

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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**Features :**

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Most complete coverage of major  
News Papers editorials

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## India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key

**Source:** The post “India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key” has been created, based on “India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key” published in “Indian Express” on 01st April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3- International Relations

**Context:** India currently has a rare strategic opportunity to reboot its neighbourhood policy due to recent political transitions in countries such as **Bangladesh, Nepal,** and **Sri Lanka**. Trade-led regional integration can become the most effective instrument for strengthening India’s relations with its neighbours and ensuring long-term regional stability.

### Reasons why rebooting neighbourhood policy is necessary

#### 1. Political transitions in neighbouring countries

- a. Political changes in Bangladesh after the exit of **Sheikh Hasina** and the electoral success of **Tarique Rahman** have opened space for a more interest-based and pragmatic bilateral relationship with India.
- b. Nepal has witnessed a generational political shift with the rise of leaders such as **Balendra Shah**, which provides India an opportunity to rebuild trust based on equality and sovereignty.
- c. Sri Lanka’s political transition after the 2024 elections has also created conditions for more pragmatic and cooperative engagement with India.

#### 2. Fragmentation of the global trading system

- a. The global trading system is becoming increasingly uncertain due to rising tariffs, sanctions, and geopolitical competition among major powers.
- b. Smaller South Asian economies are therefore likely to depend more on regional markets such as India for stable export opportunities.

#### 3. Strategic competition with China

- a. Despite geographical proximity and historical ties with India, countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka continue to depend heavily on imports from **China**.
- b. India faces a large trade deficit with China but maintains trade surpluses with its smaller neighbours, which creates an imbalance in regional economic relations.
- c. India must therefore increase imports from neighbouring countries to promote mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

### Importance of trade as the central pillar of neighbourhood policy

#### 1. Geographical advantages remain underutilised

- a. India shares a long land border of nearly 4,000 kilometres with Bangladesh, which creates strong potential for cross-border trade integration.
- b. India’s close maritime proximity to Sri Lanka also provides natural advantages for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation.

- c. India's open border with Nepal provides a unique opportunity for deep economic integration, but this advantage has not been fully utilised due to infrastructure and regulatory barriers.

## 2. Trade promotes political trust and stability

- a. Greater economic interdependence through trade helps in generating employment opportunities and strengthening supply chains across the region.
- b. Trade cooperation also reduces political mistrust and contributes to long-term stability in bilateral relations.

## 3. Connectivity can transform eastern South Asia

- a. Improved connectivity between India, Bangladesh, and Nepal can significantly boost economic development in eastern India and the wider eastern subcontinent.
- b. Better regional connectivity will also strengthen integration of India's northeastern region with neighbouring economies.

## 4. Energy cooperation offers additional opportunities

- a. India can strengthen regional cooperation in energy security with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.
- b. Such cooperation has become particularly important because economic instability in the **Gulf region** is affecting energy supplies and remittance flows across South Asia.

## Challenges in India's neighbourhood trade policy

1. **Protectionist trade approach:** India has traditionally followed a protectionist trade policy toward neighbouring countries despite demanding greater market access from major economies globally.
2. **Presence of non-tariff barriers:** Several non-tariff barriers such as customs delays, regulatory restrictions, and weak border infrastructure continue to limit regional trade integration.
3. **Legacy mindset in regional diplomacy:** India's neighbourhood policy has often been shaped by the assumption that smaller neighbouring countries should respond with political loyalty in return for economic support from India. This approach has generated resentment in several neighbouring countries and weakened India's regional influence.

## Way Forward

1. India should shift its neighbourhood policy from a "special relationship" framework to one based on sovereign equality and mutual respect.
2. India should increase imports from neighbouring countries to create more balanced trade relationships.
3. India should invest in modern border infrastructure, transport corridors, ports, and digital connectivity to strengthen regional integration.
4. India should promote cross-border investments and regional supply chains to enhance economic interdependence.
5. India should adopt transparent rules-based trade mechanisms, including safeguards such as rules of origin, to ensure sustainable regional cooperation.

**Conclusion:** India's neighbourhood policy must increasingly rely on trade-driven regional integration rather than political management alone. A trade-centred approach can strengthen mutual prosperity, reduce strategic vulnerabilities, and establish India as the primary economic anchor of South Asia.

**Question:** India's neighbourhood policy requires a shift from political management to economic integration led by trade and connectivity." Discuss in the context of recent political transitions in South Asia.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

### FCRA Amendment Bill 2026

**Source:** The post "FCRA Amendment Bill 2026" has been created, based on "FCRA Amendment Bill 2026" published in "Indian Express" on 01st April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2-Governance

**Context:** The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)** regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions and hospitality by associations and NGOs to ensure that such inflows do not adversely affect national interest, public order, or national security. The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced in the Lok Sabha to address operational and legal gaps related to cases where the FCRA registration of an association is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases.

#### Key Provisions of the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

- The amendment proposes the creation of a **designated authority** to supervise and manage foreign contributions and assets in cases where the FCRA certificate of an association is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases to exist.
- The amendment empowers the **Central government** to appoint the designated authority that will control the funds and assets of such associations during the period when the registration remains cancelled or ceased.
- The Bill provides that the assets and funds of the association may be returned to the organisation after it regains its FCRA certificate.
- Clause 16A(7) of the amendment provides that in the case of a **place of worship**, the designated authority may entrust the management or operation of the asset to another person in the prescribed manner.
- The amendment further provides that while entrusting such management, it must be ensured that the **religious character of the place of worship is maintained**.
- The government has stated that the amendment seeks to improve transparency in the utilisation of foreign funding and prevent its misuse against constitutional values and national interest.

#### Background Context

- The FCRA came into force on **May 1, 2011**, to regulate foreign contributions received by associations and NGOs in India.
- The Act has already been amended in the years **2016, 2018, and 2020** to strengthen regulatory oversight.
- At present, around **16,000 associations** are registered under the Act and receive nearly **₹22,000 crore annually** as foreign contributions.

### Reasons for the Controversy

1. The amendment has triggered political controversy, particularly in **Kerala**, where opposition parties have expressed concerns about its possible implications for civil society organisations.
2. **Pinarayi Vijayan**, the Chief Minister of Kerala, stated that the amendment could allow cancellation of FCRA registration if renewal applications are not processed within the stipulated time, which could result in the Central government taking control of the assets of institutions.
3. He further expressed concerns that procedural or technical delays in renewal could lead to cancellation of registration and subsequent control of assets by the designated authority.
4. Opposition leaders have also expressed apprehensions that the amendment could disproportionately affect **Christian minority institutions** that depend on foreign contributions for charitable and welfare activities.
5. **Rahul Gandhi** stated that the amendment could benefit the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh** while leaving charitable and community welfare organisations vulnerable to administrative control.
6. The Congress party also alleged that the amendment could weaken NGOs and community organisations and increase the discretionary powers of **the Central government over foreign-funded institutions**.

### Government's Justification

1. The Central government stated that the amendment aims to strengthen transparency and accountability in the use of foreign contributions by associations and NGOs.
2. The government also stated that the amendment is intended to address operational and legal gaps identified in cases where FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases.
3. The Minister of State for Home Affairs stated that the amendment would help prevent the misuse of foreign funding for activities such as forced religious conversions and actions against national interest.
4. The government further clarified that the amendment includes provisions for returning the assets to the organisation after restoration of its FCRA certificate.

### Way Forward

1. The government should ensure that **clear procedural safeguards** are introduced to prevent cancellation of FCRA registration due to minor technical or administrative delays in renewal applications.
2. The process for appointment and functioning of the designated authority should be made **transparent and rule-based** to reduce concerns regarding administrative discretion.
3. The government should provide **time-bound mechanisms for disposal of renewal applications** so that organisations are not adversely affected by procedural uncertainty.
4. Adequate safeguards should be introduced to ensure that **minority institutions and charitable organisations are not disproportionately affected** by regulatory action.
5. The authorities should strengthen **consultation with stakeholders such as NGOs and civil society organisations** before implementing major regulatory changes.
6. The amendment should be implemented in a manner that balances **national security concerns with the autonomy and functioning of civil society organisations**.

**Conclusion:** The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to establish a structured mechanism for managing the funds and assets of associations whose FCRA registrations are cancelled or ceased. However, concerns regarding possible administrative overreach, procedural risks in renewal

processes, and the potential impact on minority-run institutions have led to political controversy, particularly in Kerala. Therefore, ensuring procedural safeguards and transparency in implementation will be essential to balance national security considerations with the autonomy of civil society organisations.

**Question:** Discuss the key provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026. Why has it triggered political controversy, particularly in Kerala? Examine the concerns raised by stakeholders.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Counting people is not counting disaster risk

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Disaster and disaster management.

### Introduction

Counting total population instead of people exposed to hazards creates a distorted picture of disaster risk. A State may face intense cyclones or floods but still receive less funding if its population is smaller. This weakens disaster preparedness. A proper system must measure where people live and how vulnerable they are, not just how many people exist in a State.

### Evolution of Disaster Financing Framework in India

1. **Early relief-based approach:** Disaster financing began as relief funding from the 2nd Finance Commission through the Margin Money Scheme. It focused only on post-disaster expenditure.
2. **Shift to pre-funded mechanisms:** The 9th Finance Commission replaced the scheme with the Calamity Relief Fund, giving States funds in advance. This improved preparedness.
3. **Creation of national-level funds:** The 10th and 11th Finance Commissions set up national funds like the **National Calamity Relief Fund** with a **75:25 Centre-State contribution**.
4. **Institutionalisation through law:** The Disaster Management Act, 2005 created the **NDRF and SDRF**, giving a structured system for disaster financing.
5. **Reforms under the 14th Finance Commission:** Funds were reorganised into **the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF)**, with **80% for response and 20% for mitigation**, and allocation based on capacity, exposure, and risk.
6. **Expansion under the 15th Finance Commission:** The allocation size increased significantly and used an additive Disaster Risk Index combining hazard, exposure, and vulnerability.

### Revised Framework of the 16th Finance Commission

1. **Higher allocation size:** A total of **₹2,04,401 crore** is allocated to SDRF, a **59.5% increase** over the previous Commission.
2. **Shift to multiplicative risk formula:** Disaster Risk Index is defined as **Hazard × Exposure × Vulnerability**, recognising that risk occurs when all three interact.

3. **Conceptual correctness:** The framework rightly states that hazard alone is not disaster. Disaster occurs only when people and vulnerability are present.
4. **Operational weakness:** The method used to measure exposure and vulnerability does not reflect actual disaster conditions, leading to distorted results.

### Structural Flaws in Measuring Disaster Risk (16th Finance Commission Framework)

1. **Faulty measurement of Exposure:** Exposure is calculated using total State population scaled from 1 to 25, giving higher scores to populous States like Uttar Pradesh. This ignores people living in hazard zones. Exposure should reflect location-specific risk. The IPCC defines exposure as people in hazard-prone areas, not total population.
2. **Distortion due to multiplicative formula:** The formula gives advantage to large population States. High population multiplies the score even if hazard is low. Odisha has the highest hazard score of 12, but its population score of 5 reduces its DRI to 79.8. In contrast, Bihar has 224.2 and Uttar Pradesh has 413.2, despite lower hazard exposure.
3. **Misrepresentation of Vulnerability:** Vulnerability is measured using per capita NSDP. It assumes poorer States are more vulnerable. This ignores housing quality, health systems, and preparedness. Average income hides inequalities within States and does not reflect real vulnerability.
4. **Evidence of flawed vulnerability scoring:** Kerala faced ₹31,000 crore flood damage in 2018, yet its vulnerability score is only 1.073 due to higher income. Jharkhand, despite high poverty-based vulnerability, loses 0.78 percentage points due to low population score. Overall, 20 States lost funding share, mainly smaller or relatively wealthier States.

### Consequences of the Faulty Framework

1. **Penalty for disaster-prone States:** Odisha, with 574.7 km coastline and strong preparedness, faces a 1.57 percentage point reduction in funding share.
2. **Reward for demographic size:** States with larger populations gain more funds, even with lower disaster exposure.
3. **Undermining preparedness efforts:** States investing in early warning systems and evacuation lose incentives due to reduced funding.
4. **Misallocation of resources:** Funds do not reach areas with highest actual risk, weakening disaster response capacity.
5. **Conflict with climate realities:** States like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Assam face rising climate risks but receive less support.

### Way Forward

1. **Redefining exposure correctly:** Exposure should count people living in hazard zones like coastal belts, flood plains, and seismic regions.

2. **Use of scientific data sources:** Data from the **Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC) Vulnerability Atlas and Census blocks** should be used for precise mapping.
3. **Creating a composite vulnerability index:** Vulnerability should include **kutcha housing share, health infrastructure, agricultural dependence, insurance coverage, and early warning systems**.
4. **Use of existing datasets:** Data from **the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) database, National Health Mission (NHM) surveys, and India Meteorological Department (IMD) records** should be used to build a realistic vulnerability profile.
5. **Institutionalising standard metrics:** The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** should be mandated to publish an annual State-level Disaster Vulnerability Index for use in future Finance Commission allocations.
6. **Need for methodological continuity:** A stable and accepted framework will avoid disputes in each Finance Commission cycle.

## Conclusion

Disaster funding must reflect real risk, not total population size. The present system turns risk assessment into a headcount exercise. This weakens support for highly exposed States and discourages investment in preparedness. A shift to hazard-based exposure and multidimensional vulnerability is essential. Without reform, disaster finance will remain misaligned with climate risks and growing disaster frequency.

## Question for practice:

Examine how the 16th Finance Commission's disaster risk assessment framework leads to misallocation of disaster funds in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## The West Asia cauldron of conflict and its fallout

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International relations

### Introduction

West Asia is caught in a major conflict led by Benjamin Netanyahu and supported by Donald Trump. The war began on **February 28, 2026** with U.S.-Israel joint strikes on Iran under **Operation Epic Fury**. The **June 2025 12-day war** acted as a precursor. The conflict has caused **several thousand deaths, over half civilians**, and shows signs of becoming a **long-drawn war with possible ground involvement**.

### Iran's Resilience and Strategic Response

1. **Survival despite leadership decapitation:** Iran survived despite the killing of Ali Khamenei and Ali Larijani. The state has not collapsed.

2. **Continuity of nuclear capability:** Iran's **uranium stockpile remains safe**, showing that key strategic assets are intact.
3. **Sustained but calibrated retaliation:** Iran has continued to strike back with **lower intensity**, but it has maintained pressure on its adversaries.
4. **Time advantage in prolonged conflict:** Experts believe **time is on Iran's side**, as it is prepared for a long war of attrition.
5. **Strategic use of oil chokepoint:** Iran may block the Strait of Hormuz, which carries **nearly 30% of global oil shipments**, to trigger a global crisis.
6. **Diplomatic signalling and leverage:** Iran offered **safe passage to friendly countries** and demanded **U.S. withdrawal from West Asia bases and restraint on Israel**.

#### Limitations and Challenges of the U.S.-Israel Strategy

1. **Overdependence on air power:** The strategy relies on **saturation bombing**, which has not ensured decisive success against a large and resilient Iran.
2. **High cost and weapon strain:** Use of **Patriot missiles, THAAD interceptors, and Tomahawk missiles** is creating **serious cost and replenishment issues**.
3. **Signs of internal war fatigue:** Sections of the **U.S. Navy show war weariness**, indicating limits to prolonged operations.
4. **Failure of regime collapse assumption:** Despite heavy attacks, **Iran has not collapsed**, challenging the core assumption of the strategy.
5. **Israel's flawed containment strategy:** Israel attempted to contain Iran with U.S. backing, but this approach has **not produced expected outcomes**.
6. **Conflict driven by advantage, not order:** The war is focused on **extracting advantage rather than maintaining global order**, increasing instability.

#### Implications of the War

1. **Risk of regional expansion:** Israel aims to extend the conflict to **Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria**, widening the war.
2. **Severe oil and energy disruption:** Tensions around Hormuz are increasing **oil prices and energy insecurity worldwide**.
3. **Maritime and trade disruptions:** Shipping lanes and logistics systems are under stress, affecting **global trade flows**.
4. **Shift to 'no peace, no war' phase:** The conflict has entered a stage of **continuous tension without full-scale war resolution**.

5. **Global economic impact:** Most economies are already affected and are **not in a position to sustain prolonged conflict**.
6. **Weak global response:** Many U.S. allies in Europe refused support, showing **lack of international unity**.

### Ideological and Structural Dimensions

1. **Shia resistance narrative:** The conflict draws from the memory of the Battle of Karbala, symbolising **resistance, sacrifice, and endurance**.
2. **Strengthening of Shia identity:** External pressure may strengthen **religious and transnational Shia identity**, rather than weaken it.
3. **Limits of military superiority:** Western power cannot ensure victory as **ideological and cultural factors dominate outcomes**.
4. **Leadership transition and radicalisation:** The rise of **Mojtaba Khamenei** reflects **growing radical and militant tendencies**, not moderation.

### Way Forward

1. **Immediate de-escalation is necessary:** Steps must be taken to **reduce violence and prevent further civilian loss**.
2. **Diplomatic engagement and armistice:** The U.S. should **restrain Israel and move toward negotiated settlement**.
3. **Avoiding provocative actions:** Attacks near sensitive sites like nuclear facilities must be avoided to **prevent escalation**.
4. **Securing global energy routes:** Ensuring stability in Hormuz is essential to **protect global economic systems**.
5. **Reassessment of strategic objectives:** The U.S. must reconsider policies driven by **miscalculation and overreach**.

### Conclusion

The conflict highlights that **military dominance cannot ensure strategic success** against a resilient and ideologically driven state. Iran's endurance and the disruption of global systems show a **prolonged war of attrition**. Without timely diplomacy and restraint, the crisis risks expanding further, causing **greater instability, economic damage, and long-term global consequences**.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the key strategic, economic, and ideological dimensions of the ongoing West Asia conflict and examine its implications for regional stability and the global order.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### A West Asia security rethink amid America's role

**Source:** The post "A West Asia security rethink amid America's role" has been created, based on "A West Asia security rethink amid America's role" published in "The Hindu" on 02nd April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3- International Relations

**Context:** The ongoing military confrontation involving the United States, **Israel**, and **Iran** has triggered a strategic rethink across **West Asia**, exposing weaknesses in existing regional security arrangements. Gulf states are increasingly exploring alternative regional security mechanisms due to declining confidence in traditional American security guarantees.

#### Changing Security Architecture in West Asia

##### 1. Declining credibility of the U.S.A security umbrella

- a. The response of the United States to threats against Gulf states has been widely perceived as inconsistent and insufficient in recent years.
- b. Incidents such as attacks on Gulf infrastructure and continued escalation with Iran have exposed the operational limitations of American security commitments in the region.
- c. The growing energy self-sufficiency of the United States has reduced its strategic dependence on Gulf hydrocarbons and has affected its long-term engagement priorities in the region.
- d. Washington's expectation that Gulf states may financially support conflict-related efforts reflects a shift from security guarantees towards burden-sharing arrangements.

##### 2. Iran as a central variable in regional security

- a. Iran's retaliatory doctrine includes the expansion of conflict across the region if its regime survival is threatened by external military action.
- b. Iran's ability to threaten closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** underlines its strategic leverage over global energy transportation routes.
- c. Any sustainable and long-term regional security architecture will remain difficult to establish without Iran's participation or cooperation.

##### 3. Growing intra-Gulf security coordination

- a. Countries such as **Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain** are attempting deeper coordination despite earlier geopolitical divisions.
- b. Earlier disputes, such as the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar, highlighted serious internal fractures within the Gulf region.
- c. Regional actors are now prioritising collective responses to immediate security threats to strengthen their strategic resilience.

##### 4. Limitations of traditional regional institutions

- a. Regional institutions such as the **Arab League** have been criticised for their inability to respond effectively to rapidly evolving geopolitical crises.

- b. As a result, regional countries are increasingly advocating flexible and issue-based coalitions instead of relying exclusively on rigid institutional frameworks.

#### 5. Israel's expanding military reach is shaping threat perceptions

- a. Israel's demonstrated capability to project air power across a wide geographical area from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf has created new security concerns among several Arab states.
- b. Israel's operations beyond its immediate borders indicate evolving deterrence doctrines that are reshaping regional threat perceptions.

#### 6. Pakistan's attempt to reposition itself in West Asian geopolitics

- a. **Pakistan** is projecting itself as a mediator between Iran and the United States to enhance its diplomatic relevance in the region.
- b. Pakistan is leveraging its geographic proximity to Iran, its Islamic identity linkages, and its status as a nuclear-armed Muslim-majority country to strengthen its strategic positioning.
- c. Engagement with countries such as **Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt** reflects its efforts to increase its role in emerging regional security arrangements.

#### 7. Emerging role of extra-regional actors

- a. Gulf states are increasingly exploring diversified partnerships beyond the United States to reduce dependence on a single external security provider.
- b. Asian energy consumers such as **India** may gain importance in future regional security cooperation frameworks due to their economic stakes in the region.
- c. Earlier diplomatic developments, such as the China-brokered rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, illustrate the growing multipolar influence shaping West Asian geopolitics.

### Implications for India

#### 1. Energy security concerns

- a. India depends heavily on crude oil imports from West Asia, which makes its energy security vulnerable to regional instability.
- b. Disruptions in maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz can significantly affect India's energy supply stability and increase global oil prices.

#### 2. Diaspora protection challenges

- a. More than eight million Indians reside in Gulf countries, which makes their safety a major concern during periods of regional conflict.
- b. Escalating tensions in the region increase the likelihood of evacuation requirements and humanitarian contingencies involving Indian citizens.

#### 3. Strategic balancing requirement

- a. India maintains strong diplomatic relations simultaneously with Iran, Israel, the Gulf monarchies, and the United States, which makes strategic balancing increasingly complex.

- b. A volatile regional environment complicates India's diplomatic efforts to maintain strategic autonomy while safeguarding national interests.

#### 4. Emerging security partnership opportunities

- a. Gulf countries may increasingly seek security cooperation with major Asian energy partners such as India in the evolving geopolitical environment.
- b. This situation opens opportunities for India to expand its defence diplomacy and maritime security cooperation with Gulf states.

#### Way Forward

1. India should promote dialogue-based regional security frameworks that include all stakeholders, including Iran, in order to support long-term regional stability.
2. India should strengthen its strategic petroleum reserves and diversify its energy import sources in order to reduce vulnerability to supply disruptions.
3. India should expand maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region to protect critical sea-lanes of communication.
4. India should enhance evacuation preparedness mechanisms to ensure the safety of its diaspora during conflict situations.
5. India should deepen engagement with Gulf Cooperation Council countries through structured diplomatic and institutional partnerships.

**Conclusion:** The evolving conflict dynamics in West Asia indicate a transition from a United States-centric regional security architecture towards a more fragmented and multipolar order. This transition presents both risks and strategic opportunities for India, which require calibrated diplomacy and proactive regional engagement to safeguard its long-term interests.

**Question:** The ongoing U.S.–Israel conflict with Iran is reshaping the regional security architecture of West Asia. Examine the emerging security dynamics in the region and analyse their implications for India.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

#### **Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism**

**Source:** The post “Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism” has been created, based on “Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism” published in “The Hindu” on 02nd April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** The recent declaration by **Amit Shah** regarding the effective end of **Left Wing Extremism** marks a significant milestone in India's internal security landscape. The weakening of the Maoist insurgency after decades of conflict presents a historic opportunity for the expansion of governance, development, and democratic participation in previously affected regions.

#### **Success of India's Strategy Against Left-Wing Extremism**

##### **1. Decline in Maoist operational capabilities**

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- a. Intensive paramilitary operations over the last three years have significantly weakened the organisational and military strength of Maoist insurgent groups.
- b. Thousands of insurgents have surrendered or been arrested, which indicates the erosion of their operational networks and recruitment base.
- c. The neutralisation of key cadres has reduced the ability of insurgents to coordinate large-scale attacks against the state.

## 2. Expansion of state presence in previously inaccessible regions

- a. The weakening of Maoist influence has enabled the state to establish administrative and security presence in remote and forested regions that were previously beyond effective governance.
- b. Improved access to these areas has created opportunities for delivering welfare schemes and public services to marginalised communities.

## 3. Adoption of a dual strategy combining security operations and rehabilitation

- a. The government adopted a dual approach that combined strict security operations against armed insurgents with rehabilitation policies for those who surrendered.
- b. Rehabilitation measures have encouraged many insurgents to reintegrate into mainstream society and reduce violence in affected regions.

## 4. Improvement in the delivery of welfare services

- a. The government has initiated programmes to ensure the establishment of schools and the distribution of identity documents such as **Aadhaar** and ration cards in previously neglected regions.
- b. These initiatives are strengthening state legitimacy by improving access to welfare schemes and social protection mechanisms.

## Concerns Associated with the Militarised Approach to Tackling LWE

### 1. Concerns regarding human rights and civil liberties

- a. The strong militarised approach adopted to counter Left Wing Extremism has raised concerns among civil society groups regarding possible violations of civil liberties and human rights.
- b. Critics have argued that policing measures in certain areas went beyond the spirit of existing anti-terrorism laws and affected judicial processes.

### 2. Risk of alienation of tribal communities

- a. Tribal communities residing in forested and mineral-rich areas were historically affected by displacement, lack of land rights, and inadequate access to development benefits.
- b. If post-conflict governance does not address these structural grievances, there is a risk of renewed alienation and instability.

### 3. Possibility of unregulated resource extraction

- a. Many Left Wing Extremism-affected regions are rich in mineral resources, which creates the possibility of rapid expansion of extractive economic activities after the weakening of insurgency.

- b. Without proper safeguards, such an extraction could lead to the displacement and marginalisation of tribal populations.

#### 4. Need for political reconciliation after security operations

- a. Long-term peace in conflict-affected regions requires reconciliation between the state and affected communities in addition to security-based solutions.
- b. Healing the social and institutional consequences of prolonged conflict is essential for sustainable stability.

### Importance of Inclusive Development in Former LWE-Affected Areas

#### 1. Strengthening tribal rights and participation

- a. Inclusive development should prioritise the protection of tribal land rights and ensure their meaningful participation in democratic decision-making processes.
- b. Expanding access to political representation will strengthen trust between tribal communities and the state.

#### 2. Improving governance and institutional access

- a. The expansion of governance institutions such as schools, healthcare centres, and welfare delivery systems will help integrate remote regions into the national development framework.
- b. Strengthening local administrative capacity will reduce governance deficits that previously contributed to insurgency.

#### 3. Ensuring accountability in resource extraction

- a. Resource extraction activities in mineral-rich regions must follow transparent procedures and ensure fair compensation and rehabilitation for affected communities.
- b. Sustainable development practices should be prioritised to balance economic growth with environmental and social justice concerns.

#### 4. Promoting livelihood opportunities and infrastructure development

- a. Expanding employment opportunities through skill development programmes and infrastructure investment will reduce economic vulnerabilities in affected regions.
- b. Improved connectivity through roads, digital infrastructure, and financial inclusion will strengthen integration with national markets.

### Way Forward

1. The government should strengthen implementation of protective legislations such as the **Forest Rights Act** and the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act** to safeguard tribal autonomy and land rights.
2. Development initiatives in former Left Wing Extremism-affected areas should prioritise community participation and transparency in decision-making processes.
3. Security gains achieved through paramilitary operations should be consolidated through long-term governance reforms and institutional strengthening.

4. Rehabilitation policies for surrendered insurgents should be expanded to ensure their successful reintegration into society.
5. The government should promote reconciliation-based governance that addresses historical grievances and strengthens democratic legitimacy in affected regions.

**Conclusion:** The weakening of Left Wing Extremism represents a major achievement in India's internal security framework and opens a corridor of opportunity for inclusive governance. Sustainable peace in these regions will depend not only on security success but also on the protection of tribal rights, accountable development, and meaningful democratic participation of local communities.

**Question:** The weakening of Left Wing Extremism in India marks a major internal security achievement. However, sustaining peace in former LWE-affected regions requires inclusive development and protection of tribal rights. Discuss.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

### The Textbook Controversy and Core Issue

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2** - Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

#### Introduction

The **Supreme Court of India** reacted strongly to a Class 8 NCERT textbook that referred to issues like corruption in the judiciary. It initiated suo motu action, banned the book, and formed a committee. The issue raises a key question: how to balance judicial dignity with fair criticism, especially when content may influence young minds and public trust in institutions.

#### Nature and Scope of Contempt of Court

1. **Types of contempt:** Contempt has two forms. **Civil contempt** means disobedience of court orders. **Criminal contempt** includes obstructing justice, prejudicing cases, and lowering the authority of the court.
2. **Meaning of scandalising the court:** Criminal contempt also includes **hostile criticism that damages public confidence** in the judiciary. This area is sensitive and needs careful limits.
3. **Purpose of criminal contempt:** It is not meant to protect the ego of judges. It is used when **false or harmful narratives about courts spread and affect justice delivery**.
4. **Link with public opinion:** Courts and public opinion are closely connected. If public trust weakens, the **ability of courts to function effectively also reduces**.

#### Judicial Authority and the Centrality of Public Trust

1. **Judiciary's power rooted in public confidence:** Courts lack control over money or force. Their real strength lies in **people's faith in their fairness and justice delivery**.

2. **Trust built through consistent judicial conduct:** Public confidence is developed through **protection of rights, fair decisions, and upholding constitutional values over time.**
3. **Public trust as the basis of institutional authority:** This trust acts as the **foundation of judicial review and balance of power**, allowing courts to check other branches.
4. **Threat from repeated negative narratives:** Motivated or exaggerated criticism, when widely spread, can **erode this trust and weaken judicial effectiveness.**

#### Judiciary Tolerance with Defined Limits

1. **Recognition of need for criticism:** Judges have accepted that **criticism is necessary for improvement.** It helps in identifying delays and inefficiencies.
2. **Restraint in using contempt power:** Frequent or emotional use of contempt can **damage the dignity of courts instead of protecting it.**
3. **Dignity earned through conduct, not punishment:** Respect for courts comes from **quality of judgments, fairness, and objectivity**, not from silencing critics.
4. **Broad shoulders approach as institutional strength:** Courts can ignore harsh remarks if they are not harmful. This reflects **confidence and maturity of the judiciary.**
5. **Freedom of speech as a core democratic value:** Fair and even strong criticism must be allowed. Suppressing it can harm **democratic discourse and accountability.**
6. **Clear limits to acceptable criticism:** Criticism must be **fact-based, reasoned, and free from malice.** It should not aim to damage institutional credibility.

#### Balancing Free Speech, Judicial Role and Due Process

1. **Judicial review as a key democratic function:** Courts ensure **accountability of executive and legislature** by checking misuse of power.
2. **Public trust strengthens judicial review:** People approach courts because of **confidence in justice delivery**, making judicial authority effective.
3. **Judiciary as protector of fundamental rights:** Courts safeguard **rights like equality, free speech, and religion**, making their credibility crucial.
4. **Need for caution in dealing with academic content:** When writings or textbooks are involved, courts must act carefully to **avoid chilling academic freedom.**
5. **Due process as a missing element in the case:** Authors were not given an opportunity to explain. **Notice, clarification, or correction could have resolved the issue.**
6. **Impact on young and impressionable minds:** The concern was that biased content may **shape long-term perceptions of the judiciary among students.**

### Internal Challenges within Judiciary

1. **Presence of corruption as a serious concern:** Even limited instances of corruption can **damage the credibility of the entire institution**, as negative cases gain attention.
2. **Disproportionate impact of isolated misconduct:** A single corrupt judge can **undermine public trust built over years**, making the issue highly sensitive.
3. **Weakness of impeachment mechanism:** Impeachment is **lengthy, political, and rarely successful**, limiting its effectiveness as a deterrent.
4. **Transfer as an inadequate corrective tool:** Transfer only shifts the problem geographically. It does not **address misconduct or ensure accountability**.
5. **Limitations of in-house inquiry system:** Internal mechanisms exist but may fail if there is **non-cooperation or resistance from the accused**.
6. **Need for stronger institutional response:** The system was designed for rare misconduct. There is now a need for **clear, effective, and enforceable accountability mechanisms**.

### Conclusion

The judiciary must protect its authority while allowing fair criticism. Public trust is its core strength. Contempt power should be used with restraint and clarity. Internal reforms are necessary to address accountability gaps. Respect for courts grows through fairness, transparency, and strong conduct, not by suppressing criticism or limiting democratic discourse.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how the power of contempt of court should be balanced with freedom of criticism while preserving public trust and judicial credibility.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Orderly Exit: On India and Energy Transition Issues

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

### Introduction

Global energy shocks have been recurring, from the 1973 Yom Kippur War to the 2022 Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, the present crisis involving U.S.–Israeli strikes on Iran is different as it disrupts both oil and gas flows. This disruption comes at a time when the global energy system is already shifting towards cleaner sources, making it a deeper structural change rather than a temporary shock.

### Changing Nature of Energy Systems

1. **Dual energy disruption:** The present crisis affects both oil and gas flows together, unlike earlier shocks that were mainly oil-based. This increases the scale and impact of disruption.
2. **Energy transition underway:** International Energy Agency shows that electric vehicles displaced **0.9 mb/d of oil demand in 2023**, rising to **1.3 mb/d in 2024**, indicating a clear structural shift.
3. **Limited but significant impact:** This shift still forms only **1–1.3% of global oil demand**, but it signals long-term change in consumption patterns.
4. **Shock as accelerator:** A disruption of around **8 mb/d supply** can speed up the transition away from fossil fuels.

### Fragmentation of the Global Energy Order

1. **Decline of petrodollar system:** The earlier system ensured oil trade in dollars and supported U.S. financial dominance through recycling of surplus revenues.
2. **Shift to mineral-based system:** Energy is moving from global oil trade to geographically concentrated supply chains of critical minerals.
3. **Concentration of key minerals:** Lithium is concentrated in **Chile (30%), Argentina (13%), Australia (20%+)**, while cobalt is over **70% in DR Congo** and nickel is dominated by Indonesia.
4. **Role of new producers:** Copper is concentrated in Chile and Peru, while Canada and Australia are emerging as key suppliers of multiple minerals.
5. **China's processing dominance:** Control over processing and manufacturing lies mainly with China, giving it a decisive advantage in the new system.
6. **Possibility of new currency shift:** Future energy systems may depend on China and possibly the yuan, similar to earlier dependence on dollar-based oil.

### India's Strategic Dilemma

1. **Opportunity for energy security:** The transition offers India a chance to reduce fossil fuel dependence and move towards cleaner energy.
2. **Risk of new dependencies:** Dependence may shift from oil imports to critical minerals and foreign technology supply chains.
3. **Technological vulnerability:** Heavy reliance on external manufacturing and processing can limit strategic autonomy.
4. **Balancing transition and sovereignty:** India must ensure that new energy systems do not recreate old patterns of dependence in a different form.

### Building India's Energy Transition Ecosystem

1. **Rapid renewable expansion:** India's renewable capacity crossed **250 GW by 2025**, driven by solar and wind deployment.
2. **Ambitious targets achieved early:** The target of **500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030** was achieved five years ahead of schedule, showing strong policy execution.
3. **Ecosystem-based approach:** Transition now involves coordination among policy, finance, industry, research and consumers to scale innovation.
4. **Solar sector success:** Long-term policy support, concessional finance and Production Linked Incentives made solar energy cost-competitive.
5. **Digital model as example:** Systems like UPI show how coordinated action can create large-scale impact across sectors.

### Strengthening Innovation and System Integration

1. **Green hydrogen push:** The National Green Hydrogen Mission targets **5 million tonnes annual production by 2030**, supported by incentives under the SIGHT programme.
2. **Energy storage expansion:** Battery storage and pumped storage are being promoted, with viability gap funding to reduce risks.
3. **Grid infrastructure development:** The Green Energy Corridor is improving transmission and reducing curtailment.
4. **Multi-stakeholder participation:** Governments, financial institutions, manufacturers and research bodies are working together for reliability and affordability.
5. **Priority innovation areas:** Focus includes advanced storage, recycling of materials, long-duration storage, industrial decarbonization and AI-based energy systems.

### Way Forward

1. **Diversified resource strategy:** India should secure access to critical minerals from multiple regions to reduce risk.
2. **Domestic capability building:** Strong focus is needed on manufacturing, processing and technology development within the country.
3. **Integrated ecosystem approach:** Innovation must move from isolated efforts to coordinated systems involving all stakeholders.
4. **Use of policy instruments:** Tools like incentives, demand aggregation and finance support can accelerate investment and reduce risks.
5. **Global South alignment:** A non-aligned strategy can help India avoid dependence on any single power and maintain strategic autonomy.

## Conclusion

The current energy transition marks a major shift in global economic and geopolitical structures. India must ensure an orderly exit from fossil fuels by combining clean energy expansion with strong domestic capabilities. A balanced strategy, focused on diversification, innovation and autonomy, will help avoid new dependencies while securing long-term energy and economic stability.

## Question for practice:

Examine how the ongoing global energy transition, combined with recent geopolitical disruptions, is reshaping energy systems and creating both opportunities and challenges for India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future

Source: The post "Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future" has been created, based on "Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future" published in "The Hindu" on 03rd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

**Context:** India is implementing one of the world's largest rural drinking water supply programmes through the Jal Jeevan Mission, which has increased rural household tap water coverage from **16.72% in 2019 to over 81%**. The mission has reduced drudgery for women, saved nearly **5.5 crore hours daily**, and helped prevent nearly **four lakh deaths from diarrhoeal diseases**. However, ensuring long-term sustainability of rural drinking water systems now requires a strong **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for monitoring, coordination, and maintenance.

## Importance of Digital Infrastructure in Rural Drinking Water Systems

### 1. Ensures long-term functionality of schemes

- a. Infrastructure creation alone cannot guarantee a continuous water supply unless the scheme's performance is regularly monitored and maintained.
- b. Digital platforms help track supply regularity, infrastructure functionality, and seasonal variations in water availability, thereby improving service delivery sustainability.

### 2. Creation of digital identity for water schemes

- a. The introduction of **Sujalam Bharat IDs** provides a unique digital identity for each drinking water scheme covering hydraulically connected assets from source to tap.
- b. The creation of **Sujal Gaon IDs** enables village-level mapping of infrastructure systems and improves transparency, monitoring, and accountability.

### 3. Enables real-time operational monitoring

- a. Digital monitoring systems allow continuous tracking of water supply regularity and source availability across rural drinking water schemes.

- b. These systems help detect declining source levels and irregular supply patterns early, enabling preventive maintenance instead of delayed corrective action.

#### 4. Improves water quality surveillance and public health

- a. Digital platforms help detect contamination risks before they develop into major public health concerns in rural areas.
- b. Reliable water quality monitoring contributes to reducing water-borne diseases and strengthens safe drinking water delivery systems.

#### 5. Strengthens the financial sustainability of schemes

- a. Digital dashboards help track operation and maintenance expenditure and support better financial planning for repairs and infrastructure upkeep.
- b. This ensures the lifecycle sustainability of rural drinking water assets and improves the long-term functionality of schemes.

#### 6. Empowers Gram Panchayats and community institutions

- a. Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees play a central role in managing rural drinking water systems at the grassroots level.
- b. Access to digital information on pipelines, pumps, tanks, water supply regularity, and water quality strengthens their decision-making capacity and promotes **Jan Bhagidari**.

#### 7. Promotes cooperative federalism through standardised data systems

- a. Standardised digital data formats allow States to share information easily while retaining control over their own water supply systems.
- b. This facilitates inter-State learning, benchmarking of performance, and adoption of best practices in rural drinking water governance.

#### 8. Enables AI-driven infrastructure management

- a. Digital infrastructure enables frontline workers to upload images of pipelines and pumps that can be analysed using AI-based monitoring tools.
- b. Predictive analytics can detect infrastructure damage, identify supply risks, and flag maintenance needs in advance, improving the efficiency of service delivery.

### Challenges in Digital Water Governance

#### 1. Differences in data definitions and reporting standards across States

- a. Different States follow varying formats, indicators, and reporting mechanisms for rural water supply data, which creates inconsistencies in monitoring scheme performance.
- b. This results in delays in the reconciliation of datasets and prevents the creation of a unified national-level decision-support system.

#### 2. Limited technical capacity at the Gram Panchayat level

- a. Many Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees lack adequate technical training to effectively use digital dashboards and monitoring platforms.
- b. This reduces their ability to interpret infrastructure performance data and limits the potential of community-led water governance.

### 3. Connectivity gaps in remote rural areas

- a. Poor internet connectivity and unreliable electricity supply in remote and hilly regions restrict real-time data uploading and monitoring of drinking water schemes.
- b. These gaps reduce the effectiveness of digital platforms supporting the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission.

### 4. Financial sustainability of operation and maintenance (O&M)

- a. Many rural drinking water schemes face challenges in ensuring regular funding for operation and maintenance activities after infrastructure creation is completed.
- b. Weak local revenue mobilisation and limited user-charge recovery reduce the long-term sustainability of scheme functionality.

### 5. Data reliability and quality concerns

- a. Inaccurate or incomplete field-level data entry reduces the reliability of digital monitoring systems and weakens evidence-based decision-making.
- b. Without trusted datasets, predictive analytics and AI-enabled maintenance planning cannot function effectively.

### 6. Institutional coordination challenges across multiple stakeholders

- a. Rural drinking water governance involves coordination between central ministries, State departments, engineers, and local bodies, which often leads to fragmented responsibilities.
- b. Lack of seamless institutional integration slows response time for repairs, maintenance, and service delivery improvements.

### 7. Digital literacy gaps among frontline workers and communities

- a. Many frontline workers and community members are not adequately trained in using mobile-based monitoring applications and digital reporting tools.
- b. This limits community participation in scheme monitoring despite initiatives such as Sujalam Bharat IDs and Sujal Gaon IDs.

### Way Forward

1. The government should standardise national water data architecture to improve interoperability across States and institutions.
2. Capacity-building programmes should be strengthened for Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees to improve digital governance outcomes.
3. Greater integration with groundwater monitoring and watershed management programmes should be ensured to improve the sustainability of water sources.

4. AI-based predictive maintenance tools should be scaled up across rural drinking water infrastructure systems.
5. Community ownership of drinking water assets should be strengthened through participatory initiatives such as Jal Mahotsav 2026.

**Conclusion:** Pipes and pumps are essential for expanding drinking water access, but trusted and shared digital information ensures their long-term sustainability and functionality. Strengthening Digital Public Infrastructure will transform rural drinking water schemes from infrastructure-creation programmes into reliable service-delivery systems and support India's goal of universal safe drinking water access under **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

**Question:** Pipes and pumps can deliver water, but digital public infrastructure ensures the sustainability of rural drinking water systems." Examine the context of India's rural water supply transformation under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

### Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy

**Source:** The post "**Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy**" has been created, based on "**Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 03rd April 2026.

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

**Context:** India's industrial policy has increasingly relied on the Production Linked Incentive Scheme to boost manufacturing competitiveness and integrate the country into global value chains. Among all sectors, the **smartphone PLI scheme** has emerged as one of the most successful examples of industrial transformation through targeted incentives. The smartphone sector's rapid growth offers a practical template for redesigning PLIs across other sectors to enhance exports, employment generation, and manufacturing scale.

### Achievements of the Smartphone PLI Scheme

#### 1. Rapid growth in production and exports

- a. Investments of about **\$1.2 billion** under the smartphone PLI scheme helped drive production growth from **\$30 billion in 2020 to \$64 billion by FY2025**.
- b. Smartphone exports increased from **\$3.1 billion to \$24 billion**, raising India's share in global smartphone exports from **1% to 8%**.

#### 2. Expansion of employment opportunities

- a. The broader smartphone ecosystem attracted nearly **\$8 billion of investment** and generated approximately **1.5–2 lakh jobs**.
- b. Large assembly facilities established by companies such as Foxconn and Tata Electronics created significant employment, especially for women workers.

#### 3. Strengthening of the supplier ecosystem

- a. The smartphone ecosystem expanded from around **12 firms in 2019 to more than 40 companies** in the Apple supplier network alone.
- b. This expansion helped create an additional **1.2 lakh direct jobs** and strengthened linkages with MSMEs supplying components.

#### 4. Development of component manufacturing ecosystem

- a. The launch of the **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS)** aims to deepen domestic component manufacturing capacity.
- b. The scheme has already attracted applications worth nearly **twice the expected investment of ₹59,350 crore**, with employment commitments exceeding initial targets.

### Key Lessons from the Smartphone PLI for Industrial Policy

#### 1. Export-oriented policy design is essential

- a. The smartphone PLI scheme clearly targeted export-oriented production by focusing on higher-value devices suited for global markets.
- b. This approach helped integrate India into global value chains instead of relying solely on import substitution strategies.

#### 2. Prioritising downstream assembly can accelerate scale

- a. The policy targeted final assemblers such as Foxconn, Pegatron, and Wistron that were already connected to global brands.
- b. Building large-scale assembly capacity created demand for domestic suppliers and strengthened the broader manufacturing ecosystem.

#### 3. Leveraging India's labour advantage supports job creation

- a. Smartphone assembly is labour-intensive and aligns well with India's demographic advantage and workforce availability.
- b. Large facilities established under the scheme generated substantial employment, especially in labour-intensive manufacturing clusters.

#### 4. Reducing tariffs on inputs improves competitiveness

- a. The government reduced import duties on key inputs such as printed circuit board assemblies, connectors, microphones, and camera modules.
- b. This ensured that domestic manufacturers remained globally competitive instead of facing cost disadvantages due to protectionist policies.

#### 5. Administrative responsiveness improves investor confidence

- a. The expansion of export cargo capacity at Chennai airport and timely intervention during labour-related challenges improved operational efficiency.
- b. Such responsive governance strengthened investor confidence and ensured smooth implementation of the scheme.

## 6. Industry consultation strengthens policy effectiveness

- a. The smartphone PLI scheme was designed through extensive consultations with industry stakeholders.
- b. Continued collaboration between government and industry helped identify bottlenecks and improve implementation outcomes.

## 7. Ease of doing business complements financial incentives

- a. Incentives alone cannot ensure manufacturing success unless supported by improvements in logistics, infrastructure, and regulatory processes.
- b. The smartphone sector benefited from coordinated policy support that created a conducive business environment.

## Challenges in Replicating Smartphone PLI Success Across Sectors

### 1. Weak export orientation in several PLI sectors

- a. Many PLI schemes continue to emphasise import substitution rather than integration into global value chains.
- b. This limits their potential to generate large-scale employment and export-led manufacturing growth.

### 2. Tariff and non-tariff barriers on intermediate inputs

- a. High import duties on raw materials and intermediate goods increase production costs in several sectors.
- b. These barriers offset the competitiveness benefits that PLIs are intended to provide.

### 3. Limited scale of downstream manufacturing in some industries

- a. Several PLI-targeted sectors lack globally competitive lead firms capable of anchoring supplier ecosystems.
- b. Without strong downstream players, the expansion of component manufacturing networks becomes difficult.

### 4. Implementation delays and low disbursement levels

- a. Although nearly **₹1.97 lakh crore** was allocated for PLI schemes across sectors, only about **10% has been disbursed** so far.
- b. Slow implementation reduces investor confidence and delays capacity creation.

### 5. Infrastructure and logistics constraints

- a. Manufacturing competitiveness depends heavily on reliable logistics, ports, power supply, and industrial clusters.
- b. Persistent infrastructure gaps reduce India's attractiveness compared to competitors such as Vietnam and China.

## Way Forward

### 1. Strengthen export-linked incentive structures

- a. Future PLI schemes should prioritise export competitiveness and integration into global production networks.
- b. Sector-specific strategies should align incentives with global demand patterns.

### 2. Focus on labour-intensive sectors for employment generation

- a. Greater policy attention should be given to labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, garments, footwear, and toys.
- b. These sectors can generate large-scale employment similar to smartphone assembly manufacturing.

### 3. Reduce tariffs on intermediate goods

- a. Rationalising import duties on production inputs will improve the cost competitiveness of domestic manufacturers.
- b. This will help integrate Indian firms into global value chains more effectively.

### 4. Strengthen industrial clusters and logistics infrastructure

- a. Improving port connectivity, cargo handling capacity, and industrial corridor development will support export-oriented manufacturing.
- b. Efficient logistics systems are essential for scaling manufacturing production.

### 5. Institutionalise government–industry partnerships

- a. Continuous consultations with industry stakeholders should guide sector-specific PLI redesign.
- b. Such collaboration can help identify implementation challenges early and improve policy outcomes.

**Conclusion:** The smartphone PLI scheme demonstrates that export orientation, downstream assembly scale, labour-intensive manufacturing, and responsive governance can transform India's industrial performance. Applying these lessons across sectors can accelerate manufacturing growth, boost exports, and generate large-scale employment, strengthening India's position in global value chains.

**Question:** What lessons from the smartphone PLI scheme can be applied to redesign other PLI schemes for boosting exports and job creation in India?

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

## What happens when CAD rises

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3-** Indian economy

### Introduction

Even with 7.4% growth, contained inflation, Current Account Deficit (CAD) at ~0.8% of GDP, and \$701.4 billion reserves, the rupee fell over 5% last year and equity markets turned volatile. This reflects a disconnect between strong macro fundamentals and external outcomes. When oil prices rise, import bills increase and CAD widens.

A stronger dollar and weak capital flows reduce financing support, so short-term pressures dominate currency movement despite stable fundamentals.

### Oil Shock as the Starting Point of CAD Pressures

1. **War-driven oil price rise increases import bill:** Higher crude prices raise the **import bill before demand adjusts**, widening the trade deficit and increasing CAD.
2. **India's oil dependence raises dollar demand:** As a major oil importer, **dollar demand jumps sharply**, putting direct pressure on the rupee.
3. **Corporate margins get squeezed:** Higher import costs **reduce corporate profitability**, adding to economic stress.
4. **Short-term imbalance rises before adjustment:** Import costs increase immediately, while **demand adjusts slowly**, worsening short-term CAD.
5. **Quantified long-term impact on CAD:** A 1% oil price rise worsens CAB by up to 0.08pp of GDP over five years; 10% → ~0.8pp, 20% → ~1.6pp, and 5% → ~0.4pp, showing cumulative pressure.

### Impacts of CAD Pressures on the Economy

1. **Currency weakens despite strong fundamentals:** The rupee **fell over 5% and stayed near record lows**, showing CAD pressure dominates short-term outcomes.
2. **Equity markets become volatile:** Rising external imbalance leads to **increased volatility in equity markets**.
3. **Mismatch between fundamentals and outcomes:** Strong indicators like growth and reserves **fail to stabilize currency in the short run**.
4. **Buffers partially absorb shocks:** **Services exports and remittances** reduce pressure but cannot fully offset CAD rise.
5. **Policy tools delay pass-through:** **Hedging and pricing policies** slow the impact but do not eliminate it.

### From CAD to Currency Pressure: Role of Capital Flows

1. **CAD requires stable financing:** Even a **moderate CAD (~0.8% of GDP)** needs consistent capital inflows for balance.
2. **Decline in portfolio investment flows:** In 2025, **foreign portfolio investors pulled back**, reducing financing support.
3. **Weakening of FDI inflows:** **Net FDI softened** due to **profit repatriation and outbound investment**, weakening stability.

4. **Shift in market risk perception:** Reduced inflows changed **risk calculus**, increasing currency sensitivity.
5. **Flow dynamics overpower stock strength:** Strong reserves (**\$701.4 billion**) and growth cannot offset **thin and volatile inflows**.
6. **Reduced patient capital increases vulnerability:** Lower stable inflows make the rupee more sensitive to **risk appetite shifts**.

#### Role of Global Dollar Strength and Risk Aversion

1. **Stronger dollar tightens financial conditions:** A strong dollar leads to **tighter global liquidity**, reducing capital flows to India.
2. **Risk-off sentiment reduces inflows:** Investors shift to safer assets, increasing **risk premium** and lowering inflows.
3. **Simultaneous pressure on currency:** **Higher oil-related dollar demand and lower capital inflows** hit the rupee together.
4. **Short-term pricing driven by premia:** Currency movement is driven by **oil and risk premia in the short run**, not fundamentals.

#### Why the Pressure Persists Despite Strong Fundamentals

1. **Long-term anchor exists but does not act quickly:** The rupee is **~18% below PPP equilibrium**, showing strength in the long run but not immediate relief.
2. **Based on long-term real exchange rate behaviour:** Estimates use **monthly RER data over more than three decades**, showing mean-reverting trends over time.
3. **Very slow pace of adjustment:** Only **13% correction happens in one year, 25% in three years, and 44% in five years**, showing gradual adjustment.
4. **Long half-life delays correction:** It takes **more than five years** to correct half of the misalignment, slowing recovery.
5. **Adjustment is uneven and shock-driven:** Corrections often occur during **risk-off episodes and capital outflows**, not smoothly.
6. **India adjusts slower than peers:** Countries like **Brazil and Indonesia adjust faster**, highlighting India's slower response.
7. **Short-term shocks dominate fundamentals:** **Oil shocks and capital flow volatility** overpower fundamentals, keeping pressure on the rupee.

#### Conclusion

Rising CAD reflects dependence on **oil imports and volatile capital flows**. Stability needs **fuel tax adjustments, FX reserve use, hedging, diversified sourcing, and stable greenfield FDI through predictable policy and local-currency markets**. Long-term strength requires **export scale, energy diversification, strategic reserves, renewables, and efficiency** to reduce vulnerability.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how a rise in the Current Account Deficit (CAD) affects the rupee despite strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and examine the role of oil prices, capital flows, and global factors in this process.

Source: [Businessline](#)

## Allied healthcare needs attention

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3-** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### Introduction

Healthcare is not limited to doctors and hospitals. It depends on **Allied and Healthcare Professionals (AHPs)** like lab technologists, physiotherapists and technicians who deliver actual care. They form nearly **60% of the workforce** and ensure safety and quality. India is expanding healthcare infrastructure, but the supply of trained allied professionals has not kept pace, creating a serious gap in service delivery and patient outcomes.

### Magnitude of Workforce Crisis

- Severe workforce shortage:** India needs about **10.9 million healthcare workers** but has only **2.75 million**, leaving a gap of **over 8 million professionals**.
- Allied segment faces largest deficit:** Allied healthcare forms the biggest unmet demand within this shortage, making it a critical bottleneck.
- Demand-supply imbalance:** Annual demand is about **1 million AHPs**, while supply is only **0.2 million**, creating a widening gap.
- Estimates by institutions:** The shortage of over 8 million allied professionals and nurses is also highlighted by **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- Impact on healthcare delivery:** This shortage slows diagnostics, delays surgeries, limits rehabilitation services and affects patient outcomes.
- Infrastructure-workforce mismatch:** Hospitals and diagnostic centres are expanding, but workforce planning has not scaled at the same pace.

### Structural Challenges in Allied Healthcare

- High training cost with low returns:** Education requires years of specialised training and high financial investment, but early salaries remain modest.

2. **Reduced attractiveness of profession:** This mismatch discourages students, especially from small towns and modest backgrounds, affecting enrolment.
3. **Fragmented education system:** Training quality, faculty availability and standardisation vary widely across regions.
4. **Limited practical exposure:** Many students have strong theoretical knowledge but lack hands-on experience in real clinical environments.
5. **Employability gap:** Lack of early exposure to patients, equipment and teamwork makes transition to real work difficult.

### Policy Response and Institutional Framework

1. **Creation of unified regulatory body:** The **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)** provides a framework for education standards, regulation and registration.
2. **Standardisation of curriculum:** From **2026–27**, competency-based curricula aim to ensure uniform quality across institutions.
3. **Budgetary support:** **₹1,000 crore allocation** aims to add **one lakh allied professionals in five years**.
4. **Recognition of national priority:** Workforce expansion in allied healthcare is now seen as essential for healthcare delivery.
5. **Need for effective implementation:** Legal framework exists, but outcomes depend on how regulations are implemented.

### Implementation Challenges in Ongoing Reforms

1. **Student uncertainty during transition:** Students admitted between policy changes face ambiguity about degree recognition and professional registration.
2. **Need for grandfathering:** Without clear protection, thousands of students may face issues in qualification recognition and eligibility.
3. **Institutional ambiguity:** Colleges are unclear about recognition processes and whether admissions can continue during transition.
4. **Risk to training pipeline:** Delays in admissions and approvals can further reduce already limited workforce supply.
5. **Rigid curriculum requirements:** Mandatory exposure to specialised departments such as **organ transplantation, interventional radiology, oncology, neonatology and nuclear medicine** restricts participation of many institutions.
6. **Urban concentration of facilities:** These specialised departments exist mainly in tertiary hospitals located in major cities.

7. **Neglect of real training ecosystems:** Diagnostic laboratories, imaging centres, dialysis units and rehabilitation facilities operate as standalone centres but are not fully integrated into training requirements.
8. **Faculty shortage:** Limited availability of Master's and PhD-level faculty restricts expansion of programmes.
9. **Restriction on teaching roles:** NCAHP standards do not allow doctors to teach AHP programmes, creating a mismatch in emerging disciplines.

### Way Forward

1. **Balance regulation with expansion:** Regulation should ensure quality but must not slow training capacity growth.
2. **Provide transition clarity:** A clear **grandfathering framework** should protect students enrolled during regulatory changes.
3. **Ensure institutional continuity:** Allow institutions to continue admissions while recognition processes stabilise.
4. **Adopt flexible training models:** Recognise networks of clinical facilities instead of requiring a single attached hospital.
5. **Strengthen practical exposure:** Integrate early and structured clinical exposure to improve employability.
6. **Promote industry-academia collaboration:** Hospitals and diagnostic centres should co-design curricula and training programmes.
7. **Support faculty development:** Expand postgraduate and doctoral programmes to build a strong academic pipeline.
8. **Recognise evolving skill needs:** Training should include digital tools, diagnostics technology and patient interaction skills.
9. **Increase awareness of careers:** Allied healthcare should be promoted as a viable career option alongside medicine and engineering.
10. **Align workforce with infrastructure:** Workforce planning must grow alongside hospital and healthcare expansion.

### Conclusion

India has created a strong regulatory framework for allied healthcare. The key challenge is effective and flexible implementation. Expanding training capacity, ensuring continuity, and improving practical exposure are essential. Strengthening allied professionals will improve healthcare delivery, support employment, and help achieve the goals of a robust and inclusive health system.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the role of Allied and Healthcare Professionals in India's healthcare system and analyse the challenges and reforms needed to address their workforce shortage.

Source: [Businessline](#)

**US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India**

Source: The post "US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India" has been created, based on "US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India" published in "Indian Express" on 04th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

**Context:** The ongoing recalibration of relations between the U.S.A. and China reflects a shift from ideological confrontation to managed strategic competition, which is reducing India's leverage in great-power politics. This transformation is narrowing India's strategic space and requires a capability-driven and realistic foreign policy response.

**Changing nature of U.S.A – China relations**

1. The U.S.A has increasingly begun to view China primarily as an economic competitor rather than as a systemic ideological rival, which has altered the earlier framing of great-power competition.
2. The U.S.A is placing greater strategic emphasis on the Western Hemisphere rather than the Indo-Pacific region, thereby reducing the centrality of Asia in its global priorities.
3. Both the U.S.A and China presently share an interest in maintaining relative stability in their bilateral relations, although their motivations for doing so remain different.
4. China is seeking stability to address domestic economic challenges and strengthen technological self-reliance in critical sectors.
5. The U.S.A is attempting to manage competition with China while focusing on domestic economic restructuring and alliance recalibration.

**Implications for India**

**1. Declining utility of external balancing through the U.S.A**

- a. India can no longer depend excessively on the U.S.A as a reliable strategic counterweight to China in all conflict scenarios.
- b. A more transactional relationship between the U.S.A and China increases the possibility that bilateral understandings between them may indirectly affect India's strategic interests.

**2. Reduction in India's geopolitical salience**

- a. India's strategic importance appears to be relatively declining simultaneously in both Washington and Beijing due to changing global priorities.
- b. This situation exposes a structural vulnerability in India's long-term external balancing strategy.

**3. Emergence of bipolar technological ecosystems**

- a. The global artificial intelligence ecosystem is increasingly becoming bipolar between the U.S.A and China.
- b. India cannot align with China's digital ecosystem due to security concerns, but excessive dependence on American foundational models may also create technological vulnerabilities.

#### **4. Tactical improvement in U.S.A – Pakistan relations**

- a. The recent tactical thaw in relations between the U.S.A and Pakistan has increased Pakistan's diplomatic manoeuvring space in the region.
- b. At the same time, the strategic nexus between China and Pakistan continues to remain intact and poses long-term security challenges for India.

#### **5. Structural advantages gained by China in the energy transition**

- a. China has significantly strengthened its position in renewable energy supply chains, electric vehicles, batteries, and solar manufacturing.
- b. The global transition from fossil-fuel dependence to electrification is likely to benefit China more than many other major powers, thereby widening the capability gap with India.

### **Policy responses India should adopt**

#### **1. India should recalibrate expectations from the U.S.A partnership**

- a. India should continue selective cooperation with the U.S.A in defence modernisation, maritime domain awareness, and critical technologies.
- b. At the same time, India should avoid assuming that the U.S.A will provide unconditional support during regional crises involving China.

#### **2. India should maintain calibrated engagement with China**

- a. India should continue to insist that peace and stability along the Line of Actual Control remain a prerequisite for broader normalisation of bilateral relations.
- b. India should avoid accepting limited boundary settlements that may legitimise incremental territorial concessions.

#### **3. India should strengthen economic and technological resilience**

- a. India should reduce its dependence on China in critical manufacturing inputs and supply chains through diversification strategies.
- b. India should simultaneously avoid creating excessive technological dependence on the U.S.A in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence.

#### **4. India should avoid excessive reliance on middle-power coalitions**

- a. India should recognise that middle-power coalitions rarely shape global strategic rules and instead primarily pursue hedging strategies.
- b. India should therefore continue to pursue strategic autonomy supported by indigenous capability development.

## 5. India should revitalise neighbourhood and eastern engagement policies

- a. India should strengthen its Neighbourhood First Policy to prevent strategic encirclement in South Asia.
- b. India should reinvigorate its Act East Policy to deepen connectivity and cooperation with Southeast Asian partners.

**Conclusion:** India must increasingly shift from reliance on external balancing strategies towards strengthening its domestic military, economic, technological, and diplomatic capabilities in order to safeguard its long-term strategic autonomy in an evolving global order.

**Question:** “The recalibration of U.S.A –China relations is shrinking India’s strategic space.” Examine the implications of this shift and suggest policy responses India should adopt in the evolving global order.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

### Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right

**Source:** The post “**Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right**” has been created, based on “**Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 04th April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** The right to be considered for promotion is a judicially evolved constitutional principle derived from **Article 14 of the Constitution of India** and **Article 16(1) of the Constitution of India**, which guarantee equality before law and equal opportunity in matters of public employment. The judiciary has clarified that although promotion itself cannot be claimed as a fundamental right, every eligible government employee possesses a fundamental right to be fairly considered for promotion whenever vacancies arise. Recently, the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** reaffirmed this principle by holding that exclusion of an eligible employee from consideration by a Departmental Promotion Committee violates constitutional guarantees.

#### Constitutional Basis of the Right

1. The constitutional foundation of the right to be considered for promotion flows primarily from Articles 14 and 16(1).
2. **Article 14** ensures that state action must be non-arbitrary and based on fairness and reasonableness in administrative decisions affecting employees.
3. **Article 16(1)** guarantees equality of opportunity in matters relating to public employment, and the judiciary has interpreted employment to include not only recruitment but also career progression through promotions.
4. Therefore, denial of fair consideration for promotion to eligible employees amounts to a violation of equality principles under the Constitution.

#### Judicial Evolution of the Principle

##### 1. 1991 Supreme Court Judgment (Lift Irrigation Corporation Case)

- a. In the **State of Mysore v. Syed Mahmood (promotion principle clarification context)** line of reasoning, later reflected in the **Orissa Lift Irrigation Corporation Ltd. v. Rabi Sankar Patro**, the Supreme Court clarified that government employees do not possess a fundamental right to promotion.

- b. However, **the Court clearly held that employees possess a fundamental right to be considered for promotion in accordance with applicable service rules** whenever promotion opportunities arise.
- c. This judgment established the distinction between the right to promotion and the right to consideration for promotion.

### 2. 1999 Constitution Bench Judgment (Ajit Singh vs State of Punjab)

- a. In **Ajit Singh (II) v. State of Punjab**, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court strengthened the doctrine by holding that every eligible employee falling within the zone of consideration has a fundamental right to be considered for promotion under Article 16(1).
- b. The Court further **clarified that denial of such consideration constitutes a violation of the employee's personal fundamental rights**.

### 3. 2024 Supreme Court Judgment (Bihar State Electricity Board vs Dharamdeo Das)

- a. In **Bihar State Electricity Board v. Dharamdeo Das**, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that although the right to be considered for promotion is a fundamental right, employees cannot claim retrospective promotion automatically from the exact date when a vacancy arose.
- b. The Court **clarified that administrative delays do not create a vested right to promotion from the vacancy date, although the right to fair consideration must still be protected**.

### 4. Recent High Court Trends

- a. Several High Courts in recent years have relied upon this principle to address administrative delays in promotion processes.
- b. For instance, the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** granted notional retrospective promotion to a junior engineer after finding that he had been wrongly excluded from Departmental Promotion Committee consideration due to a misinterpretation of eligibility rules.
- c. Similarly, the **Himachal Pradesh High Court** and the **Manipur High Court** directed state authorities to ensure timely promotion consideration in cases where delays had adversely affected employees nearing retirement.

### How the Right Works in Practice

1. The right to be considered for promotion operates through institutional mechanisms such as Departmental Promotion Committees within government departments.
2. Eligible employees who fall within the prescribed zone of consideration must be evaluated fairly based on service rules and vacancy positions.
3. The government is required to convene Departmental Promotion Committee meetings regularly so that eligible candidates are not denied opportunities due to administrative delays.
4. Courts may grant notional promotions with retrospective effect if an employee is wrongly excluded from consideration.
5. However, this right does not guarantee actual promotion, and promotion decisions still depend on merit, seniority, eligibility criteria, and availability of vacancies.

### Challenges in Implementation

**1. Delay in Holding Departmental Promotion Committee Meetings:** Government departments often delay Departmental Promotion Committee meetings for several years, which results in stagnation of employees in the same posts despite eligibility.

**2. Misinterpretation of Service Rules:** Administrative authorities sometimes incorrectly interpret eligibility conditions, which leads to wrongful exclusion of employees from promotion consideration.

**3. Administrative Inefficiency:** Weak personnel management systems and poor record maintenance frequently slow down promotion processes in public administration.

**4. Increased Litigation Burden:** Employees are often compelled to approach courts to enforce their right to be considered for promotion, which increases judicial workload and delays relief.

**5. Retirement Before Consideration:** Many employees retire before their cases are considered by promotion committees, which results in loss of career advancement opportunities.

### Significance of the Principle

1. The recognition of the right to be considered for promotion strengthens transparency and fairness in public employment.
2. It promotes merit-based administrative functioning and improves morale among government employees.
3. It also reinforces accountability within administrative institutions and ensures compliance with constitutional guarantees of equality in service matters.
4. Thus, the principle plays an important role in maintaining administrative justice in India's public employment framework.

### Way Forward

1. Departmental Promotion Committee meetings should be conducted at regular and time-bound intervals to prevent unnecessary delays in promotion consideration.
2. Service rules governing promotion eligibility should be clarified to reduce ambiguity and administrative discretion.
3. Government departments should adopt digital personnel management systems for maintaining accurate service records and monitoring promotion eligibility automatically.
4. Administrative accountability mechanisms should be strengthened to fix responsibility for delays in promotion processes.
5. Courts may continue to exercise supervisory jurisdiction in cases involving repeated violations of promotion consideration rights.

**Conclusion:** The right to be considered for promotion reflects the constitutional commitment to equality and fairness in public employment under Articles 14 and 16(1). Although promotion itself cannot be claimed as a fundamental right, ensuring fair consideration protects career progression opportunities and strengthens the rule of law in public administration.

**Question:** "There is no fundamental right to promotion, but there is a fundamental right to be considered for promotion." Examine this statement in the context of Articles 14 and 16. Discuss the judicial evolution of this principle and the challenges in its implementation.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Fresh IBC Amendments: How Govt Looks to Plug Gaps in Insolvency Code

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

### Introduction

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026 aims to fix delays and gaps in the insolvency system. The IBC, enacted in 2016, created a time-bound process to resolve stressed companies. Over time, delays, backlog and low recovery reduced its effectiveness. The amendments focus on **faster admission, reduced litigation, stronger creditor control, and new frameworks like out-of-court, group and cross-border insolvency.**

### What is Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

1. **Purpose of IBC:** It provides a **time-bound mechanism to resolve defaulting companies**, either through revival or liquidation when revival is not possible.
2. **Core Objective:** It focuses on **resolution of financial stress and preservation of enterprise value**, not just recovery of dues.
3. **Evolution of the Framework:** The Code has been **amended six times earlier** to address stakeholder needs and emerging issues.

### Persistent Challenges in the Existing IBC Framework

1. **Delay in Admission of Cases:** The NCLT has a **14-day timeline** to admit cases, but in practice it takes **months**, delaying the start of resolution.
2. **Backlog and Litigation Delays:** Heavy case load and **procedural overlaps increased litigation**, slowing down the resolution process.
3. **Limited Recovery Outcomes:** As of December 2025, **1,376 companies were resolved**, with **₹4.11 lakh crore recovered**, but recovery is only **over 34% of claims**.
4. **Weak Alternatives to Formal Process:** Earlier options were either a **long NCLT process** or a **weak out-of-court system**, offering limited recovery certainty.

### Key Reforms Introduced under the IBC (Amendment) Bill, 2026

#### 1. Measures to Speed up Insolvency Process:

- (a) **Mandatory admission of cases:** The **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** must **admit applications once default is proven**, with no scope for rejection beyond procedural checks.

- (b) **Time-bound appellate process:** NCLAT must **dispose of appeals within 3 months**, reducing delays at the appellate stage.
- (c) **Reduction in litigation delays:** The reforms aim to **remove procedural overlaps and limit disputes**, ensuring faster progress of cases.

## 2. New Resolution Mechanisms and Expansion of Framework:

- (a) **Creditor-Initiated Insolvency Resolution Process (CIIRP):** Financial creditors with **51% approval** can start an out-of-court resolution, enabling early action and reducing burden on tribunals.
- (b) **Group insolvency framework:** It allows **coordinated resolution of related companies**, improving consistency and reducing uncertainty.
- (c) **Cross-border insolvency provisions:** It provides rules for **recognition, cooperation and coordination with foreign jurisdictions**, aligning with global practices.

## 3. Strengthening Governance and Institutional Mechanisms:

- (a) **No RP-liquidator overlap:** The **Resolution Professional (RP)** cannot act as a liquidator, removing conflict of interest.
- (b) **Enhanced role of Committee of Creditors (CoC):** The CoC gets **greater control and supervisory role during liquidation**, improving accountability.
- (c) **Empowerment of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI):** The regulator can **set timelines and standards for the CoC**, ensuring discipline in the process.

## 4. Legal Clarifications to Remove Ambiguity:

- (a) **Expanded definition of corporate debtor:** The term now includes **foreign entities with limited liability**, widening the scope of the Code.
- (b) **Clarity on secured creditor rights:** Creditors are treated as secured **only to the extent of the value of their security**, and inter-creditor priority agreements are respected.
- (c) **Clarification on government dues:** Government dues are placed **lower in the repayment order**, making the priority among creditors clear and reducing confusion.
- (d) **Clean slate principle codified:** The successful bidder gets a **fresh start without past liabilities**, ensuring effective resolution.

## 5. Measures to Improve Resolution Efficiency and Value:

- (a) **Two-stage approval of resolution plans:** Approval is split into **implementation first and distribution later**, reducing delays due to disputes among creditors.
- (b) **Flexible resolution structure:** Assets can be **sold in parts through different plans**, helping better value realisation.

- (c) **Provision for Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) restoration:** A **one-time restoration is allowed with 66% CoC approval**, within a fixed time period.
- (d) **Direct dissolution after failed process:** Companies can be **closed quickly with 66% CoC approval**, saving time.
- (e) **Transfer of guarantor assets:** Assets of guarantors can be **included in the resolution process**, improving recovery chances.
- (f) **Streamlined CIRP process:** Reduces duplicate steps and **gives more powers to the Resolution Professional**, making the process efficient.

#### 6. Rationalisation of Penalties and Process Discipline:

- A. **Shift from criminal to civil penalties:** Certain violations now attract **civil penalties instead of criminal punishment**, recognising that delays may not always be intentional.
- B. **Penalty for frivolous proceedings:** Strict penalties are imposed on **vexatious or unnecessary cases**, preventing misuse of the system.

#### Conclusion

The amendments aim to make the insolvency system **faster, more efficient and predictable**. They address delays, improve governance and introduce global practices. The reforms reinforce that **IBC is a resolution framework, not a recovery tool**, focused on preserving value. Effective implementation and institutional capacity will determine whether these changes deliver stronger outcomes.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to address delays and structural gaps in India's insolvency framework.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

### Time to Push for Rupee Internationalisation

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

#### Introduction

The rupee nearing the **95 per dollar mark** shows rising external pressure and highlights the need to increase global demand for the currency. At the same time, the use of rupee in foreign trade settlement has started in a limited way over the last four years. Global changes in payments and reserves now create a favourable situation to push rupee internationalisation.

#### Global Shift Towards De-dollarisation

1. **Impact of Geopolitical Events:** The Russia–Ukraine War led to Russia’s removal from **SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)**, forcing countries to rethink global payment dependence. The US–Israel–Iran conflict is further pushing countries to secure energy supplies and reduce reliance on the dollar.
2. **Declining Dominance of the Dollar:** The share of the dollar in global reserves fell from **64% in 2017 to 56.7% in 2025**, showing a steady decline. At the same time, its share in global payments remains high at around **50%**, due to its role as a reference currency.
3. **Rise of Alternative Reserve Assets:** The share of other currencies in reserves increased from **2.5% to 6.13%**, showing diversification. Gold reserves also rose sharply from **10% in 2015 to 23%**, emerging as a strong alternative.
4. **Decline in Foreign Investment in US Assets:** Foreign holdings of US treasury securities declined from **nearly 50% in 2014 to 32% (\$9 trillion)**. This shows reduced confidence in dollar-based assets.

### India’s Policy Push for Rupee Internationalisation

1. **Regulatory Measures by RBI:** The Reserve Bank of India allowed rupee invoicing and settlement of foreign trade in **July 2022**. In **December 2023**, it expanded this to allow cross-border trade settlement in rupee and local currencies with all partners.
2. **Bilateral Trade Arrangements:** India signed agreements with UAE, Indonesia, and Maldives to settle trade in local currencies. Trade with Russia, including oil and defence supplies, has been settled in rupee since 2022.
3. **Institutional Support through Banking Channels:** As of February 2025, **156 Special Rupee Vostro Accounts** were opened by **123 foreign banks across 30 countries**. Around **26 Indian banks** are involved in facilitating such transactions.
4. **Initial Progress in Rupee Usage:** Rupee invoicing reached **6.18% of exports (₹2.64 lakh crore)** between April–January FY26. It remained around **5.8–5.9% since FY24**, while imports invoiced in rupee stood at **4.69%**.

### Issues and Challenges Remain

1. **Gap Between Invoicing and Settlement:** Rupee settlement remains low, with **2.76% in exports and 2.32% in imports**, much below invoicing levels. This shows a clear gap between intent and actual usage.
2. **Dependence on Dollar-Based Systems:** The dominance of SWIFT makes global transactions dependent on Western-controlled systems. Countries excluded from it face serious constraints in international trade.
3. **Structural Advantage of the Dollar:** The dollar’s role as a reference currency in third-party trade increases its use in global invoicing. This makes it difficult for other currencies, including the rupee, to expand quickly.

4. **Emerging Systems with Limitations:** Alternatives like BRICS Pay face concerns such as dominance of certain countries. This limits trust and wider acceptance among participants.

### Way Forward

1. **Promote Bilateral Local Currency Trade:** Increasing settlement of trade in rupee and local currencies can reduce dependence on the dollar. This requires deeper agreements with trading partners.
2. **Develop Alternative Payment Systems:** Systems like CIPS and SPFS can be linked to create alternatives to SWIFT. Interoperability among these systems can improve efficiency.
3. **Leverage Digital Currency Platforms:** Central Bank Digital Currencies offer new channels for cross-border payments. Around **13 cross-border CBDC projects**, including Project mBridge, are already under development.
4. **Utilise Global Sentiment Against Dollar:** Growing dissatisfaction with US policies and sanctions creates a favourable environment. Countries are now more open to reducing dollar dependence and adopting alternatives.

### Conclusion

Global shifts, declining dollar dominance, and geopolitical tensions have created a strong case for rupee internationalisation. India has made policy progress, but settlement gaps remain. Expanding trade in rupee, building alternative systems, and using global sentiment can strengthen its role. The present moment offers a clear opportunity that must be used effectively.

### Question for practice:

Examine how global de-dollarisation trends and India's policy measures are shaping the prospects of rupee internationalisation, and discuss the key challenges that still remain.

Source: [Businessline](#)

### India's next social protection is care, not cash

Source: The post "India's next social protection is care, not cash" has been created, based on "India's next social protection is care, not cash" published in "BusinessLine" on 06th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

**Context:** India's social protection system has traditionally focused on **cash transfers, pensions, and food security**, ensuring basic consumption needs. These measures are insufficient to address the **daily realities of older adults**, such as loneliness, chronic illness, limited mobility, and lack of social support. The elderly population in India is projected to rise from **149 million in 2022 to 347 million by 2050**, accounting for over 20% of the total population. Therefore, there is an urgent need to integrate **care-based social protection** alongside financial support to ensure holistic well-being.

### Need for Care-Based Social Protection

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1. Cash transfers and pensions prevent hunger but **do not ensure access to medicines, regular health check-ups, or social engagement**.
2. Older adults living alone or in **migration-affected households** are especially vulnerable to social isolation and neglect.
3. Global evidence shows that societies that manage ageing populations effectively rely on a **community layer of long-term care**, rather than depending solely on hospitals or family care.
4. The World Health Organisation recommends a **continuum of home and community-based support** that helps older adults maintain **functional ability and dignity**.

### Leveraging Existing Platforms

1. India already has a strong network of **self-help groups (SHGs) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)**, which can be leveraged for community-based care.
2. These SHGs include over **102 million women in more than 9.2 million groups**, forming a **trusted and locally rooted network** capable of last-mile service delivery.
3. SHGs have experience in **financial inclusion, enterprise promotion, nutrition, health, and convergence with government schemes**, making them suitable for elder care interventions.
4. Current frontline workers like ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and ANMs provide **episodic services** and are not structured for continuous engagement with older adults.
5. There is a clear gap in **regular check-ins, functional monitoring, and ongoing assistance**, which SHGs can fill effectively.

### Proposal for Community-Based Care Layer

1. SHG members can be trained to provide **non-clinical, community-based elder care**, functioning as care coordinators.
2. Their responsibilities can include:
  - a. Conducting regular social check-ins to reduce **loneliness and isolation**.
  - b. Early identification of **health risks or functional decline** and referral to appropriate services.
  - c. Assisting older adults in accessing **pensions, entitlements, and healthcare services**.
  - d. Facilitating linkages with **local health systems and frontline workers**.
3. Integrating elder care within SHG activities ensures it is part of a **broader wellbeing agenda**, rather than a standalone program.

### Benefits of Community-Based Care

1. It **closes a major gap in the social safety net**, as pensions alone do not ensure functional ability or independence.
2. It creates **dignified employment for women**, formalising previously unpaid caregiving roles.
3. It reduces strain on the health system by **ensuring treatment adherence, preventing hospitalisations, and flagging early warning signs**.
4. Regular engagement addresses **mental health challenges and loneliness**, enhancing dignity and social inclusion.
5. The model is **cost-effective**, as it builds on existing SHG infrastructure rather than creating new, expensive facilities.

### Examples and Evidence

1. Programs like **Pune's Vriddha Mitra** and **Kerala's Kudumbashree** demonstrate that community-based elder care can be **organised, skilled, and scaled effectively**.
2. A **phased, targeted approach** should prioritise remote or migration-prone areas where older adults face the greatest isolation.
3. Implementation must consider **local realities and service gaps** to ensure the care model is effective in diverse rural and semi-urban contexts.

### Challenges and Sustainability

1. Potential challenges include **overburdening SHG members, uneven quality of care, and coordination issues with health systems**.
2. These challenges can be addressed through **clear role definitions, structured training, supervision, and predictable compensation**.
3. Care must be treated as a **core function of social protection**, not an optional add-on, to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

### Way Forward

1. The government should formally recognise **community-based elder care** as an integral part of social protection.
2. A **phased implementation strategy** should focus first on high-need areas such as remote or migration-affected regions.
3. Investment must be made in **capacity building and training** of SHG members and local cadres to maintain quality and accountability.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** should be established to track outcomes related to well-being, functional ability, and social inclusion.
5. Care programs should be integrated with existing health and welfare schemes to ensure **continuity and coordination of services**.
6. Encouraging **community participation and awareness** can foster ownership and sustainability of elder care initiatives.

**Conclusion:** India has the institutional foundation through **NRLM and SHGs** to extend social protection from cash to care. A **structured community-based care layer** can safeguard the **dignity, functional ability, and well-being** of older adults while reducing pressure on the health system. The focus must shift from scale alone to **sustained, trust-based, community-driven care**, ensuring older adults live with dignity, security, and social inclusion.

**Question:** In the context of India's ageing population, discuss the need for community-based care as a social protection measure beyond cash transfers. How can existing institutional platforms be leveraged for this purpose?

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

### Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026

Source: The post "**Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026**" has been created, based on "**Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026**" published in "**PIB**" on 06th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

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**Context:** The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026** is a continuation of India's efforts to modernise its regulatory framework by **reducing criminalisation of minor procedural lapses**. It proposes amendments in **79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries**, covering **784 provisions**, including 717 for decriminalisation and 67 for improving ease of living. The Bill replaces criminal penalties for minor offences with **civil penalties, warnings, or administrative mechanisms**, making the legal system **more practical, citizen-friendly, and balanced**. This reform builds upon the **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023**, expanding the scope of decriminalisation based on recommendations from a **Parliamentary Select Committee**.

### Objectives of the Bill

1. The Bill aims to **reduce excessive criminalisation**, focusing on **compliance rather than punishment**.
2. It seeks to **simplify regulatory processes**, ensuring that minor lapses do not lead to disproportionate legal consequences.
3. It introduces a **trust-based, proportionate enforcement mechanism** for both citizens and businesses.

### Pillars of the Bill

1. **Warning before Punishment:** First-time and minor lapses are addressed through advisory notices or warnings before penalties.
2. **Proportionate Penalties:** Penalties are **graded based on the severity of the offence**, ensuring fairness and avoiding unnecessary criminalisation.
3. **Faster and Fair Resolution:** Dedicated **adjudicating officers and appellate authorities** provide swift dispute resolution while reducing court burdens.
4. **Dynamic Penalty Framework:** Penalties are **periodically revised** to ensure they remain relevant, effective, and responsive.

### Citizen-Centric Reforms

1. Minor everyday lapses now attract **civil penalties instead of criminal fines**, making the legal system simpler and fairer.
2. Examples include:
  - **Railways Act, 1989:** Refusing to vacate a reserved berth attracts a civil penalty of ₹1,000.
  - **Clinical Establishments Act, 2010:** Minor deficiencies attract civil penalties up to ₹10,000.
  - **Calcutta Metro Railway Act, 1985:** Smoking violations attract civil penalties of ₹2,000.
3. **Ease of Living Provisions:**
  - **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988:** Drivers get a **30-day grace period** after licence expiry.
  - **NDMC Property Tax:** Standardises taxation using the **Unit Area Method**.
  - **Accident Compensation:** Victims can approach the Claims Tribunal **12 months beyond the deadline** if sufficient cause exists.
  - **Delhi Police Act, 1978:** Being outdoors at night no longer attracts criminal liability.
  - **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988:** Ticketing violations are now administrative with civil penalties up to ₹500.

### Ease of Doing Business Provisions

1. The Bill introduces **graded enforcement mechanisms** for businesses to correct minor lapses before facing penalties.

2. Examples include:
  - **Tea Act, 1953:** First-time procedural lapses get warnings; penalties apply only to repeated offences.
  - **Copyright Act, 1957:** False entries in the Register of Copyrights no longer attract imprisonment.
3. **MSME Benefits:**
  - **Legal Metrology Act, 2009:** First-time lapses trigger improvement notices, not penalties.
  - **Private Security Agencies Act, 2005:** Criminal fines for minor procedural lapses removed.
  - **Delivery of Books and Newspapers Act:** Warnings introduced for delayed submissions.
4. Export and trade sectors also benefit, e.g., the **APEDA Act, 1985**, where minor procedural lapses now follow a **warning-and-penalty framework**.
5. Outdated provisions like licensing under the **Coir Industry Act, 1953** have been removed to reduce compliance burdens for small businesses.

### Key Legislative Changes

1. **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** Imprisonment replaced with civil penalties for procedural lapses.
2. **Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957:** Minor civic offences converted to civil penalties; outdated provisions removed.
3. **Apprentices Act, 1961:** Introduces a three-stage enforcement mechanism—advisory notice, warning, and monetary penalty.
4. Other amended laws include the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985**, the **Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950**, and the **MMDR Act, 1957**, replacing imprisonment with civil penalties or removing minor offences entirely.

### Benefits of the Bill

1. Reduces **unnecessary criminalisation** for citizens and businesses.
2. Promotes **predictable, proportionate, and trust-based enforcement**.
3. Improves **ease of living** by ensuring minor lapses do not lead to criminal proceedings.
4. Enhances **ease of doing business** by allowing MSMEs and enterprises to correct procedural errors before penalties.
5. Encourages **voluntary compliance** while maintaining strict enforcement for serious offences.

### Way Forward

1. The government should ensure the **effective implementation** of graded enforcement mechanisms across all ministries and sectors.
2. Continuous **awareness campaigns** are needed to educate citizens and businesses about civil penalties and compliance requirements.
3. Periodic review of penalties should ensure they **remain relevant and proportionate** to the severity of offences.
4. Integration with **digital compliance platforms** can simplify reporting and reduce administrative delays.
5. Monitoring mechanisms should assess the **impact on ease of living and ease of doing business**, ensuring reforms achieve their intended outcomes.

**Conclusion:** The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, modernises India's legal framework by **removing criminal penalties for minor procedural lapses**. By introducing **graded enforcement mechanisms**, civil penalties, and warnings, the Bill ensures a **balanced and trust-based regulatory environment**. The reforms improve both **ease of living and ease of doing business**, while serious offences continue to attract appropriate penalties. Overall, the Bill promotes a **predictable, fair, and citizen-friendly legal system**, encouraging compliance over punishment.

**Question:** Examine the key features and objectives of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026. How does it contribute to ease of living and ease of doing business in India?

Source: [PIB](#)

## Transforming India's Nuclear Power Landscape

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

### Introduction

India plans a major expansion of nuclear power from **8,180 MW to 100 GW by 2047**. This shift is linked to **Viksit Bharat 2047** and **net-zero emissions by 2070**. The **SHANTI Act, 2025** replaces earlier laws and opens the sector to private participation. Nuclear energy is now seen as a key source for reliable and low-carbon electricity.

### Current Status of Nuclear Energy in India

- Limited share in energy mix:** Nuclear capacity is about **8.8 GW** and contributes only **3% of electricity generation**, showing a very small role.
- Electricity capacity distribution:** Total capacity reached **476 GW in June 2025**, with **50% non-fossil sources** and **240 GW thermal power**.
- Generation imbalance:** Thermal power produces **75% of electricity**, while renewables with 50% capacity generate only 22%, and nuclear produces **57 TWh**.
- Indigenised technology base:** India operates **24 reactors**, mainly **PHWRs**, upgraded from **220 MW to 700 MW designs**.
- Low cost advantage:** The **700 MW PHWR cost is \$2 million per MW**, among the lowest globally.

### Why Nuclear Energy is Central to India's Energy Transition

- Rising electricity demand:** Per capita electricity generation is **1,418 kWh**, far below **China (7,097 kWh)** and **USA (12,701 kWh)**.
- Low electrification share:** Per capita energy consumption is **7,893 kWh**, but only one-fifth is electricity, showing future demand growth.
- Net-zero requirement:** Climate goals require moving away from fossil fuels to low-carbon sources.

4. **Limitations of renewables:** Renewable generation depends on **climate, season, and geography**, and needs large storage investments.
5. **Land intensity issue:** Solar and wind require **10 times more land** compared to thermal plants.
6. **Need for baseload power:** Nuclear is a stable and low-carbon source, suitable for large-scale energy needs.

#### Initiative Taken

1. **Policy push for nuclear expansion:** The government set a target of **100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047**, linking nuclear energy with **Viksit Bharat and net-zero goals**.
2. **Legal transformation of the sector:** The **SHANTI Act, 2025** replaces the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** and the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010**, and allows **private and foreign participation**.
3. **Financial support and investment push:** Expansion requires over **\$200 billion investment**, and reforms aim to attract both **domestic and foreign private capital**.
4. **Institutional strengthening and regulatory reform:** The **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) is given statutory status**, and the framework attempts separation between **civilian and strategic nuclear activities**.
5. **Technological development and innovation:** ₹20,000 crore is allocated for **indigenous Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) (5 MW, 55 MW, 200 MW)**, along with focus on **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) scaling and advanced reactor research**.
6. **Operational expansion and deployment strategy:** Approval for **10 PHWR reactors (700 MW each)** under fleet mode, promotion of **modular construction**, and use of nuclear power for **captive industrial needs**.

#### What are the Challenges for Nuclear Expansion

1. **Huge investment requirement:** Expanding capacity by 90 GW needs over **\$200 billion (₹18 lakh crore)**.
2. **Project delays:** Approved projects like fleet mode reactors have **not yet started construction**.
3. **High cost of imported designs:** Foreign reactors may cost over **\$5 million per MW**, making them expensive.
4. **Slow international collaboration:** Projects at **Jaitapur, Mithi Viridi and Kovvada** remain delayed for over a decade.
5. **Financing complexity:** Nuclear power has **high upfront cost but low operating cost over 60 years**, requiring new financial models.

6. **Regulatory gaps:** Issues like **tariffs, fuel ownership, waste management, insurance, and dispute resolution** remain unclear.
7. **Institutional limitations:** AERB lacks full independence and needs stronger regulatory authority.

### Way Forward

1. **Indigenisation of technology:** Foreign reactor designs need adaptation to reduce cost and improve efficiency.
2. **Expand PHWR deployment:** The **220 MW PHWR model** can be modularised and used widely.
3. **Promote SMRs:** Small reactors can replace **fossil-fuel based captive power plants (90 GW capacity)**.
4. **Industrial adoption:** Sectors like **steel, cement, petrochemicals, and data centres** show growing interest.
5. **Strengthen R&D:** Focus on **molten-salt reactors and thorium-based fuel with HALEU (High Assay Low Enriched Uranium)**.
6. **Reform regulations:** Clear rules needed for **civilian and strategic separation**, tariffs, and safety.
7. **Flexible site norms:** Modify **exclusion zone rules** for small and single-unit reactors.

### Conclusion

India's nuclear expansion depends on effective implementation of reforms and strong regulatory clarity. The SHANTI Act creates a new framework, but success needs investment, technology and policy support. Nuclear power can ensure reliable and clean energy, support economic growth, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels if execution remains timely and consistent.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the need for expanding nuclear power in India and examine how the SHANTI Act, 2025 aims to transform India's nuclear energy landscape along with its key challenges and way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Elastic rules: On the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environmental pollution and degradation

### Introduction:

India's Plastic Waste Management framework has evolved since 2016 to reduce plastic pollution. The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regime set strict collection targets up to **100% by 2024-25**. However, the 2026 amendments introduce flexibility in compliance, such as carry-forward provisions and tradable certificates.

This shift raises concerns about enforcement, accountability, and the actual reduction of plastic waste despite rising recycling mandates.

### Evolution of the Regulatory Framework

1. **Continuously evolving regulatory framework:** The Plastic Waste Management Rules are not a single static law. They have been updated since **2016**, with amendments in **2018, 2021, 2022, and 2025-26**, showing constant policy evolution.
2. **Gradual tightening of compliance:** Each amendment has increased obligations, reduced flexibility, and pushed businesses to improve waste management practices.
3. **Introduction of EPR framework (2022):** The Extended Producer Responsibility made producers, importers, and brand owners responsible for managing plastic waste generated from their products.
4. **Phased increase in collection targets:** Targets were raised from **35% (2021-22) to 70% (2022-23) and 100% by 2024-25**, aiming for full waste recovery.
5. **Focus on reducing plastic leakage:** The framework aims to limit plastic dumping in landfills, rivers, and oceans by enforcing collection and recycling.

### Key Features of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026

1. **Mandatory recycled content targets:** Producers, importers, and brand owners must use a fixed share of recycled plastic in packaging. Category I (rigid plastic) requires **30% in 2025-26, rising to 60% by 2028-29**.
2. **Category-wise targets for plastics:** Category II (flexible plastic) must meet **10% recycled content, increasing to 20%**, while Category III (multi-layered plastic) must meet **5%, rising to 10%**, reflecting differences in recyclability.
3. **Reuse obligations introduced:** The rules mandate reuse targets for rigid packaging. For 2025-26, reuse includes **10% for small containers (0.9-4.9 litres), 70% for large water packaging, and 10% for large non-water packaging**, with gradual increases.
4. **Carry-forward of compliance targets:** Companies that fail to meet targets in 2025-26 can carry forward the shortfall for **three years (till 2028-29)**, provided at least one-third of the gap is met annually.
5. **Tradable certificate mechanism:** A system of trading certificates allows companies to meet obligations by purchasing credits from those exceeding targets, reducing the need to recycle their own plastic waste.
6. **Exemptions for regulated sectors:** Recycled content requirements do not apply where regulations like food safety standards restrict the use of recycled plastic, especially in food and beverage packaging.
7. **Clear definitions and regulatory clarity:** The amendment defines terms such as **“reuse,” “end-of-life disposal,” and “plastic waste processors”**, reducing ambiguity in implementation.

8. **Quality standards and labelling norms:** Recycled plastic packaging must comply with **Indian Standard IS 14534:2023** and carry labels indicating recycled content.
9. **Digital monitoring and decentralised enforcement:** Implementation involves monitoring through a centralised portal, audits by registered environmental auditors, and enforcement by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and State-level committees.

### Key Concerns and Criticisms

1. **Underlying material challenge:** Plastic is cheap, flexible, and widely used, but these same features make its collection and reuse difficult.
2. **Dilution of annual compliance discipline:** The carry-forward provision allows firms to meet **2025–26 targets by 2028–29**, reducing yearly pressure and delaying outcomes.
3. **Mismatch between targets and actual performance:** While targets reached **100% collection by 2024–25**, actual achievement remains only **50–60%**, showing weak enforcement.
4. **Lack of credible data systems:** There is no verified public dataset, and reporting relies mainly on self-declarations.
5. **Shift from enforcement to flexibility:** Focus appears to move from strict collection to use of recycled content, regardless of source.
6. **Risk from tradable certificates:** Companies may meet targets on paper without reducing their own plastic footprint.
7. **Fake certificate problem:** Over **6,00,000 fake certificates** were found, showing serious flaws in monitoring.
8. **Exclusion of key sectors:** Food and beverage packaging may escape regulation due to safety restrictions on recycled plastic.

### Implementation Gaps and Ground Reality

1. **Reuse targets lack strong enforcement backing:** Reuse obligations exist but may remain ineffective without proper tracking of collection and recycling.
2. **High plastic waste generation:** Around **4.13 million tonnes of plastic waste** was generated in 2022–23, showing continued pressure.
3. **Recycling progress but incomplete:** About **20.7 million tonnes** of waste has been recycled since 2022, but full coverage is missing.
4. **Weak enforcement of plastic bans:** Around **84% of surveyed locations** still use banned single-use plastics.
5. **Consumer demand as driver:** About **91% vendors report demand for carry bags**, making transition difficult.

6. **Cost and perception issues:** Alternatives are costlier, and consumers see single-use plastics as more hygienic.
7. **Better compliance in formal sector:** Organised retail performs better than informal markets, where enforcement is weaker.

### Way Forward

1. **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms:** Regular inspections, coordinated action, and strict penalties are needed to ensure compliance.
2. **Improve monitoring systems:** Reliable data systems and independent audits are required to verify actual recycling and collection.
3. **Control supply of banned plastics:** Limiting production and availability is necessary to reduce continued usage.
4. **Support sustainable alternatives:** Improve availability and affordability of eco-friendly substitutes through local production and supply chains.
5. **Promote behaviour change:** Awareness campaigns should address consumer preferences and encourage reusable options.
6. **Assist small vendors:** Financial and policy support is needed to help small businesses shift away from plastic use.
7. **Ensure accountability in EPR:** Clear targets beyond 2025 and strict enforcement of collection obligations are required.

### Conclusion

The 2026 amendments introduce flexibility but weaken accountability in plastic waste management. Carry-forward provisions, weak monitoring, and reliance on certificates risk undermining EPR goals. Without strict enforcement, reliable data, and stronger compliance systems, the focus on recycled content may not reduce actual waste. Strengthening implementation is essential to achieve real environmental outcomes.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026 in addressing plastic waste in India, in light of flexible compliance provisions and existing implementation challenges.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Advancing India's Fisheries Sector

Source: The post "Advancing India's Fisheries Sector" has been created, based on "Advancing India's Fisheries Sector" published in "PIB" on 07th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

**Context:** India is the **second-largest fish-producing country in the world**, contributing nearly **8% of global fish production**. The fisheries sector contributes about **7.43% to Agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA)** and supports the livelihoods of nearly **three crore people**, especially in coastal and rural regions. Over the past decade, the sector has witnessed significant transformation through **policy interventions, infrastructure development, financial inclusion initiatives, and digital governance reforms**.

### Growth Trends and Economic Importance

1. India's fish production increased from **95.79 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024-25**, reflecting a growth of about **106%**.
2. India's seafood exports reached **₹62,408 crore in 2024-25**, with frozen shrimp emerging as the dominant export commodity.
3. The fisheries sector plays an important role in ensuring **nutritional security, employment generation, rural diversification, and export competitiveness**.

### Role of Institutional Reforms in Fisheries Development

#### 1. Blue Revolution (2015)

- a. The Blue Revolution repositioned fisheries as a **strategic sector for livelihood enhancement and economic growth**.
  - b. It strengthened infrastructure development and promoted modern aquaculture practices across inland and marine fisheries.
- #### 2. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)
- a. PMMSY serves as the **central pillar of fisheries sector development**, with an allocation of **₹2,500 crore in 2026-27**.
  - b. The scheme promotes **production enhancement, infrastructure modernization, value chain strengthening, and traceability systems**.
  - c. It has supported the development of **aquaculture ponds, reservoir cages, fish retail markets, cold storage facilities, and transport infrastructure**.

#### 3. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)

- a. PM-MKSSY promotes **formalisation, insurance coverage, quality assurance, and access to institutional finance**.
- b. The scheme has an outlay of **₹6,000 crore between 2023-27**.
- c. It strengthens market integration and improves income stability of fishers and aquaculture farmers.

#### 4. Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)

- a. FIDF supports the creation of **fishing harbours, landing centres, cold-chain infrastructure, and fish processing units**.
- b. Around **225 infrastructure projects worth ₹6,685 crore** have been approved under the scheme.
- c. These projects have improved landing facilities and generated employment opportunities across the fisheries value chain.

### Role of Investment Support

1. The **Union Budget 2026–27** allocated **₹2,761.80 crore**, which is the highest-ever allocation for the fisheries sector.
2. Investments in **Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS)** and **Bio-floc technology** have promoted water-efficient and high-density fish production.
3. Infrastructure development such as **fish landing centres, cold-chain logistics, feed mills, processing facilities, and retail fish markets** has strengthened the fisheries value chain.

#### Role of Financial Inclusion and Risk Mitigation

1. The extension of the **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** scheme to fisheries has improved access to institutional credit for fishers.
2. The lending limit under the scheme has been increased from **₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh**.
3. The scheme has benefited **4.39 lakh fishers**, thereby improving working capital availability.
4. Insurance coverage has been extended to **3.3 million beneficiaries**, strengthening social security.
5. Livelihood assistance has been provided to **7.44 lakh fisher families during lean fishing periods**.

#### Role of Digital Governance

##### 1. National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP)

- a. NFDP provides a **single-window digital interface** for accessing institutional credit, insurance services, incentives, and training programmes.
- b. The platform has registered more than **30.60 lakh fisheries stakeholders**.
- c. It strengthens transparency, traceability, and data-driven decision-making in fisheries governance.

##### 2. Marine Fisheries Census 2025

- a. The Marine Fisheries Census 2025 introduced **geo-referenced digital enumeration of fisher households**.
- b. It provides reliable socio-economic data to support targeted welfare delivery and policy formulation.

#### Role of Institutional Strengthening and Inclusive Development

1. The Government has supported the formation of **2,195 Fisheries Farmer Producer Organisations (FFPOs)** to improve collective bargaining power and market access.
2. Nutritional and livelihood support has been extended to **4.33 lakh fisher families during the fishing ban periods**.
3. Fisheries-related schemes have generated approximately **74.66 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities since 2014–15**.
4. Integration of fisheries with **Amrit Sarovars and inland reservoirs** has supported livelihood diversification and ecosystem restoration.

#### Challenges in the Fisheries Sector

1. The fisheries sector faces challenges of **overfishing and depletion of marine resources**, particularly in coastal regions.
2. Climate change is affecting **fish breeding cycles, migration patterns, and marine ecosystems**, reducing productivity.

3. There are significant **regional disparities in infrastructure availability**, especially between coastal and inland fisheries.
4. Small-scale and traditional fishers continue to face **limited access to institutional credit, insurance, and modern technology**.
5. The sector remains highly dependent on **shrimp exports**, making it vulnerable to international market fluctuations.
6. Post-harvest losses remain high due to **inadequate cold-chain infrastructure and processing facilities**.
7. There is limited awareness and adoption of **digital platforms like NFDP among grassroots fisher communities**.
8. Inland fisheries potential remains **underutilised despite large reservoir resources**.

### Way Forward

1. The Government should promote **climate-resilient fisheries infrastructure and ecosystem-based fisheries management practices**.
2. Greater investment is required in **cold-chain logistics, storage, and fish processing infrastructure** to reduce post-harvest losses.
3. Export diversification should be encouraged to reduce dependence on shrimp exports.
4. Institutional credit coverage should be expanded further to include **small-scale, traditional, and women fishers**.
5. Digital literacy programmes should be strengthened to improve the effective utilisation of platforms like NFDP.
6. Sustainable fishing practices supported by **scientific stock assessments and community participation** should be promoted.
7. Greater participation of **women, cooperatives, startups, and Fisheries Farmer Producer Organisations** should be encouraged to ensure inclusive growth.
8. Inland fisheries development should be accelerated through better utilisation of **reservoirs, Amrit Sarovars, and aquaculture technologies**.

**Conclusion:** India's fisheries sector is undergoing a structural transformation through **institutional reforms, investment expansion, financial inclusion initiatives, and digital governance mechanisms**. Addressing existing structural challenges while strengthening sustainability and inclusiveness will help India realise the full potential of its fisheries sector and advance the goals of the **blue economy and SDG-14 (Life Below Water)**.

**Question:** Discuss how institutional reforms, investment support, and digital governance are transforming India's fisheries sector. Also examine the challenges faced by the sector and suggest measures for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Source: [PIB](#)

### Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states

**Source:** The post "**Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states**" has been created, based on "**Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 07th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

**Context:** The **Sixteenth Finance Commission of India** has recommended fiscal transfers for the period **2026–31**, with a stronger focus on local bodies and performance-linked grants. While strengthening grassroots decentralisation is important, several recommendations have raised concerns regarding the **reduced fiscal autonomy of states and weakening statutory fiscal federalism**.

### Positive Contributions of the Sixteenth Finance Commission

#### 1. Strengthening Local Bodies

- a. The Commission recommended nearly **₹7.91 lakh crore** for **panchayats and urban local bodies**, significantly increasing third-tier transfers.
- b. The grants include **80% basic grants and 20% performance-linked grants**, encouraging accountability and service delivery improvements.
- c. Urbanisation-linked incentives support infrastructure development in rapidly growing cities.

**2. Promoting Fiscal Discipline and Performance:** The introduction of performance-linked grants encourages **efficient utilisation of funds and improved governance outcomes**. This approach aligns fiscal transfers with measurable development indicators.

**3. Continuity in Vertical Devolution Share:** The Commission retained **41% tax devolution to states**, maintaining continuity with the **Fifteenth Finance Commission of India** framework. This ensured predictability in Centre–State fiscal transfers.

### Concerns Regarding Fiscal Federal Balance

#### 1. Decline in Effective Share of States

- a. Although the nominal share remained **41%**, the effective share declined from about **36% to nearly 32%** due to changes in the divisible pool composition.
- b. The increasing reliance on **cesses and surcharges**, which are excluded from the divisible pool, reduces actual transfers to states.

#### 2. Changes in Horizontal Devolution Criteria

- a. Fourteen states, especially **smaller and northeastern states**, received lower shares compared to previous Finance Commission allocations.
- b. This reduction may adversely affect fiscally weaker regions and widen regional disparities.

#### 3. Discontinuation of Revenue Deficit Grants

- a. The discontinuation of **revenue deficit grants** weakens fiscal support for structurally weaker states.
- b. These grants previously ensured minimum resource availability for states with limited fiscal capacity.

#### 4. Removal of Sector-Specific and State-Specific Grants

- a. The discontinuation of grants under **Article 275(1)** reduces targeted support for:
  - tribal welfare
  - special area administration

- backward regions
- b. These grants historically formed the **equity pillar of fiscal federalism**.

### 5. Shift Toward Discretionary Transfers

- a. The increasing use of grants under **Article 282** expands discretionary transfers instead of statutory transfers.
- b. Discretionary transfers reduce predictability and increase dependence of states on the Union government.

### 6. Expanding Role of the Third Tier in Fiscal Transfers

- a. The Commission significantly increased allocations to **panchayats and municipalities**, treating them as major stakeholders in fiscal transfers.
- b. However, local bodies remain constitutionally subordinate to states despite recognition under the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act** and **74th Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- c. Excessive central transfers to local bodies may weaken the fiscal authority of states.

### 7. Inadequate Response to Post-GST Fiscal Realities

- a. The Commission did not sufficiently address challenges arising from the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, such as:
  - IGST settlement issues
  - destination-based taxation effects
  - revenue asymmetries across states
- b. Producer states have particularly faced revenue adjustments after GST implementation.

### 8. Increasing Central Leverage Through Conditional Transfers

- a. The shift from formula-based statutory transfers to performance-based conditional transfers enhances central discretion.
- b. This weakens cooperative federalism and increases fiscal centralisation.

### Constitutional Concerns Raised

1. The Constitution envisages **states as primary fiscal partners** in federal governance under **Part VI**.
2. Local bodies derive authority through state legislatures and are not constitutionally equal fiscal units.
3. Treating the third tier at par with states risks altering the **federal balance envisaged in the Constitution**.

### Challenges Emerging from the Recommendations

1. Shrinking divisible pool due to increased reliance on **cesses and surcharges** reduces fiscal space for states.
2. Removal of revenue deficit grants affects **fiscally weaker states disproportionately**.
3. Greater reliance on discretionary transfers increases **uncertainty in fiscal planning**.
4. Reduced horizontal shares for northeastern states may widen **regional inequalities**.

5. Limited alignment with GST realities weakens fiscal equalisation mechanisms.
6. Direct transfers to local bodies may create **administrative overlap and coordination challenges** with states.

### Way Forward

1. The divisible pool should be expanded by **bringing cesses and surcharges partially within the devolution framework**.
2. Revenue deficit grants should be redesigned as **equalisation grants based on multiple indicators such as backwardness, tribal population, and infrastructure gaps**.
3. Finance Commission recommendations should better reflect **post-GST fiscal realities**, including destination-based taxation effects.
4. Transfers to local bodies should be routed in coordination with states to preserve the **federal chain of accountability**.
5. A transparent framework should be developed to balance **statutory transfers under Article 275 and discretionary transfers under Article 282**.
6. Strengthening **intergovernmental fiscal institutions such as the GST Council** can improve cooperative fiscal federalism.

**Conclusion:** The Sixteenth Finance Commission has made important strides in strengthening grassroots decentralisation and performance-linked governance. However, the shift toward discretionary transfers and reduced statutory fiscal support to states raises concerns about the evolving balance of fiscal federalism. A calibrated approach that strengthens **states alongside local bodies** is essential for sustaining India's cooperative and competitive federal structure.

**Question:** The Sixteenth Finance Commission's recommendations strengthen local bodies but raise concerns about fiscal federal balance. Examine the implications of recent Finance Commission recommendations on Centre-State fiscal relations and cooperative federalism.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

## Climate Change as a Public Health Emergency

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure**

### Introduction

Climate change is no longer limited to environmental concerns. It has become a **broad public health crisis**, affecting diseases, nutrition, and human survival. It intensifies existing illnesses and creates new risks. In India, its impact is already visible through changing disease patterns, unsafe water, rising heat stress, and food insecurity. This makes climate change a **present and urgent medical emergency** that affects all aspects of human health.

### Emerging Public Health Scenario

1. **Water stress and disease exposure:** Frequent waterlogging in cities like Mumbai contaminates clean water and increases diseases such as **cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A, and leptospirosis**.

2. **Drought and unsafe water use:** Water scarcity forces communities to use unsafe sources, increasing **diarrhoeal diseases and chronic dehydration**.
3. **Shifting disease patterns:** Changing temperature and rainfall disrupt disease cycles, increasing **infections, allergies, and vector-borne diseases**.
4. **Expansion of vector-borne diseases:** Rising temperatures allow mosquitoes to survive longer, leading to **higher dengue cases and spread of malaria into new regions like Himachal Pradesh**.
5. **Air pollution and heat stress rise:** Higher temperatures increase energy use and emissions, raising **PM2.5 levels and heat-related deaths in regions like Odisha, Telangana, and Vidarbha**.

#### Underlying Drivers of the Crisis

1. **Changing climate patterns:** Irregular rainfall, floods, and droughts disrupt natural systems and increase health risks.
2. **Rising temperatures:** Warmer conditions expand disease zones and increase **heat stress on the human body and livestock**.
3. **Increased energy use and emissions:** Greater use of air conditioning raises greenhouse gases and **fine particulate pollution (PM2.5)**.
4. **Environmental degradation:** Climate stress weakens air, water, and soil quality, affecting **basic determinants of health**.
5. **Weak preparedness of health systems:** New disease regions lack immunity and health systems are **not prepared to respond at scale**.

#### Public Health Consequences

1. **Multi-organ health impact of pollution:** PM2.5 particles enter the lungs and bloodstream, causing **asthma, COPD, heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage**.
2. **Heat stress and mortality:** Heat forces the body to work harder, increasing **hypertension, heart attacks, and stroke**, especially among outdoor workers.
3. **Loss of recovery time due to night heat:** Rising night temperatures in cities like Delhi-NCR and Mumbai reduce the body's ability to cool down.
4. **Infant and maternal health risks:** Exposure to heat and pollution increases **preterm births and low birth weight**.
5. **Food insecurity and malnutrition:** Extreme weather reduces crop output and quality, causing **micronutrient deficiency and chronic malnutrition**, especially in children.
6. **Decline in milk production:** Heat stress reduces cattle productivity, weakening **child nutrition and immunity**.

7. **Widening inequality and vulnerability:** Poor communities, children, elderly, and labourers face **higher exposure and lower capacity to cope**.
8. **Global scale of health risk:** 3.6 billion people live in **highly vulnerable areas**, and death rates from extreme events are **15 times higher in vulnerable regions**.

#### Systemic Impact on Health Systems and Society

1. **Threat to health infrastructure and workforce:** Climate stress reduces the ability of systems to provide **universal health coverage (UHC)**.
2. **Rising economic burden of healthcare:** Over **930 million people spend at least 10% of income on health**, and **100 million fall into poverty each year** due to health costs.
3. **Disruption of social determinants of health:** Climate change affects **livelihoods, food systems, water access, and social support systems**.
4. **Mental health impacts:** Climate shocks lead to **anxiety, stress, and long-term mental health disorders**.
5. **Threat to development gains:** Climate change risks reversing **decades of progress in health, poverty reduction, and development**.
6. **Inequality and vulnerability:** Poor communities, children, elderly, and migrants face **higher risks despite contributing least to emissions**.

#### Way Forward

1. **Recognising health as central to climate action:** Climate policy must place **public health at its core**.
2. **Reducing emissions with health co-benefits:** Promote clean energy and reduce pollution to improve **air quality and overall health**.
3. **Building climate-resilient health systems:** Strengthen infrastructure, workforce, and ensure **sustainable and resilient healthcare delivery**.
4. **Improving surveillance and preparedness:** Develop systems to track and respond to **heat stress and infectious diseases**.
5. **Ensuring water, food, and nutrition security:** Strengthen systems that support **safe water and stable food supply**.
6. **Global temperature control:** Limiting warming to **1.5°C is critical** to prevent severe health impacts.
7. **Equity-based approach:** Prioritise vulnerable populations who face **higher risks despite contributing least to emissions**.

#### Conclusion

Climate change is already a **serious public health emergency** affecting disease patterns, nutrition, and survival. Its impacts are widespread and unequal, hitting vulnerable populations the hardest. Delayed action will increase risks and reverse health gains. Recognising climate change as a health crisis and strengthening systems is essential to protect lives and ensure long-term human well-being.

### Question for Practice:

**Q.** Discuss how climate change has emerged as a public health emergency, highlighting its drivers, health impacts, and required policy responses.

Source - [The Hindu](#)

## Reinforcing the Case for a One Health Approach

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

### Introduction

The rising frequency of pandemics shows that human, animal, and environmental health are deeply interconnected. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weak coordination across sectors and nations, while also highlighting the importance of **scientific collaboration and data sharing**. Increasing human activities such as land-use change and global travel have accelerated health risks. In this context, the **One Health approach has emerged** as a **critical framework** to address complex challenges and strengthen global preparedness and response.

### Understanding One Health

1. **Definition and core idea:** One Health is an integrated approach that aims to balance the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognises that all these domains are interdependent.
2. **Evolution of the concept:**
  - The term was first used during the **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003-04**.
  - It gained momentum with **avian influenza H5N1 and the Manhattan Principles of 2004**.
  - **The Manhattan Principles (2004) are 12 actionable principles for a "One World, One Health" approach**, established by the **Wildlife Conservation Society and partners**.
3. **Multi-sectoral collaboration:** The approach brings together **different sectors, disciplines, and communities** to address health challenges.
4. **Full spectrum of disease control:** It covers the entire chain from **prevention, detection, preparedness, response, to management of diseases**.
5. **Wide applicability:** It can be applied at **community, national, regional, and global levels** through shared governance and coordination.

### What are the Drivers of Emerging Health Threats

1. **Human-driven ecological changes:** Most emerging zoonotic diseases originate due to **changes in ecosystems and land use caused by human activities**.
2. **Agricultural and urban expansion:** **Intensification of agriculture and urbanisation** increases contact between humans and animals, raising disease risks.
3. **Global connectivity:** **International travel and trade** help diseases spread rapidly across countries.
4. **Environmental stress factors:** Climate change creates **stress on natural systems**, making disease patterns more unpredictable.
5. **Sudden emergence of pathogens:** New pathogens can appear suddenly and **threaten global stability within a short time**.

### Global Recognition and Institutional Frameworks

1. **Impact of COVID-19 pandemic:** The pandemic acted as a turning point by showing the cost of poor coordination and the benefits of global cooperation.
2. **Role of scientific collaboration:** Sharing of SARS-CoV-2 genetic data and research on human susceptibility helped accelerate vaccine development.
3. **WHO Pandemic Agreement 2025:** This legally binding treaty focuses on prevention, preparedness, and response. It promotes equity through pathogen data sharing and fair access to vaccines.
4. **Quadripartite collaboration:** **The World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** lead global One Health efforts. They work together to address interconnected health risks.
5. **One Health Joint Plan of Action 2022:** This plan provides a coordinated framework for countries to strengthen health systems and manage shared risks.

### India's Response: Institutional and Policy Measures

1. **National One Health Mission:** India launched this mission to integrate human, animal, and environmental health sectors. It aims to improve surveillance, preparedness, and zoonotic disease control.
2. **Post-COVID policy shift:** The government accelerated collaborative approaches to better handle future health crises.
3. **Recognition of climate-linked risks:** India has acknowledged the impact of **climate change stressors** on natural systems, highlighting the need to address extreme climate events.
4. **State-level initiatives as models:**

- **Odisha Climate Budget:** Tracks **climate-resilient development expenditure**.
- **Kerala Meenangadi plan:** Promotes a **participatory carbon-neutral model**.
- **Tamil Nadu initiatives:** Includes **Green Climate Company and Cool Roof Project in Chennai**.

### Challenges in Implementation

1. **Slow progress despite acceptance:** Although widely accepted, **implementation of One Health remains slow**.
2. **Conflicts in governance:** Conflicts between departments, government agencies, and even nations often hinder coordinated and synchronous action during health crises.
3. **Rapid and unpredictable threats:** New pathogens can emerge suddenly and spread rapidly, threatening global stability within a very short time.
4. **International coordination gaps:** Conflicts between nations affect **synchronous global action** during health crises.
5. **Weak monitoring systems:** There is a need for stronger **continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**.

### Way Forward

1. **Promote scientific collaboration:** Policies should rely on **evidence and shared scientific knowledge** across countries.
2. **Strengthen coordination mechanisms:** Better coordination is needed among **sectors, institutions, and nations**.
3. **Focus on major risk areas:** Attention should be given to **zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food systems, and pollution**.
4. **Encourage global dialogue:** Platforms like international summits can help **exchange ideas and build cooperation**.
5. **Reform institutional frameworks:** Global systems must be **aligned with One Health goals** for better outcomes.

### Conclusion

One Health provides a **practical and necessary approach** in an interconnected world. Health risks are shared across humans, animals, and ecosystems. Strong coordination, scientific cooperation, and integrated policies are essential. This approach supports **public health, economic stability, and environmental balance**, making it the most effective path for ensuring global health security.

### Question for practice:

**Q.** Examine the significance of the One Health approach in addressing emerging global health threats and the challenges in its effective implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Missing link in India's natural-birth story: Midwives

**Source:** The post “Missing link in India’s natural-birth story: Midwives” has been created, based on “Missing link in India’s natural-birth story: Midwives” published in “Indian Express” on 08th April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance**

**Context:** India has achieved significant progress in maternal healthcare as the Maternal Mortality Ratio declined from **130 per lakh live births in 2014–16 to 93 in 2019–21**. However, the increasing rate of caesarean-section deliveries from **6.4% in 2008–09 to more than 27% in 2024–25** reflects a growing imbalance in childbirth practices. The World Health Organization recommends that caesarean-section rates should ideally remain between **10% and 15%**, which indicates that India is witnessing excessive surgical intervention in childbirth.

#### Reasons for Rising Caesarean Deliveries in India

1. The rate of caesarean deliveries in private hospitals has reached nearly **47.4%**, which indicates the increasing medicalisation of childbirth.
2. In states such as Telangana, the caesarean-section rate has reached **over 60%**, reflecting regional imbalances.
3. Financial incentives influence delivery practices because caesarean procedures cost significantly more than normal deliveries in private hospitals.
4. Deliveries contribute nearly **70–80% of the earnings of private gynaecologists**, which may indirectly encourage surgical interventions.
5. Cultural preferences among families for selecting auspicious birth dates also contribute to unnecessary surgical deliveries.

#### Risks Associated with Unnecessary Caesarean Deliveries

1. Caesarean deliveries increase the risk of infection and haemorrhage in mothers.
2. Caesarean procedures may cause adhesions and complications in future pregnancies.
3. Caesarean deliveries may also lead to long-term complications such as scar endometriosis.
4. Children born through caesarean delivery are more likely to develop respiratory infections, asthma, and obesity.
5. Caesarean delivery can disrupt the newborn’s gut microbiota, although exclusive breastfeeding may help restore it partially.

#### Role of Professional Midwives in Strengthening Maternal Care

1. Professional midwives support natural childbirth by recognising labour as a physiological process rather than a medical emergency.
2. They provide continuous monitoring during labour and reduce unnecessary medical interventions.
3. They help identify complications early and ensure timely referral to obstetricians when required.
4. They also help reduce dependence on surgical deliveries by promoting safe normal deliveries.
5. They improve maternal care both in remote rural areas and urban institutional settings.

### Government Initiative to Promote Midwifery in India

1. India launched the **Nurse Practitioner in Midwifery programme** in 2018 to strengthen the midwifery workforce.
2. Around **1,500 trained midwives** have been produced under this programme so far.
3. However, India requires nearly **90,000 professional midwives** to meet the needs of the public healthcare system.

### Challenges in Strengthening Midwifery Services in India

1. India faces a shortage of trained professional midwives despite increasing institutional deliveries.
2. The healthcare system remains largely doctor-centric, which limits the role of midwives in childbirth services.
3. Private hospitals often prefer surgical deliveries due to financial incentives.
4. Social perceptions sometimes favour surgical delivery over natural childbirth.
5. There is inadequate integration of midwives into the public health system, especially in rural and tribal regions.

### Way Forward

1. The government should expand midwifery training programmes across states.
2. Midwives should be integrated into primary healthcare institutions and maternity care systems.
3. Awareness should be created among families regarding the benefits of normal childbirth.
4. Regulation of unnecessary caesarean deliveries in private hospitals should be strengthened.
5. Strong referral linkages between midwives and obstetricians should be institutionalised.

**Conclusion:** India's maternal healthcare progress must now focus on ensuring safe, appropriate, and evidence-based childbirth practices rather than only increasing institutional deliveries. Strengthening professional midwifery services can help reduce unnecessary caesarean deliveries and ensure equitable maternal care for women in both rural and urban areas.

**Question:** The rising rate of caesarean deliveries in India reflects both gaps in access to skilled birth attendants and over-medicalisation of childbirth. Discuss the role of midwives in ensuring safe and appropriate maternal care.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

### Freebies unplugged

**Source:** The post "**Freebies unplugged**" has been created, based on "**Freebies unplugged**" published in "**BusinessLine**" on 08th April 2026.

### UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** Electoral freebies have become a recurring feature of India's political landscape as political parties frequently announce welfare measures such as free electricity, bus rides, consumer goods, and unconditional cash transfers before elections. While such measures aim to provide social support, concerns have emerged regarding their impact on fiscal sustainability and electoral fairness. The Economic Survey 2025-26 has

highlighted the increasing fiscal burden and limited long-term developmental impact of unconditional cash transfer schemes.

### What are Electoral Freebies

1. Electoral freebies refer to **unpaid-for welfare measures announced primarily before elections** to influence voter behaviour.
2. These include free electricity, free transport services, distribution of consumer goods, and unconditional cash transfers to women and households.
3. Free ration schemes, transfers to farmers, and electricity subsidies also form part of India's expanding welfare framework.

### Economic Impact of Freebies

1. Freebies reduce the fiscal space available for creating durable public assets such as infrastructure and social sector investments.
2. Several states implementing unconditional cash transfer schemes are already operating under revenue deficit conditions.
3. Such transfers account for nearly **0.19% to 1.25% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)** and **0.68% to 8.26% of total state budget expenditure**.
4. The Sixteenth Finance Commission has observed that unconditional cash transfers may account for nearly **20% of total subsidy spending** in some states.
5. Power subsidies also contribute significantly to fiscal stress in states.

### Political Impact of Freebies

1. Freebies may create an uneven electoral playing field by giving incumbent governments an advantage during elections.
2. Competitive populism among political parties encourages a culture of escalating welfare promises.
3. The timing of such announcements near elections raises concerns regarding the fairness of electoral competition.

### Social Impact of Freebies

#### Positive impacts

1. Unconditional cash transfers improve consumption levels among vulnerable households.
2. Such transfers enhance food security and provide short-term income stability.
3. Certain schemes such as subsidised food programmes and pensions create lasting welfare benefits.

#### Limitations

1. Unconditional cash transfers do not consistently improve child nutrition outcomes.
2. Such transfers have limited impact on educational achievement.
3. These schemes do not enable sustained exit from poverty without complementary investments in health and education sectors.

### Challenges Associated with Electoral Freebies

1. Electoral freebies place increasing pressure on already stressed state finances.

2. There is inadequate distinction between welfare expenditure and populist expenditure in public debate.
3. Competitive populism reduces incentives for long-term developmental investment.
4. Many states implementing unconditional transfers are already facing revenue deficits.
5. Timing of announcements close to elections raises concerns about ethical governance and electoral neutrality.

### Need for Rationalising Welfare Spending

1. Welfare schemes should increasingly shift toward investments in health, nutrition, childcare, and education.
2. Conditional cash transfer models such as Bolsa Família demonstrate better long-term developmental outcomes.
3. India's Midday Meal Scheme is an example of a conditional welfare programme linked to education outcomes.
4. Electoral announcements of welfare schemes should ideally not coincide with election periods.
5. Greater fiscal transparency and accountability in subsidy spending is necessary.

**Conclusion:** Electoral freebies provide short-term relief to vulnerable populations but may weaken fiscal discipline and distort democratic competition if used excessively. A balanced approach that prioritises targeted and conditional welfare spending alongside investments in long-term human capital development is essential for sustainable and inclusive growth in India.

**Question:** Electoral freebies have become a persistent feature of India's political economy. Examine their impact on fiscal sustainability and democratic processes. Suggest reforms to rationalise welfare spending.

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

## In Delhi's support for Arab Gulf, a return of the Bombay school of thought

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International relation

### Introduction

The Gulf has now become a **top strategic priority for India**, especially during the ongoing tensions in the Persian Gulf. It is not a distant region but India's immediate neighbourhood with strong economic and social ties. India's response shows a clear shift in thinking. This shift reflects a return to an older strategic idea, where maritime connections and Gulf relations are central to India's security and growth.

### What are "Bombay School of thought" and "Ludhiana School of thought"?

#### 1. Bombay School of thought:

**Maritime outlook:** It sees India's security starting from the sea and focuses on trade, ports, and naval strength. It treats the Gulf, Persia, and Arabian regions as the outer layer of India's defence.

**Policy tools:** It uses diplomacy, trade, and naval presence to shape regional politics. Control of sea lanes and influence in coastal regions are seen as key instruments.

## 2. Ludhiana School of thought:

**Continental outlook:** It focuses on land borders and sees threats coming through regions like Afghanistan. It gives priority to land-based defence and frontier control.

**Policy tools:** It relies on military presence, alliances with local forces, and political influence in border regions. Afghanistan is treated as the central buffer for India's security.

### Evolution of India's Security Approach

1. **Colonial roots of the debate:** The strategic divide began during the Great Game after external threats exposed India's western vulnerabilities. Two different approaches to defence emerged from this period.
2. **Shift after Anglo-Afghan experience:** The First Anglo-Afghan War showed the risks of deep continental involvement. Yet, land-focused thinking continued to dominate.
3. **Post-independence continental focus:** After 1947, India focused on defending land borders with Pakistan. Trade, ports, and maritime strategy became less important.
4. **Decline of maritime centres:** Major port cities lost importance as Delhi became the main centre of power. Strategic thinking became more land-oriented.
5. **Revival after economic reforms:** The 1990s reforms brought trade and global integration back. This gradually restored attention to maritime strategy and external economic links.
6. **Continued continental pressure:** Despite this revival, persistent land threats kept India's strategic focus largely tied to the continent.

### Why is the Gulf suddenly so important?

1. **Geographical proximity:** The Gulf lies very close to India, separated only by a narrow stretch of water. It is part of India's immediate strategic environment, not a distant region.
2. **Economic and social linkages:** India has deep connections with the Gulf through labour, trade, and cultural ties. These links make the region highly important for India's stability.
3. **Diaspora and remittances:** Nearly **9 million Indians live and work in the Gulf**, sending around **\$50 billion annually**. This makes the region vital for India's economy.
4. **Energy and logistics dependence:** India depends heavily on the Gulf for energy and trade routes. This creates a strong strategic need to ensure stability in the region.

### Re-emergence of the Bombay School in Present Context

1. **Rise of the Gulf region:** The rapid growth of oil-rich Gulf countries increased their importance for India. The region became central to India's economy and external engagement.

2. **Shift from Iran to Arab Gulf:** After 1979, Iran's confrontational politics limited engagement. Arab Gulf countries steadily became more important for India.
3. **Return of maritime thinking:** India is now focusing on sea routes, trade, and Gulf relations. This reflects a clear revival of Bombay School logic.
4. **Strategic centrality of the Gulf:** The Gulf is now a key part of India's economic and social system. It acts as an extension of India's own space.

### Challenges in Implementation

1. **Persistent land threats:** India still faces serious challenges from Pakistan along its land borders. These threats cannot be ignored while focusing on maritime strategy.
2. **Need for balance:** India cannot choose only one approach between land and sea. Both maritime and continental strategies are necessary for full security.
3. **Regional instability factors:** Pakistan continues to use proxies and extremist elements. Iran's political system also creates challenges in the region.

### Way Forward

1. **Integration of two approaches:** India needs to combine maritime strength with strong land defence. This will ensure balanced and effective security.
2. **Strengthening Gulf engagement:** India should deepen ties with Arab Gulf countries through trade, diplomacy, and security cooperation. This will strengthen its strategic position.
3. **Leveraging positive regional trends:** The Arab Gulf is showing political moderation and economic openness. This creates an opportunity for stable and long-term partnerships.

### Conclusion

India's growing support for the Gulf shows a clear return to maritime thinking rooted in the Bombay School. The Gulf has become central to India's economy, security, and external relations. However, India must not ignore land-based threats. The key challenge is to combine both approaches effectively. A balanced strategy will help India secure its interests and maintain stability in a complex regional environment.

### Question for Practise:

Discuss how India's growing support for the Arab Gulf reflects a return to the Bombay School of thought, in contrast to the Ludhiana School, and examine its implications for India's strategic priorities.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Systemic reckoning: On the verdict in the Sattankulam murder case

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Governance

### Introduction

The custodial deaths of **Jayaraj and Bennix in Sattankulam, Tamil Nadu**, exposed serious failures in policing and judicial processes. Arrested on minor charges, they were subjected to brutal torture in custody, leading to their deaths. The case highlights **misuse of police power, weak safeguards, and low accountability**. At the same time, the conviction shows how **judicial intervention, credible evidence, and public pressure** can ensure justice and challenge institutional impunity.

### Background of the Case

1. **Arrest on minor charges:** In Tamil Nadu, **Jayaraj** was picked up for alleged lockdown violations, which did not justify strict legal action or custodial detention.
2. **Escalation of police action:** The situation worsened when his son questioned police behaviour, leading to **further detention and escalation of force**.
3. **Severe custodial torture:** Both were subjected to **third-degree torture, including physical and sexual assault**, causing serious internal injuries.
4. **Fabrication of charges and records:** Police filed **false FIRs and misleading explanations**, claiming the injuries were self-inflicted.
5. **Failure of medical and judicial safeguards:** A doctor declared them “fit for remand”, and the magistrate issued **mechanical remand orders without proper verification**.
6. **Custodial neglect leading to death:** They were shifted despite injuries and died soon after, showing **continuous neglect and brutality in custody**.
7. **Public outrage and pursuit of justice:** The incident triggered **nationwide protests**, and the victims’ family continued a **long legal struggle for accountability**.

### Present Verdict and Its Significance

1. **Death penalty and “rarest of rare” classification:** The court awarded **death penalty to nine policemen**, calling it a **“rarest of rare” case**, showing the extreme seriousness of custodial torture and murder.
2. **Accountability of entire police unit:** Almost the **entire police station staff was convicted**, which is unprecedented and shows **collective institutional failure**.
3. **Gross abuse of power:** The court held that those meant to protect citizens became **violators of law and constitutional duties**, highlighting misuse of authority.
4. **Shift in perception of custodial violence:** This verdict signals a **significant shift in national approach**, where multiple officers are held criminally accountable.

5. **Debate on proportional punishment:** The death penalty raises concerns about **reformatory justice**, and uniform punishment may face scrutiny in higher courts.
6. **Strong deterrent message:** The conviction sends a clear signal that **police excesses will not remain unpunished**, breaking the culture of impunity.

### Custodial Violence: Nature and Patterns

1. **Definition and forms of custodial violence:** Custodial violence includes **physical torture, mental harassment, and sexual abuse**, used to extract information or assert authority.
2. **Physical and mental torture practices:** Methods include **beatings, deprivation, humiliation, and coercion**, causing severe physical and psychological harm.
3. **Sexual violence as coercion:** Sexual assault is used as a tool of **control and intimidation**, leading to deep social and mental trauma.
4. **Culture of impunity and entitlement:** Police often act with a sense of **unchecked authority**, assuming violence is part of their power.
5. **Institutional complicity:** Failures of **police, doctors, and magistrates together enable custodial violence**, weakening accountability.

### Issues in Addressing Custodial Deaths

1. **Low conviction rate:** Between 2011–2022, **only one police officer was convicted** in Tamil Nadu, showing weak accountability.
2. **Rising custodial deaths:** Data shows **490 cases (2019–2020) in Tamil Nadu** and **2,152 judicial + 155 police custody deaths (2021–22)** nationally.
3. **Impact on marginalised groups:** Nearly **38% victims belong to marginalised communities**, indicating social bias.
4. **Weak investigation and prosecution:**  
Even when cases are reported, **lack of strong investigation leads to no convictions**.
5. **Structural failure of institutions:** Police, judiciary, and medical systems often fail together, creating **systemic gaps in justice delivery**.

### Safeguards Against Custodial Violence in India

#### 1. Constitutional Safeguards

- **Right to life and dignity:** Protection under Article 21
- **Protection against coercion:** Safeguards under Article 20(3)
- **Rights during arrest and detention:** Guarantees under Article 22
- **Access to justice:** Provision of free legal aid under Article 39A

#### 2. Legal and Institutional Safeguards

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- **Penal provisions against abuse:** IPC sections on custodial torture and wrongful confinement
- **Procedural safeguards:** CrPC provision for judicial inquiry in custodial deaths
- **Human rights framework:** Role of NHRC and SHRC under the Protection of Human Rights Act
- **BNS provisions:** Safeguards against hurt and wrongful confinement by public servants

### 3. Judicial Safeguards and Guidelines

- **Procedural safeguards in arrests:** In *D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal*, the Supreme Court (1997) laid down **clear guidelines for arrest and detention**, including arrest memo, medical checks, and informing relatives.
- **Arrest must be justified:** In *Joginder Kumar vs State of UP* (1994), the Supreme Court held that **arrest should not be routine** and must be based on necessity and valid legal grounds.
- **State accountability:** In *Nilabati Behera vs State of Orissa*, the Supreme Court (1993) recognised **state liability and compensation** for custodial deaths.
- **Surveillance and transparency:** In *Paramvir Singh* case, the Supreme Court (2020) directed **installation of CCTV cameras with audio** in police stations.

### Way Forward

1. **Enactment of a Standalone Anti-Torture Law:** India must criminalize custodial torture through a dedicated **Prevention of Torture Bill**, as recommended by the Law Commission of India (2017). This law should align with the UNCAT, prescribing stringent punishments for erring officials and ensuring mandatory compensation for victims.
2. **Strengthening Judicial Oversight:** Custodial deaths and torture cases must be investigated by Judicial Magistrates instead of Executive Magistrates, ensuring unbiased scrutiny, as per the 2024 Supreme Court ruling. Courts should also impose harsher penalties for violations of **D.K. Basu guidelines** and mandate compliance with human rights norms.
3. **Independent Oversight Mechanisms:** Establishing independent oversight bodies at state and national levels, as suggested by the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** (2013), can ensure impartial investigations into custodial violence cases. The NHRC must be given prosecutorial powers to act against offenders rather than merely recommending action.
4. **Police Reforms for Transparency and Accountability:** Full implementation of the Prakash Singh case (2006) police reforms, which advocate separating law enforcement from political influence, can professionalize policing and reduce misuse of power. Additionally, **Model Police Act, 2006** must be enforced uniformly across states to promote accountability.
5. **Mandatory CCTV Surveillance and Audio-Video Interrogation:** Expanding the Supreme Court's directive on CCTV installation in police stations (**Common Cause vs Union of India, 2018**) to include real-time monitoring and external audits can prevent custodial torture. Video recordings of interrogations, as recommended by NHRC, must be made mandatory.
6. **Fast-Track Courts and Compensation Mechanisms:** Special fast-track courts should be established to expedite custodial violence cases, **ensuring strict punishment for perpetrators**. Additionally, NHRC's recommendation for uniform compensation for victims must be institutionalized, with a clear fund allocation mechanism.
7. **Ratification of International Conventions and Global Best Practices:** India must ratify the UNCAT and adopt best practices from countries like the **UK's Independent Office for Police**

**Conduct (IOPC) and Norway's Ombudsman Model**, which allow for independent oversight and strict accountability of law enforcement officials.

### Conclusion

The Sattankulam verdict marks a rare assertion of accountability but also reveals deep structural gaps in policing and justice systems. **Custodial violence continues due to weak enforcement and institutional failures.** Lasting change requires **strict implementation of safeguards, stronger oversight, and a dedicated anti-torture law**, so that constitutional rights are protected and such abuses are effectively prevented.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the Sattankulam custodial death case exposes systemic failures in policing and justice mechanisms, and evaluate the role of judicial intervention and safeguards in ensuring accountability in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)