5. Digitalisation creating exclusion risks:** Digital systems improve efficiency but exclude women who lack **connectivity, documentation, or digital skills**, limiting their ability to claim benefits.

### Way Forward

The **M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)** and the **World Food Programme (WFP)** highlight some urgent priorities to ensure meaningful action for women farmers.

**1. Visibility of women farmers in law, data, and policy: Gender-disaggregated agricultural data and the National Policy for Farmers' definition of farmers based on activities rather than land ownership** can recognise women landowners, tenants, labourers, and forest gatherers.

**2. Strengthening land and productive resource rights: Equal inheritance implementation, joint spousal land titles, and incentives for registering land or housing in women's names** can improve women's control over assets.

**3. Women's participation in resource governance:** Women should have stronger roles in **managing common lands and water resources**, while collective platforms can increase bargaining power.

**4. Aligning food systems with nutrition objectives:** Public procurement and support policies should encourage **nutri-cereals, pulses, fruits, and vegetables**, and distribute them through **Public Distribution Systems, Anganwadis, and school meals**.

**5. Community-based nutrition and food initiatives: Kitchen gardens, women's seed banks, and localised food planning** can strengthen women's role in improving diets and farming practices.

**6. Access to technology and extension services: Labour-saving tools, agricultural training, and market information** can reduce drudgery, improve productivity, and support sustainable farming decisions.

## Conclusion

Ensuring **rights, justice, and action for women farmers** requires recognising them as farmers and strengthening access to **land, productive resources, technologies, and nutrition systems**. Empowered women farmers can influence agricultural practices, improve food security, and strengthen community well-being. Supporting their agency can promote **climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture** across India.

## Question for practice:

Discuss the structural challenges faced by women farmers in India and explain the measures needed to ensure rights, justice, and action for them in agri-food systems.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## The chokepoint that cannot be routed around

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

## Introduction

The crisis around the **Strait of Hormuz** reveals a deeper weakness in global trade systems. Earlier disruptions exposed **supply chain fragility** and encouraged redundancy in suppliers and logistics. However, the current situation shows that some constraints arise from **geography and institutions** rather than logistics. Strategic

passages such as **Hormuz cannot be easily bypassed**, making them critical points of vulnerability for **global energy flows**.

### The Earlier Crisis of Supply Chain Disruption in the Suez Canal

- 1. Blockage of a critical trade route:** In **March 2021**, the **MV Ever Given**, a **400-metre ship**, ran aground in the **205-metre-wide Suez Canal** and blocked the route for six days, halting about **\$9.6 billion in daily trade**.
- 2. Recognition of supply chain fragility:** The disruption highlighted the risks of **thin margins and fragile logistics networks**, triggering a large debate on **supply chain resilience**.
- 3. Policy emphasis on redundancy:** The key lesson was that **global trade requires redundancy**, including **diversified suppliers, larger inventories, and stronger logistics capacity**.
- 4. Economic nature of the crisis:** The **2020–22 supply chain crisis** emerged from logistical limits at **ports, semiconductor factories, and container terminals**, where **demand exceeded capacity**.
- 5. Market adjustment as the solution:** **Higher prices encouraged more ships, increased production, and rerouting of trade flows**, helping markets stabilise within **about 18 months**.

### The Present Crisis of Energy Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz

- 1. Strategic energy passage:** The **Strait of Hormuz**, about **21 miles wide**, bordered by **Iran on the northern shore**, functions as a crucial route for **global oil and petroleum flows**.
- 2. Sharp fall in vessel movement:**
  - By **March 3**, Automatic Identification System (AIS) tracking recorded only **nine vessels** navigating the strait compared with a **February daily average of 135 ships**.
  - The number of vessels fell from **91 on February 28** to **26 on March 1**, showing a **near-vertical collapse in movement**.
- 3. Insurance-triggered disruption:** **Seven members of the International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs** issued **72-hour cancellation notices**, soon followed by **all twelve members**.
- 4. Commercial withdrawal of shipping:** Once **insurance cover disappeared**, shipowners chose to **wait rather than enter the strait**, effectively halting traffic **even without a physical blockade**.

### The Structural Difference Between Supply Chain Bottlenecks and Energy Chokepoints

- 1. Insurance acting as the first chokepoint:** The disruption occurred **before any physical closure**, as **insurance withdrawal became the immediate barrier**.
- 2. Geographical limitation of the passage:** The **Strait of Hormuz cannot be widened or duplicated**, making it a **fixed physical constraint** unlike flexible supply chains.
- 3. Limited substitute routes:** Existing pipelines from the Gulf can redirect only about **4.2 million barrels per day**, while the strait normally carries **around 20 million barrels daily**.

**4. Absence of bypass for LNG exports:** Qatar's LNG, accounting for **19% of global supply**, has **no alternative route**, reinforcing the strait's central importance.

**5. Evidence from emergency adjustments:** Saudi Arabia redirected oil to Yanbu, loading **2.44 million barrels per day** against a **six-month average of under one million**, showing both the **workaround and its ceiling**.

**6. Rapid cascading effects in energy systems:** Iraq's Rumaila field cut production by **1.5 million barrels per day** because **storage filled and exports could not move**.

### **The Economic Consequences of Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz**

**1. Impact on price discovery systems:** S&P Global's Platts excluded Dubai, Upper Zakum, Al-Shaheen, and Murban loadings from the price-discovery process, disrupting the benchmark system used for pricing Middle Eastern crude sold to Asian buyers.

**2. Importance of the Dubai benchmark:** The Dubai marker serves as the reference price for most Middle Eastern crude sold to Asian buyers.

**3. Rising price premiums in trading:** By March 4, TotalEnergies bid **\$12 above the benchmark**, compared with a premium of **\$1** in the previous week.

**4. Projected oil price increases:** Goldman Sachs scenarios estimate that a **one-month full closure could add \$15 to oil prices**, while **full pipeline use could limit the rise to \$12**.

**5. Market already pricing risk:** By March 3, oil markets had already incorporated a **\$14 risk premium**, close to the **full-closure scenario**.

**6. Potential natural gas price surge:** A two-month LNG disruption could push European benchmark gas prices (Dutch TTF) above **€100 per megawatt hour**, compared with **€31.6** before the war.

**7. Limited supply response from shale:** The International Energy Agency estimates that **US shale could add 400,000 barrels per day**, far below the possible **16 million barrel per day shortfall**.

### **India's Strategic Exposure to the Hormuz Energy Chokepoint**

**1. Dependence on the Hormuz route:** Around **four to five million barrels** of India's daily hydrocarbon imports pass through the **Strait of Hormuz**.

**2. Limits of supplier diversification:** India has diversified oil suppliers to ensure availability and affordability. However, **about 4–5 million barrels** of its daily hydrocarbon imports still pass through the **Strait of Hormuz**, so the **maritime chokepoint risk remains unchanged**.

**3. Institutional vulnerability in maritime insurance:** India does not have its own **Shipping Protection and Indemnity Clubs**, which play a **central role in maritime insurance**.

**4. Global concentration of insurance institutions:** Most **P&I clubs** are located in **London and Europe**, giving them **significant influence over global shipping operations**.

**5. Delayed institutional response:** The Finance Minister acknowledged the need for an Indian P&I entity three years ago, but the institution has not yet been created.

### Conclusion

Recent crises reveal a shift in the nature of global vulnerabilities. Earlier disruptions centred on **supply chain nodes** such as **ports and factories**, encouraging redundancy and diversification. The **Hormuz crisis shows that strategic passages matter more. Geography, insurance systems, and pricing institutions** shape global energy flows. Resilience must address **critical maritime chokepoints**, not only supply chain networks.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the Strait of Hormuz crisis reveals the limitations of supply chain resilience strategies developed after the Suez Canal disruption.

**Source: Businessline**