

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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

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The new Canada-India economic alignment emerges

Source: The post “The new Canada-India economic alignment emerges” has been created, based on “The new Canada-India economic alignment emerges” published in “The Hindu” on 09th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: The recent visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India and discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi signal a reset in bilateral relations. The signing of the **Terms of Reference** to relaunch negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) reflects a renewed focus on economic cooperation and strategic partnership.

Key Opportunities in India–Canada Economic Relations

- 1. Energy and Critical Minerals Cooperation:** Canada is a major supplier of **oil, natural gas, uranium, and critical minerals** required for electric vehicles and advanced manufacturing. The **Canadian \$2.6-billion uranium supply agreement** between India and Cameco strengthens nuclear energy collaboration.
- 2. Technology and Innovation:** Canada hosts advanced **AI research clusters and innovation ecosystems**. Indian IT firms such as HCL Technologies are expanding their footprint in Canada.
- 3. Infrastructure and Investment:** Canadian institutional investors like Brookfield Corporation and Fairfax Financial Holdings have invested heavily in India’s telecom, infrastructure, and renewable energy sectors.
- 4. Agriculture and Food Security:** Canada’s agri-food exports can support India’s growing demand for sustainable food supplies.
- 5. Financial Services Collaboration:** Joint ventures such as Sun Life Financial–Aditya Birla Capital demonstrate the success of long-term financial partnerships.

Challenges in India–Canada Economic Relations

- 1. Diplomatic and Political Tensions:** Past disagreements over political issues and diaspora politics have periodically strained relations, affecting trust and economic engagement.
- 2. Slow Progress in Trade Negotiations:** The CEPA negotiations have faced delays due to **differences over market access, labour mobility, and regulatory standards**.
- 3. Regulatory and Market Barriers:** Businesses often encounter **complex regulatory frameworks, tariffs, and non-tariff barriers**, which limit trade expansion.
- 4. Investment Risks and Policy Uncertainty:** Investors require **policy stability and transparent dispute resolution mechanisms** to sustain long-term investments.
- 5. Geopolitical and Strategic Constraints:** Canada’s balancing of relations with Western allies and India’s strategic autonomy sometimes create differing policy priorities.

Way Forward

1. Fast-track CEPA Negotiations: Finalising CEPA can reduce tariffs, improve market access, and provide a rules-based trade framework.

2. Institutionalise Strategic Dialogue: Establish regular high-level economic and trade dialogues to manage political differences and maintain momentum.

3. Promote Sector-Specific Partnerships: Focus cooperation on **critical minerals, clean energy, AI, infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing**.

4. Facilitate Investment and Business Mobility: Simplify regulatory procedures and improve **visa and labour mobility arrangements** for professionals.

5. Strengthen People-to-People and Academic Links: Expanding education, research, and innovation partnerships will build long-term trust and economic collaboration.

Conclusion: The renewed political commitment between India and Canada presents a crucial opportunity to strengthen economic ties. By addressing diplomatic sensitivities and accelerating trade and investment cooperation, the partnership can evolve into a **mutually beneficial strategic economic relationship linking India with North American markets**.

Question: The renewed economic engagement between India and Canada represents a strategic shift driven by mutual economic opportunities. Discuss the significance of the recent visit of Mark Carney to India and evaluate the opportunities, challenges, and way forward in India-Canada economic relations.
Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's new waste management rules face old implementation gaps

Source: The post "**India's new waste management rules face old implementation gaps**" has been created, based on "**India's new waste management rules face old implementation gaps**" published in "**Mongabay**" on 09th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Environment

Context: India notified the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026**, replacing the earlier framework to improve segregation, accountability, and waste processing. Despite progressive provisions, weak enforcement and institutional constraints continue to hinder effective waste management in cities like Delhi.

Key Provisions of SWM Rules 2026

1. Four-way Waste Segregation: Waste must now be segregated into **dry, wet, sanitary, and special care waste** (e.g., medicines, paint cans, bulbs).

2. Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR): It applies to generators producing **>100 kg waste/day**, occupying **>20,000 sq m**, or using **>40,000 litres of water/day**. There is mandatory **on-site treatment of wet waste** or certified disposal.

3. Restrictions on Landfill Dumping: Only **non-recyclable and inert waste** allowed in landfills. Higher landfill fees for **unsegregated waste**.

4. Legacy Waste Management: Mandatory **mapping of dumpsites** and time-bound **biomining and bioremediation**.

5. Digital Monitoring System: Creation of a **centralised portal** to track waste generation, transportation, processing and disposal.

Key Challenges

1. Weak Enforcement by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs): Municipal capacity remains limited, resulting in **mixed waste reaching landfills**.

2. Poor Segregation at Source: Public participation is inadequate, and waste collectors often **remix segregated waste**, eroding trust.

3. Legacy Landfill Crisis: Large dumps such as **Ghazipur Landfill, Bhalaswa Landfill, and Okhla Landfill** continue to release methane and pollutants.

4. Pollution from Waste-to-Energy Plants: Incinerators have been linked with emissions of **toxic substances such as dioxins and furans**.

5. Institutional and Financial Constraints: Limited municipal budgets and **poor fee collection systems** weaken waste management infrastructure.

6. Environmental and Health Impacts: Waste burning significantly contributes to **air pollution, methane emissions, and urban heat stress**.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Segregation at Source: Mandatory household segregation with **strict penalties and incentives**.

2. Capacity Building of ULBs: Improve funding, technical capacity, and accountability mechanisms.

3. Decentralised Waste Processing: Promote **composting, biomethanation, and material recovery facilities** at ward level.

4. Integrate Informal Waste Sector: Formal recognition and integration of **waste pickers into recycling systems**.

5. Rationalise Waste-to-Energy Projects: Limit WtE plants to **non-recyclable fractions only** and enforce strict emission standards.

6. Public Awareness and Community Participation: Partnerships with NGOs, RWAs, and local communities for behavioural change.

Conclusion: While the SWM Rules 2026 provide a stronger regulatory framework, their success depends on **effective enforcement, citizen participation, and decentralised waste processing**. Without addressing implementation gaps, India's waste crisis will continue to worsen urban pollution and public health risks.

Question: “India’s new Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 aim to strengthen waste segregation and accountability. However, long-standing implementation gaps continue to undermine effective waste management in cities.” Discuss.

Source: [Mongabay](#)

The Need to Recognise ‘Volunteer’ Care Work

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

Education, Human Resources. .

Introduction

India’s welfare system depends on millions of women who provide health, nutrition, and childcare services. The **Union Budget 2026–27 proposes training 1.5 lakh multiskilled caregivers under NSQF**, recognising the growing demand for care services. However, a major contradiction remains. **More than five million existing care workers such as ASHAs, Anganwadi workers and mid-day meal workers still remain classified as “volunteers”**. They deliver essential public services but lack formal wages, labour protections, and employment security.

Background of Care Work

- 1. Central role in welfare delivery: ASHAs, Anganwadi workers and mid-day meal workers sustain India’s welfare architecture** by delivering health, nutrition and childcare services in communities across the country.
- 2. Institutional foundation of the workforce: Anganwadi workers operate under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)** to provide early childhood care and nutrition, while **ASHAs were created under the National Rural Health Mission in 2005** to connect communities with the public health system.
- 3. Scale and presence of the workforce:** India has **over one million ASHA workers**, along with large numbers of Anganwadi workers and helpers, making the care workforce a major pillar of public welfare delivery.
- 4. Range of responsibilities in public health:** Care workers **record birth and death data, support maternal and child health programmes, track communicable and non-communicable diseases, and monitor sanitation and hygiene in communities.**
- 5. Evidence of their effectiveness:** ASHAs received the **WHO Director-General’s Global Health Leaders Award in 2022**, and a **PLOS Global Public Health study shows that women connected with ASHAs are 1.6 times more likely to access maternal health services and institutional delivery.**

Major Issues With Care Work

- 1. Volunteer classification and lack of labour rights:** Care workers are officially treated as “volunteers” or “scheme workers”, which allows the state to avoid providing **formal wages, contracts, paid leave, or maternity benefits.**
- 2. Low and uncertain income:** An ASHA worker earns roughly ₹5,000 to ₹15,000 per month, combining a small fixed payment with incentives linked to specific tasks such as facilitating institutional births.
- 3. Gendered undervaluation of care work:** The 2024 Time Use Survey shows 41% of women aged 15–59 spend 140 minutes daily on caregiving compared to 21.4% of men at 74 minutes, showing a strong gender imbalance in unpaid care work.
- 4. Dependence on a feminised shadow labour force:** The welfare system depends on a vast informal workforce of women delivering essential services while remaining outside formal employment protections.
- 5. Historical policy choices creating informality:** Under ICDS, the government denied Anganwadi workers formal worker status, laying the foundation for treating welfare workers as volunteers rather than employees.
- 6. Legal decisions excluding employee status:** The State of Karnataka vs Ameerbi (1996) tribunal decision excluded Anganwadi workers from government employee status, reinforcing their informal classification.
- 7. Ignored labour reform recommendations:** The 45th Labour Conference recommended regularisation, minimum wages, pensions and gratuity for ASHA workers, but successive governments did not implement these proposals.
- 8. Fiscal decisions worsening conditions:** The ICDS budget cut in 2015 and the freezing of the Centre’s honorarium contribution in 2018 reduced financial support and increased economic pressure on care workers.
- 9. Regional inequality in compensation:** Since central payments stagnated, States began topping up wages from their own budgets, leading to major differences between wealthier and fiscally constrained States.

Existing Policy Responses to Care Work Issues

- 1. Care economy expansion through training:** The Union Budget 2026–27 proposes training 1.5 lakh multiskilled caregivers under programmes aligned with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) to strengthen the care ecosystem.
- 2. Limited welfare support schemes:** Care workers receive partial support through state honorarium increases, gratuity benefits, and inclusion in schemes such as Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan.
- 3. Insurance protection for ASHA workers:** In 2018 the government introduced an ASHA benefit package covering accidents, deaths and disability, providing limited social security support.
- 4. Judicial recognition of permanent nature of work:** In Dharam Singh & Anr. vs State of U.P. & Anr. (2025) the Supreme Court held that work that is recurrent and central to an institution cannot be treated as temporary indefinitely, strengthening demands for regularisation.

Way Forward

- 1. Legal reclassification of care workers:** The Centre should **reclassify ASHAs and Anganwadi workers as statutory employees under the Code on Social Security**, ensuring minimum wages, pensions and labour protections.
- 2. Transition from honorarium to formal wages:** Policy frameworks should **convert honorarium-based payments into fair wages with formal employment contracts** for long-term security.
- 3. Skill recognition for existing workers:** The **NSQF training programmes should include ASHA and Anganwadi workers**, recognising their existing skills and improving career security.
- 4. Reducing regional wage disparities:** The **Centre and States must coordinate funding to ensure equitable pay across regions**, reducing inequalities caused by varying State capacities.
- 5. Implementation of global labour standards:** Reforms should follow the **International Labour Organisation's 5R Framework for Decent Care Work**, particularly the commitments of **Reward and Represent**.

Conclusion

India's health and welfare programmes rely heavily on millions of women who perform essential care services. Yet these workers remain **underpaid, informal and excluded from labour protections despite their critical role in public welfare delivery**. Recognising them as formal employees, ensuring fair wages and social security, and integrating them into skill programmes are essential steps for building **a stronger and more equitable care economy**.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges faced by 'volunteer' care workers such as ASHAs and Anganwadi workers in India, and discuss the measures required to recognise and strengthen their role in the country's care economy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

One Nation, One Election — Remedy Worse Than Disease

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

provisions and basic structure. **And** Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

Introduction

The proposal of **One Nation, One Election** aims to hold Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections together to reduce expenditure and administrative disruption. However, comparative experience and constitutional principles raise serious concerns. The proposal may weaken parliamentary accountability, disturb federal

balance, and create governance complications. The debate therefore centres on whether administrative convenience justifies altering key democratic safeguards.

The One Nation, One Election Proposal

- 1. Constitutional Amendment Framework:** The proposal is based on the committee chaired by **Ram Nath Kovind** and introduced through the **Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024** to synchronise national and State elections.
- 2. Alignment of Legislative Tenures:** Proposed Article 82A empowers the President to notify an appointed date from which **all State Assembly terms align with the Lok Sabha cycle**, even if some Assemblies must end their tenure earlier than five years.
- 3. Unexpired-Term Elections Mechanism:** If a legislature dissolves before completing its tenure, the newly elected House will serve **only the remaining period of the original term**, rather than receiving a fresh five-year mandate.
- 4. Election Deferral Authority:** The proposal allows the **Election Commission of India to recommend deferring State elections** if simultaneous conduct is not feasible, while amendments are proposed to **Articles 83, 172 and 327** to enable the framework.

Comparative Constitutional Experience

- 1. Independent Electoral Cycles in Federal Democracies:** Countries such as Canada conduct federal and provincial elections separately, showing that **federal systems often maintain different democratic rhythms across levels of government**.
- 2. Structural Limits in Australia:** Synchronisation is impossible because **State legislatures have fixed four-year terms while the federal House of Representatives has a maximum tenure of three years**, making electoral cycles naturally different.
- 3. Institutional Stability in Germany:** Stability arises not from simultaneous elections but from the **Constructive Vote of No Confidence**, which requires Parliament to elect a successor before removing a Chancellor.
- 4. Electoral System Differences:** Countries like South Africa and Indonesia use proportional representation that distributes political power and protects minority voices, while **India's first-past-the-post system allows a national wave to strongly influence State elections**.
- 5. Presidential System Comparison:** In the United States, fixed electoral cycles function because the executive does not depend on legislative confidence, which differs fundamentally from a parliamentary system.
- 6. Indonesia's Experience as a Cautionary Lesson:** Simultaneous elections in **2019 caused nearly 900 poll worker deaths and over 5,000 illnesses**, while **2024 elections led to more than 100 deaths and nearly 15,000 illnesses**, leading Indonesia's Constitutional Court in **2025 to order separation of national and local elections from 2029**.

Major Concerns with the One Nation, One Election Proposal

1. Parliamentary Accountability vs Stability

- a. **Parliamentary Responsibility Principle:** India adopted a parliamentary system where governments remain in power only while they enjoy legislative confidence. **B. R. Ambedkar** emphasised that democracy cannot maximise both stability and responsibility simultaneously.
- b. **Maximum Tenure, Not Guaranteed Tenure:** Articles 83 and 172 prescribe only the maximum five-year tenure of legislatures, allowing early dissolution so voters can renew the mandate when confidence collapses.
- c. **Shift Toward Guaranteed Executive Stability:** Synchronised elections treat dissolution as an administrative inconvenience and push the system toward a quasi-presidential logic, weakening continuous legislative accountability.

2. Federalism Concerns

- a. **Federalism as a Basic Structure Principle:** In **S. R. Bommai v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court affirmed that federalism forms part of the Constitution's basic structure, recognising the independent constitutional identity of States.
- b. **Truncation of State Mandates:** Synchronisation may shorten State Assembly tenures even when governments retain legislative confidence; for example, a State elected in 2033 could see its mandate end in only one year if the national cycle requires alignment.
- c. **Loss of Continuous Democratic Feedback:** Staggered elections at the national, State and local levels create regular electoral feedback that keeps governments attentive to public opinion, acting as a substitute for recall mechanisms.

3. Problems of Unexpired-Term Elections

- a. **Devaluation of the Electoral Mandate:** Mid-cycle elections would produce governments with shortened mandates, making elections appear provisional and potentially increasing voter apathy.
- b. **Weak Governance Incentives:** Governments with residual tenure may avoid structural reforms and rely on short-term populist policies.
- c. **Governance Dead Zone Risk:** The amendment does not define the minimum duration required to trigger an unexpired-term election, creating uncertainty in governance.

4. Risks of Election Deferral and President's Rule

- a. **Unguided Discretion in Election Deferral:** Proposed Article 82A allows the Election Commission to recommend deferring State elections without clear criteria, time limits or parliamentary oversight, creating institutional ambiguity.
- b. **Possibility of Prolonged Unelected Governance:** If a State government falls mid-term, President's Rule may continue while elections are deferred, allowing the Union government to administer the State through the Governor.

c. **Weak Institutional Safeguards:** Even Article 356 includes parliamentary approval and time limits, while **Article 82A creates broader discretionary authority**, raising concerns about constitutional misuse.

5. Weakness of the Cost Argument

a. **Election Expenditure Is Economically Small:** Parliamentary Standing Committee estimates show combined Lok Sabha and Assembly election spending around **₹4,500 crore in 2015-16**, about **0.25% of the Union Budget and 0.03% of GDP**.

b. **Historical Cost Evidence:** Data indicates Lok Sabha election expenditure ranged between **0.02% and 0.05% of GDP between 1957 and 2014**, showing elections impose a limited fiscal burden.

c. **Operational Efficiency of Staggered Elections:** Elections are conducted in phases, lasting about **82 days in 2024**, allowing rotation of **EVMS, VVPATs and security forces**.

d. **Higher Logistical Demand for Simultaneous Polls:** Conducting elections together would require **larger numbers of machines, personnel and security forces at the same time**, potentially increasing costs and administrative pressure.

Way Forward

1. **Respecting Federal Democratic Rhythms:** Electoral cycles should respect the **independent mandates of States**, ensuring that democratic accountability remains continuous and responsive.
2. **Respecting Federal Democratic Rhythms:** Reforms must maintain the principle that governments remain in office **only while they enjoy legislative confidence**, which is central to the parliamentary system.
3. **Avoiding Constitutional Distortion:** Electoral reforms should not undermine **federalism or parliamentary responsibility**, which form part of the Constitution's basic structure.
4. **Reconsidering the Amendment Proposal:** The **Justice Kurian Joseph Committee on Union-State Relations** recommended that the proposed amendment should be **withdrawn**.

Conclusion

The **One Nation, One Election** proposal promises administrative efficiency but raises serious constitutional and democratic concerns. It may weaken parliamentary accountability, disturb federal balance and create governance complications through truncated mandates and election deferrals. Election expenditure is relatively small compared to these risks. Preserving staggered electoral cycles therefore remains important for maintaining democratic accountability and constitutional stability.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the constitutional, federal and governance concerns associated with the proposal of **One Nation, One Election** in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority

Source: The post “Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority” has been created, based on “Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority” published in “The Hindu” on 10th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3– Science & Technology

Context: Algorithmic sovereignty refers to a nation's ability to **develop, control, and govern its own AI models, datasets, and digital infrastructure**. As AI systems increasingly influence geopolitical analysis, legal interpretation, and policymaking, the perspectives embedded within them become important. The dominance of Western and Chinese AI architectures raises concerns for India about **strategic dependence and bias in algorithmic outputs**.

Why Algorithmic Sovereignty Should Be India's Priority

1. Structural Bias in AI Systems

- a. Contemporary AI models are trained predominantly on **Western datasets, legal scholarship, and institutional knowledge**.
- b. As a result, these systems tend to reproduce Western interpretations of international law and geopolitics.
- c. For example, AI responses regarding maritime law or military activities may reflect **Western naval doctrine rather than the perspectives of India and other Global South nations**.
- d. This structural bias can make Western viewpoints appear as the default position while alternative interpretations remain underrepresented.

2. Geopolitical and Strategic Risks

- a. AI systems are increasingly used by policymakers, analysts, and researchers to interpret international events.
- b. If such systems consistently favour the interpretive frameworks of powerful Western states, their outputs may **shape geopolitical discourse and policy thinking** in ways that do not align with India's strategic interests.
- c. In effect, algorithmic interpretations may amplify certain narratives and influence how international law, conflict, and diplomacy are understood.

3. Digital Colonialism

- a. Dependence on foreign AI infrastructure—such as **chips, cloud computing, and foundational models**—creates structural asymmetry.
- b. If core technological systems remain controlled by external actors, India's sovereignty in the digital domain could become **conditional on access granted by foreign providers**.
- c. In such a scenario, foreign algorithms may determine how data is processed, how innovation occurs, and how knowledge is produced, leading to a form of **digital colonialism**.

4. Cultural and Linguistic Limitations

- a. Global AI models are largely trained on datasets that do not adequately represent **India's linguistic diversity and socio-cultural realities**.
- b. Consequently, these systems may struggle to effectively capture the complexities of India's governance, economy, and society.
- c. Without indigenous datasets and models, Indian languages and local contexts risk being treated as secondary inputs rather than primary foundations of AI development.

5. National Security Concerns

- a. AI-driven systems increasingly influence areas such as **strategic analysis, conflict interpretation, and information flows**.
- b. If India relies heavily on foreign AI infrastructure, there is a risk that the country's strategic thinking and decision-making processes may depend on external technological ecosystems.
- c. Such dependence can create vulnerabilities in sensitive domains related to **security and geopolitical decision-making**.

Debate: Foreign AI Stack vs Indigenous Development

1. Argument for Using Foreign AI Systems

- a. Some experts argue that India should prioritise **rapid adoption and deployment of existing global AI technologies**.
- b. Given the technological lead of countries like the United States, it may be more practical to integrate advanced foreign models into India's sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education, and governance.
- c. This approach focuses on **closing the deployment gap** rather than attempting to compete immediately in the development of frontier AI models.

2. Argument for Sovereign AI Stack

- a. Others emphasise that exclusive reliance on foreign foundational models poses long-term strategic risks.
- b. Since many global AI systems are trained on Western data and assumptions, they may carry **linguistic, cultural, and strategic biases** that do not align with India's realities.
- c. Therefore, developing indigenous AI capabilities is necessary to avoid technological dependence and ensure that India's digital ecosystem reflects **its own societal and geopolitical perspectives**.

Way Forward

1. Invest in Domestic Compute Infrastructure: India must build **domestic computing capacity and technological infrastructure** required for training advanced AI models. This includes investments in computing resources and technological ecosystems necessary to sustain independent AI development.

2. Develop Indigenous Datasets: Creating datasets that reflect **India's linguistic diversity, social realities, and governance structures** is essential. Indigenous training data will allow AI systems to better understand and represent Indian contexts rather than relying on externally generated knowledge bases.

3. Promote Indian AI Models and Frameworks: India should focus on becoming a **producer of AI models and interpretive frameworks**, not merely a consumer of foreign technologies. Encouraging research and development within domestic institutions can strengthen India's position in the global AI landscape.

4. Strengthen Secure Data Infrastructure: Building secure and reliable data infrastructure is necessary to ensure **control over data flows and digital ecosystems**. This will help prevent external entities from dominating the technological architecture that supports AI systems.

5. Adopt a Strategic Integration Approach: India should pursue a strategy of **strategic choice rather than technological isolation**. While engaging with global AI ecosystems, it must maintain the ability to integrate external technologies without becoming structurally dependent on them.

Conclusion: AI is emerging as a critical arena of global competition where technological capability translates into geopolitical influence. For India, algorithmic sovereignty is essential to ensure that **its perspectives, priorities, and realities are reflected in AI-driven knowledge systems**. By investing in domestic capabilities while maintaining strategic global engagement, India can build a resilient and independent AI ecosystem.

Question: Why should algorithmic sovereignty be a top priority for India in the age of Artificial Intelligence? Discuss the challenges of relying on foreign AI systems and suggest the way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Export policy must move away from subsidies

Source: The post "Export policy must move away from subsidies" has been created, based on "Export policy must move away from subsidies" published in "Business Line" on 10th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: For decades, India's export policy relied heavily on **financial incentives such as the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)** to improve price competitiveness. However, rising geopolitical tensions, climate regulations, and protectionist policies are making subsidy-driven strategies less effective. In this context, India must redesign its export policy to focus on **structural competitiveness, resilience, and regulatory compliance**.

Budget 2026-27 Measures to Strengthen Export Resilience

1. Export Credit and Financial Support: The government has allocated **₹7,295 crore for export credit support**, including interest subvention and collateral support. These measures aim to improve access to finance, particularly for MSME exporters, by reducing borrowing costs and easing credit constraints.

2. Customs and Trade Facilitation Reforms: Customs reforms include extending **duty deferment from 15 to 30 days for authorised economic operator (AEO) manufacturers** and expanding trusted trader clearances. These steps aim to reduce procedural delays and improve predictability in export operations.

3. Boost to E-Commerce Exports: The removal of the **₹10 lakh cap on courier exports** is intended to support the growth of cross-border e-commerce, enabling smaller exporters to access international markets more easily.

4. Reduction in Input Costs: The increase in **duty-free import limits for seafood processing inputs from 1% to 3% of previous year's FOB turnover** helps reduce input cost exposure for exporters in the seafood sector.

5. Logistics and Infrastructure Investments: A **₹12.2 lakh crore public capital expenditure programme** focuses on improving freight corridors, waterways, and coastal cargo infrastructure. These investments aim to reduce logistics costs, which currently account for around **7–8% of India's GDP**.

Limitations of Subsidy-Driven Export Policies

1. Geopolitical Uncertainty

- a. Recent global conflicts and geopolitical tensions have increased volatility in international trade.
- b. Such disruptions expose the limitations of relying solely on financial incentives to maintain export competitiveness.
- c. When supply chains are affected by sanctions, wars, or political tensions, subsidies cannot offset the structural disruptions faced by exporters.

2. Fragmentation of Global Supply Chains

- a. The global trading system is increasingly shaped by **sanctions, technology controls, and friend-shoring strategies** adopted by major economies.
- b. These trends fragment global supply chains and alter trade patterns. In such an environment, competitiveness depends more on **supply chain resilience and diversification** rather than fiscal incentives.

3. Rising Compliance and Climate Regulations

- a. International trade is increasingly influenced by **environmental and regulatory standards**, particularly climate-related regulations.
- b. Exporters must comply with sustainability requirements, carbon reporting, and environmental standards.
- c. Subsidies alone cannot address these regulatory challenges; instead, exporters need **institutional and technical support to meet global compliance standards**.

4. Structural Cost Disadvantages

- a. High **logistics costs, financing constraints, and regulatory delays** continue to affect India's export competitiveness.
- b. These structural issues increase production and transaction costs for exporters. Subsidies may temporarily compensate exporters, but they do not address the underlying inefficiencies in infrastructure and logistics systems.

Lessons from Global Export Competitors

1. Several developing economies have strengthened export competitiveness by focusing on structural reforms rather than subsidies.
2. For instance, some countries have significantly reduced customs clearance times and invested in compliance infrastructure to meet global sustainability standards.
3. These measures enhance **long-term competitiveness and market credibility** in international trade.

Key Areas for Policy Implementation

1. Strengthening Compliance Capacity

- a. India must develop **carbon accounting and life-cycle assessment facilities in major export clusters**, especially in sectors such as steel, textiles, chemicals, and engineering goods.
- b. Improving certification systems and reducing approval timelines will help exporters meet international environmental standards.

2. Expanding Export Credit and Insurance

- a. Export credit and insurance coverage should be expanded significantly to protect exporters from global market risks.
- b. Faster claim settlement and reduced lending costs for MSMEs will enhance financial stability for exporters.

3. Strengthening Trade Diplomacy

- a. India needs to adopt a more proactive approach to international trade negotiations.
- b. Investing in **technical trade diplomacy, regulatory monitoring systems, and sector-specific policy expertise** will help India influence global regulatory frameworks and protect its export interests.

Conclusion: The evolving global trade environment requires India to move beyond subsidy-based export policies toward a **resilience-oriented strategy**. Sustainable export growth will depend on improved logistics, stronger compliance systems, expanded financial support, and proactive trade diplomacy. By focusing on structural reforms and capability building, India can transform its export policy into a framework that ensures **long-term global competitiveness and stability**.

Question: Why should India move away from subsidy-based export policies? Discuss the need for a resilience-oriented export strategy in the current geopolitical environment.

Source: [Business Line](#)

The Iran War Intensifies India's Strategic Challenge

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-international relation

Introduction

The Iran war intensifies India's strategic challenge as the conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran reshapes the geopolitical environment of West Asia. The confrontation is not mainly about nuclear weapons or missile threats. The central objective is to weaken the ideological foundation of the Iranian regime and its

regional influence. This escalation threatens regional stability, global energy routes and political balance in West Asia, creating serious strategic and economic implications for India.

What the war is trying to achieve?

- 1. Eliminating the ideological foundation of the Iranian regime:** The conflict is not aimed at removing an immediate military threat, stopping missiles, or preventing nuclear rebuilding. **The central objective is to destroy the ideology driving the Iranian government.**
- 2. Regime change as the proposed solution:** The United States and Israel argue that **removing the current Iranian regime is necessary to eliminate this ideological influence.**
- 3. Ending Iran's proxy war against Israel:** Israel seeks to weaken Iran's support for **non-state actors hostile to Israel**, which it considers an existential security threat.
- 4. Weakening Iran's governance structure through military pressure:** Air strikes have targeted **military institutions, security systems, and oil infrastructure** to break the cohesion of Iran's state structure and provoke internal opposition.
- 5. Forcing regional strategic change:** The broader objective is to **reduce Iran's influence across West Asia and reshape the regional balance of power.**

Why the conflict started?

- 1. Iran's long-term use of proxy groups:** Iran has supported organisations such as **Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shia militias in Iraq**, which expanded Iran's regional influence.
- 2. Proxy actors destabilising regional states:** Some Iranian-backed groups have become **powerful political actors within their countries**, affecting government formation and internal stability.
- 3. Hamas attacks triggering escalation:** **Iran's support for Hamas during the October 7, 2023 attacks** exposed Iran's proxy network to intense Israeli retaliation.
- 4. Regional fear of Iranian influence:** Iran's policy of exporting instability created concern among **Gulf monarchies**, which prefer a stable regional order.
- 5. Diplomatic shift through the Abraham Accords:** Under American encouragement, several Gulf states signed the **Abraham Accords to normalise relations with Israel** as a way to stabilise the region.

Wider Geopolitical Implications

- 1. Exposure of Gulf security vulnerabilities:** The conflict has exposed weaknesses in the **U.S. security umbrella protecting Gulf states**, making the region appear more vulnerable.
- 2. Threat to global energy security:** The war has placed **oil infrastructure and energy routes under serious risk**, which affects global markets.
- 3. Pressure on the United States to end the war:** Escalation has increased risks to regional security, pushing Washington to consider an early end to the conflict.

4. **Strategic advantage for global rivals:** A prolonged U.S. engagement in West Asia would reduce American focus on **China and Russia**.
5. **China's potential strategic gains:** Continued U.S. distraction could strengthen China's strategic position, including its ambitions regarding **Taiwan**.
6. **Economic impact benefiting Russia: Rising oil prices favour Russia** during its confrontation in Ukraine.
7. **Mixed signals from the United States:** The U.S. leadership has sent **conflicting messages about ending or prolonging the war**, reflecting uncertainty about its strategy.
8. **Evidence of economic pressure:** The United States has even **requested India to buy more Russian oil to stabilise global prices**.

Impact on India

1. **Energy security risks:** India depends significantly on oil supplies from West Asia, making disruptions in the region economically damaging.
2. **Reduced U.S. strategic attention:** If the United States remains heavily engaged in West Asia, it will have **less strategic bandwidth to focus on India**.
3. **Regional instability affecting Indian interests:** Escalation in West Asia creates uncertainty in a region where India has deep economic and political stakes.
4. **Shrinking strategic space:** India faces growing pressure from both **the United States and China**, reducing its strategic flexibility.
5. **Rise of alternative regional powers:** Countries such as **Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan** may gain greater influence if Iran weakens.

India's Strategic Response

1. **Participation in diplomatic initiatives:** India participated as an observer in **the first Board of Peace meeting in Washington DC**, indicating willingness to play a more proactive role.
2. **Protection of Indian diaspora:** India immediately responded to the needs of **Indian communities living in Gulf countries**, which remain a major national priority.
3. **Return to cautious diplomacy:** India adopted a restrained approach after the assassination of **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** and the torpedoing of an Iranian naval vessel near Indian waters.
4. **Limitations of current diplomatic approach:** India's strategy is largely based on **strong bilateral relations with Israel, Gulf states and other regional partners**.

Way Forward

1. **Adopt a broader regional policy:** India needs a comprehensive West Asia policy that goes beyond individual bilateral partnerships.
2. **Manage contradictions among partners:** Regional tensions such as the **schism between Saudi Arabia and the Emiratis** require careful diplomatic balancing.
3. **Recognise limits of bilateral engagement:** Regional strategy must address wider geopolitical dynamics instead of treating each relationship separately.
4. **Strengthen strategic engagement:** A proactive regional approach is necessary to protect India's long-term economic and security interests.

Conclusion

The Iran war represents an attempt by the United States to reorder the strategic structure of West Asia. The conflict has exposed vulnerabilities in regional security and intensified geopolitical competition. These developments create serious strategic challenges for India. **A balanced regional strategy, deeper diplomatic engagement and careful management of partnerships are essential for protecting India's long-term interests in an increasingly unstable region.**

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the ongoing Iran war reflects an attempt to reshape the geopolitical order of West Asia and analyse its strategic implications for India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

BRICS at a Crossroads

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International relation

Introduction

The U.S.–Israel attack on Iran has created a major geopolitical crisis for **BRICS**, a **10-nation bloc chaired by India**. Iran's membership has turned the conflict into a direct test of the grouping's credibility. The crisis questions whether BRICS can protect its members and challenge Western dominance. It also exposes internal divisions and raises doubts about India's leadership and the future of the **multipolar world order**.

BRICS and the Vision of a Multipolar World

1. **Formation as a counterbalance to Western dominance:** BRICS emerged to challenge the **post-1945 global power structure dominated by the United States and Western institutions**. The grouping aimed to create a platform where emerging economies could coordinate political and economic influence.
2. **De-dollarisation as a core strategic objective:** BRICS sought to reduce dependence on the **U.S. dollar-dominated financial system**. This effort aimed to weaken Western financial control over global markets and payments.

3. **Creation of alternative financial institutions:** The bloc established the **New Development Bank (NDB)** as an alternative development financing institution. It represented an attempt to create financial systems outside Western-controlled institutions.

4. **Development of alternative payment mechanisms:** Initiatives such as **China's Cross Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS)** and **BRICS Pay** aimed to build independent financial networks. These mechanisms sought to bypass Western-controlled financial gateways.

5. **Security and geopolitical coordination through related forums:** The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** functioned as an indirectly connected geopolitical forum. It strengthened cooperation among non-Western powers in security and diplomacy.

6. **Strategic aim of building an independent global order:** Through these initiatives, BRICS attempted to construct an **independent financial and political architecture**. The effort aimed to provide an alternative to U.S. and Western dominance in global governance.

Expansion of BRICS and Iran's Membership

1. **Expansion reflecting growing geopolitical influence:** The expansion of BRICS signalled the increasing importance of emerging economies in global politics. It strengthened the bloc's ambition to represent the interests of the Global South.

2. **Iran's entry into BRICS in 2024:** Iran formally joined the grouping in **2024**, expanding BRICS to a **10-nation bloc**. This membership enhanced the organisation's strategic reach in **West Asia**.

3. **Iran's geopolitical significance for the bloc:** Iran holds major importance in **regional geopolitics, energy networks, and trade routes**. Its inclusion strengthened the strategic depth of the BRICS coalition.

4. **Earlier U.S.-Israel military action against Iran:** Iran had already faced a **12-day conflict in June 2025**, where its **nuclear facilities and senior military and scientific leadership were targeted**. This earlier attack had already exposed tensions between BRICS ambitions and Western power.

5. **Collective response under Brazil's BRICS chairmanship:** During Brazil's leadership, BRICS issued a **strong joint statement condemning Israeli attacks as violations of international law**. This response demonstrated earlier attempts at collective diplomatic action.

The Iran War and the Strategic Challenge for BRICS

1. **U.S.-Israel attack eliminating Iran's top leadership:** The attack killed **Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei** and dismantled the country's top command structure. The operation was conducted **without formal authorisation from the U.S. Congress**.

2. **Conflict as a challenge to the multipolar world order:** The war cannot be treated as a simple regional dispute. It represents a **direct confrontation with emerging multipolar institutions such as BRICS**.

3. Rubio doctrine

- a. **Advocating Western dominance:** At the **Munich Security Conference**, U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** called for dismantling the multipolar order. His speech promoted a **Western alliance to reclaim economic dominance over the Global South**.
 - b. **Economic competition targeting the Global South:** The doctrine emphasised competition for **market share in India, Africa, and Southeast Asia**. The objective was to re-establish Western economic influence in post-colonial economies.
 - c. **Criticism of international institutions:** Rubio described the **United Nations and other global institutions as ineffective**. This statement reflected a belief that the current international system no longer serves Western strategic interests.
 - d. **Historical comparison with colonial economic expansion:** Analysts compared the situation to the **East India Company's expansion**, where economic power and military force captured markets and governance. The comparison reflects fears of renewed economic dominance.
4. **Exposure of internal contradictions within BRICS:** The crisis highlighted differences among member states with **incompatible strategic orientations**. These divisions weakened the ability of the bloc to act as a unified geopolitical force.
5. **Strategic message against resistance to U.S. primacy:** The conflict sends a warning about the **cost of challenging Western dominance**. It raises doubts about the security and resilience of emerging multipolar institutions.

India's Role as BRICS Chair

1. **Absence of collective BRICS response:** Under India's chairmanship, **no joint statement, emergency meeting, or coordinated diplomatic response** was issued. This silence reduced BRICS' credibility as a geopolitical bloc.
2. **India's silence on the assassination of Iran's leader:** India did not publicly express condolence after the killing of **Ayatollah Khamenei**. This absence of diplomatic response drew criticism.
3. **Individual responses from other BRICS members: Brazil, Russia, and China** independently condemned the U.S. attack. However, the bloc failed to present a unified diplomatic position.
4. **Shift in India's geopolitical alignment:** India has increasingly moved closer to the **Quad and the United States**. This shift reflects a departure from its traditional **Nehruvian non-alignment policy**.
5. **Strategic autonomy interpreted as U.S. alignment:** India describes its foreign policy as **strategic autonomy**, yet critics argue it has translated into closer alignment with the United States.
6. **Violation of India's security role in the Indian Ocean:** The U.S. torpedoed the unarmed Iranian warship **IRIS Dena** in waters under India's strategic influence. The attack occurred **without intelligence sharing or prior consultation with India**.
7. **Weakening of India's claim to Global South leadership:** India's silence during the crisis has eroded its claim of representing the **Global South and acting as a moral diplomatic leader**.

Conclusion

BRICS faces a decisive moment after the Iran crisis exposed its internal divisions and weak collective response. The grouping now stands at a crossroads. It can either strengthen political solidarity, build coordinated diplomacy, and create collective economic and energy frameworks, or risk fragmentation. The future relevance of BRICS will depend on whether its members act together to defend sovereignty and the interests of the Global South.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Iran crisis has exposed the internal contradictions within BRICS and raised questions about its ability to challenge Western dominance in the emerging multipolar world order.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Reevaluating the office of the Speaker

Source: The post “Reevaluating the office of the Speaker” has been created, based on “Reevaluating the office of the Speaker” published in “The Hindu” on 11th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Polity

Context: The recent no-confidence motion moved by the Opposition against Om Birla, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, has reignited debate about the accountability and neutrality of the Speaker’s office. The discussion highlights the evolving role of the Speaker in maintaining the credibility of India’s parliamentary institutions.

Constitutional role and importance of the Speaker

1. The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha and is responsible for ensuring orderly debate and smooth functioning of the House.
2. The Speaker enforces the rules of procedure and safeguards the rights and privileges of members of Parliament.
3. The office maintains the balance between the authority of the government and the voice of the Opposition in legislative proceedings.
4. The Constitution expects the Speaker to function as an impartial authority who rises above party politics after the election.
5. The Speaker also exercises important powers such as recognising members to speak, interpreting procedural rules, disciplining members, and certifying Money Bills.
6. These powers significantly influence legislative outcomes and parliamentary debates, making the neutrality of the office crucial.

Process for the removal of the Speaker

1. The Constitution provides a stringent procedure to remove the Speaker in order to protect the dignity and stability of the office.
2. According to **Article 94(c)**, the Speaker can be removed only through a resolution passed by a majority of the total membership of the Lok Sabha.

3. The process begins when a member submits a written notice to the Secretary-General of the House seeking the Speaker's removal.
4. A **notice period of at least fourteen days** must be given before the motion can be taken up for discussion.
5. The **motion must be supported by at least fifty members of the House to be admitted.**
6. During the debate on the motion, the Speaker may participate as a member of the House and vote in the first instance, but cannot exercise a casting vote in case of a tie.
7. Historically, such motions have been extremely rare and have never succeeded, including attempts against **G. V. Mavalankar, Hukam Singh, and Balram Jakhar.**

Institutional and democratic significance

1. Even when unsuccessful, such motions carry institutional significance by reminding presiding officers that their authority derives from the **confidence of the legislature.**
2. The **credibility of the Speaker's office largely depends on the perception of impartiality** among political actors and the public.
3. **Allegations of partisan conduct can weaken public trust** in parliamentary processes and institutions.

Contemporary challenges affecting the Speaker's office

1. There is an increasing perception of politicisation in parliamentary functioning.
2. Decisions on issues such as disqualification under the anti-defection law and certification of Money Bills are often viewed through a partisan lens.
3. Frequent confrontations between the ruling party and the Opposition have resulted in procedural deadlocks in Parliament.
4. The neutrality of the presiding office is sometimes questioned, which reduces trust among political actors.
5. Parliamentary conventions and unwritten norms that once guided the impartial conduct of the Speaker have gradually weakened due to intensifying political competition.

Way forward

1. Political parties should collectively reaffirm the tradition that the Speaker acts impartially after assuming office.
2. Greater transparency in procedural rulings can strengthen trust in parliamentary institutions.
3. Clear explanations for major decisions, such as rejecting requests for discussion or certifying legislative bills, should be provided.
4. Structured dialogue between the government and the Opposition can reduce confrontations and improve legislative productivity.
5. Codifying best practices related to the Speaker's discretionary powers can help clarify ambiguities in parliamentary procedure.

Conclusion: The Speaker's office remains a cornerstone of parliamentary democracy in India. Strengthening institutional conventions, transparency, and impartiality is essential to preserve Parliament's credibility and ensure effective democratic governance.

Question: The neutrality of the Speaker is essential for the credibility of parliamentary democracy. In this context, examine the constitutional position, removal process, and challenges associated with the office of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Is India's poverty rate 5% or 24%?

Source: The post "Is India's poverty rate 5% or 24%?" has been created, based on "Is India's poverty rate 5% or 24%?" published in "BusinessLine" on 11th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: Recent debates suggest that India's poverty rate could be around **5% or 24%**, depending on the poverty line used. According to the **World Bank**, extreme poverty in India declined significantly, but a large share of the population remains economically vulnerable.

Extreme Poverty Estimates

1. The World Bank measures **extreme poverty** at **\$3.00 per person per day (2021 PPP)**.
2. Using this threshold, India's extreme poverty declined from **about 27% in 2011-12 to 5.3% in 2022-23**.
3. Nearly **270 million people moved above this threshold**, reflecting major progress in reducing extreme deprivation.
4. However, this benchmark mainly captures **bare survival levels of income** rather than economic security.

Poverty in Lower-Middle-Income Context

1. For **lower-middle-income countries**, the World Bank recommends a higher poverty line of **\$4.20 per day**.
2. At this level, **23.9% of India's population (around 342 million people)** were poor in 2022-23.
3. This group includes households that have escaped extreme poverty but remain **economically vulnerable to shocks** such as inflation, job loss, health emergencies, or climate risks.

Government's Approach to Poverty Measurement

1. Government responses in Parliament have largely relied on the **National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**.
2. The MPI measures deprivation across sectors such as **health, education, housing, sanitation, and basic services**.
3. The methodology is supported by the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative**.
4. However, MPI was designed to **complement monetary poverty measures**, not replace them.

Limitations and Methodological Issues

1. Relying solely on MPI avoids the key question of **what income level defines poverty in India today**.

2. Recent poverty estimates also reflect methodological changes in the **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey**, including the **Modified Mixed Reference Period**, which shortens recall periods and may increase measured consumption levels.
3. The **Global MPI 2024** estimates that **16.4% (233.6 million people)** are multidimensionally poor, while an additional **18.7% (266.3 million people)** are vulnerable to falling into multidimensional poverty.
4. Selective focus on headline reductions may overlook households just above the poverty threshold.

Way Forward

1. India should update its **monetary poverty line** to reflect current prices and consumption patterns.
2. A **dashboard approach** combining income-based poverty, multidimensional poverty, and vulnerability indicators should be adopted.
3. Greater transparency in poverty estimation methods and survey changes is necessary.
4. Clear poverty benchmarks are essential for **designing welfare programmes, minimum wages, and targeted subsidies**.

Conclusion: India has made significant progress in reducing **extreme poverty**, but a large population remains economically vulnerable. A comprehensive and transparent poverty measurement framework is necessary to ensure **effective policymaking and democratic accountability**.

Question: Debates over India's poverty rate often arise due to different poverty lines and measurement approaches. Examine the difference between extreme poverty and economic vulnerability in India and discuss the need for a comprehensive poverty measurement framework.

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

Inside China, Authority, Conflict and Strategic Challenges

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International relations

Introduction

China's political evolution since **1949**, when the Communist Party of China came to power, reflects the nature of authority, control, and internal political tensions within the system. The progression from **Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping and later Xi Jinping** highlights how strong leadership has shaped China's political structure. At the same time, internal conflicts, institutional tensions, and external strategic challenges suggest that China's political system may not be as unified as it appears.

Evolution of Leadership and Power Structure

1. **Rise of Communist authority in 1949:** China became a communist state in **1949** when **Mao Zedong led the Communist Party of China to victory** and established a political system centred on strong party control.
2. **Dominance of three iconic leaders:** Although many leaders governed China between **1949 and 2026**, **Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping** left the deepest imprint on China's development and political direction.

3. **Centralised leadership model:** Each of these leaders exercised **unquestioned authority over both the Communist Party and the state**, showing that strong personal leadership has remained central to maintaining power in China.

4. **Leadership as a tool of national resilience:** Strong leadership helped China maintain political stability and resist external domination, allowing the state to consolidate power internally while protecting national sovereignty.

5. **Continuity in governance approach:** Despite differences in style and policies, the leadership of Mao, Deng and Xi demonstrates continuity in the Communist Party's approach of concentrating authority at the top.

Purges and Internal Party Struggles

1. **Purges revealing internal power struggles:** China is often portrayed as a political monolith, yet periodic purges within the Communist Party reveal internal struggles for authority and are used by leaders from **Mao and Deng to Xi** to remove rivals and strengthen control.

2. **Recent military purge under Xi Jinping:** In the latest purge, **PLA General Zhang Youxia**, Vice-Chairman of the **Central Military Commission**, and senior officer **Gen. Liu Zhenli** were removed from the highest policy body of the Communist Party.

3. **Removal of military lawmakers:** The purge also removed **nine military lawmakers from China's Parliament**, including **Ground Force Commander Li Qiaoming** and **Information Support Force Political Commissar Li Wei**.

4. **Language indicating internal conflict:** General Zhang was described in the **People's Liberation Army Daily** as **"a toxin that had to be incised,"** indicating deep internal tensions within the party leadership.

5. **Historical precedent of power struggle:** During Mao's era, the **Liu Shaoqi episode** was seen by experts as an attempted challenge to Mao's authority, showing that internal struggles existed even in earlier periods.

6. **Declining credibility of anti-corruption narrative:** Repeated purges described as **anti-corruption campaigns** are increasingly viewed as attempts to maintain control rather than purely administrative actions.

Trust Deficit and Institutional Challenges

1. **Declining belief in leadership goals:** Over time, confidence in the political goals set by the leadership appears to have weakened, creating a **growing trust deficit within the system**.

2. **Economic pessimism within the country:** A **less optimistic assessment of the Chinese economy** has contributed to internal dissatisfaction and uncertainty within political circles.

3. **Institutional pressures within the system:** Problems within some political institutions are increasing internal tensions that may affect the higher levels of the Communist Party.

4. **Purges as a response to rising tensions:** The removal of senior officials may reflect attempts by the leadership to **retain control and suppress internal opposition** rather than simply addressing corruption.

5. **Weakening perception of party unity:** The idea of China as a unified political monolith is gradually weakening as internal tensions become more visible.

Global Setbacks and Strategic Limitations

1. **Damage to global credibility:** Rising international tensions and China's inability to influence events beyond **East and Southeast Asia** have affected its image as a global power.

2. **Failure of global outreach in Venezuela:** In **early 2026**, China was unable to challenge **U.S. President Donald Trump's** assertion that **the Western Hemisphere belonged to the United States**, despite significant Chinese investments in Venezuela.

3. **Strategic setback in West Asia:** China could not prevent the **U.S. attack on Iran**, which resulted in the death of **Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei**, highlighting limits to Chinese influence.

4. **Negative comparisons in military capability:** Events in West Asia led to **unfavourable comparisons between Chinese weapons and those of the United States and Western countries**, damaging China's reputation.

5. **Impact on China's image as a global competitor:** China's inability to counter the United States in multiple regions weakened the perception that **China is equal to the West in strategic power**.

6. **Internal repercussions of external failures:** These global setbacks may have triggered **recriminations within the Communist Party leadership**, possibly contributing to internal tensions.

China's Recent Strategic Reticence

1. **Shift towards cautious diplomacy:** China, usually known for a **belligerent foreign policy**, has recently adopted a more cautious approach in dealing with the United States and other countries.

2. **Innovation-driven growth continues:** Despite political caution, China is experiencing rapid progress in sectors such as **electric vehicles, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and Artificial Intelligence**.

3. **Reduced confrontation with the United States:** With the exception of the **Taiwan issue**, China has shown reluctance to adopt a confrontational stance towards the United States.

4. **Understated Arctic shipping achievement:** A Chinese cargo ship travelled from **Asia to Europe through the Arctic Ocean in late 2025**, completing the journey in **two weeks instead of three via the Suez Canal**. China, however, presented the route only as improving **global supply chain stability**, rather than projecting it as a **Polar Silk Road initiative**.

5. **Strategic caution linked to economic concerns:** Experts believe this cautious behaviour is intended to avoid provoking Western powers while the Chinese economy faces challenges.

6. **Sensitivity to U.S. warnings in the Arctic:** The United States warned about **Chinese ships near Greenland**, which may have influenced China's restrained position in Arctic politics.

7. **Possible connection with internal political tensions:** Many analysts believe that **problems within the top leadership of the Communist Party** may explain China's recent strategic restraint.

8. **Growing pessimism within society:** A noticeable mood of pessimism is emerging within China, although the reasons behind this sentiment remain unclear.

Conclusion

China's political structure still appears strong, but **internal tensions, declining trust, economic concerns, and global setbacks** suggest deeper challenges within the Communist Party. Understanding these developments is important because China's actions influence Asia and the wider world. A more cooperative and less confrontational China would help global stability and improve relations with countries such as **India**.

Question for practice:

Examine the internal political tensions and strategic challenges facing China under Xi Jinping, and explain how they may affect China's global position.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

AI and the National Security Calculus

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

Introductions

Recent tensions around Artificial Intelligence show how AI is becoming part of global security competition. An American AI lab, Anthropic, has accused three Chinese AI labs—DeepSeek, MoonshotAI, and MiniMax—of distilling frontier models. At the same time, AI models developed by American companies have reportedly been used by the U.S. military to speed up the “kill chain” from target identification to strike. These developments raise major questions about AI diffusion, military use, and global governance.

AI Competition and the Distillation Controversy

1. **Industrial-scale model distillation:** Distillation means training a weaker AI model by learning from the outputs of a stronger model. Anthropic claims Chinese actors conducted **16 million exchanges with its Claude model through about 24,000 fraudulent accounts**, violating access restrictions.

2. **Use of deceptive techniques:** The distillation activity reportedly used sophisticated methods to hide their identity and intent while extracting model outputs. This indicates organised efforts to reproduce advanced AI capabilities.

3. **National security framing:** Anthropic wants DeepSeek, MoonshotAI, and MiniMax to be treated as **national security threats**. This reflects how AI research competition is now being framed in security terms.

Limits of AI Containment Strategies

1. **AI as a dual-use general-purpose technology:** Generative AI is often compared with nuclear technologies. However, it functions more like **semiconductors**, as it supports civilian uses while also having military applications.

2. **Private-sector driven innovation:** Cutting-edge AI research happens mainly in private companies for civilian products. Governments do not control the full development process.

3. **AI models cannot be contained like nuclear materials:** Nuclear non-proliferation works because fissile materials are rare and traceable. Mathematical AI models do not have such physical constraints.

4. **Evidence of technological workarounds:** DeepSeek reportedly achieved **comparable performance to frontier models at a fraction of the cost even after export controls**. This shows restrictions cannot easily prevent technological progress.

5. **Limits of restriction-based control:** Treating simple AI queries as equivalent to weapons proliferation reflects the weakness of containment strategies.

Military Use of AI and Limits of Corporate Guardrails

1. **Use of AI in military operations:** AI models from American labs have reportedly been used by the U.S. military to accelerate the **“kill chain” from target identification to legal approval and strike**.

2. **Military applications of frontier AI models:** Models from companies such as **Anthropic, OpenAI, Google and xAI** can support surveillance, cyberwarfare, and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

3. **Pressure on companies to support defence use:** When Anthropic raised concerns about military uses of its technology, the Pentagon labelled it a **“supply chain risk.”** This designation is normally associated with foreign adversaries.

4. **Competitive pressure among companies:** Rival firms may accept permissive defence contracts to secure government clients. OpenAI reportedly accepted such arrangements, indicating a **race to the bottom** in guardrails.

5. **Weakness of corporate safeguards:** When governments demand military access, companies can be pressured, replaced, or overridden. Corporate guardrails therefore cannot ensure responsible use.

Market Power and Innovation Concerns

1. **Restrictions strengthen dominant firms:** Input-based restrictions make it harder for competitors to challenge large U.S. companies even in civilian AI markets.

2. **Collateral damage to global innovation:** These restrictions can weaken scientific collaboration, technological innovation, and economic development.

3. **Debate over intellectual property and fairness:** Distillation is often described as industrial-scale intellectual property theft. However, frontier AI models themselves are trained on **billions of web pages created by people who did not consent or receive compensation**.

4. **Parallel extractive processes:** Asking an AI model millions of questions and learning from its responses can be viewed as similar to training models on large public datasets.

5. **Coordinated industry response:** AI firms whose models were distilled argue for coordinated action by the **AI industry, cloud providers, and policymakers**. Such coordination may further concentrate market power among a few companies.

Conclusion

Generative AI is likely to become part of military systems across countries. Corporate guardrails cannot ensure responsible use because governments can pressure companies, replace them, or override restrictions. Effective regulation therefore requires **plurilateral commitments by states**. These should ensure **meaningful human control over lethal decisions, prohibitions on mass civilian surveillance, and auditable technical standards**. Such commitments must apply universally to remain effective.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the growing use of Artificial Intelligence in military systems and global technological competition is reshaping the national security calculus.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Withdrawing life-supporting care: The procedure and the hurdles

Source: The post “**Withdrawing life-supporting care: The procedure and the hurdles**” has been created, based on “**Withdrawing life-supporting care: The procedure and the hurdles**” published in “Indian Express” on 12th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Science and technology

Context: Euthanasia refers to the practice of intentionally ending or allowing the end of a person’s life in order to relieve suffering caused by a terminal or incurable illness. In India, **active euthanasia is illegal**, but **passive euthanasia has been permitted by the Supreme Court under strict safeguards**, recognising the right to die with dignity as part of **Article 21 of the Constitution**. Important judicial developments include the judgments in Aruna Shanbaug Case and Common Cause vs Union of India, which laid down guidelines for passive euthanasia and living wills.

Types of Euthanasia

I. Active Euthanasia

- a. Active euthanasia refers to the deliberate act of ending a patient’s life through measures such as administering a lethal injection or drug.
- b. This form of euthanasia is illegal in India because it involves directly causing the death of a patient.
- c. However, active euthanasia is legal in some countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and parts of Europe under specific regulations.

II. Passive Euthanasia

- a. Passive euthanasia refers **to allowing a patient to die naturally by withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment**.

- b. It involves stopping treatments that artificially prolong life when there is no reasonable hope of recovery.
- c. Such treatments may include ventilator support, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, dialysis, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or artificial nutrition.

Procedure for Passive Euthanasia in India

1. Assessment by the Treating Physician

- a. The process begins when the treating physician assesses whether the patient has any realistic possibility of recovery or meaningful quality of life.
- b. The physician evaluates the medical condition and determines whether continuing treatment would only prolong suffering.

2. Review by the Primary Medical Board

- a. A Primary Medical Board is constituted in the hospital to examine the case.
- b. The board consists of the treating physician and two subject experts with at least five years of experience.
- c. The board reviews the patient's condition and discusses the prognosis with the patient's family members.
- d. After consultation, the board and the family attempt to reach a shared decision regarding the withdrawal or continuation of treatment.

3. Review by the Secondary Medical Board

- a. If the decision is made to withdraw life-sustaining treatment, the case is referred to a Secondary Medical Board.
- b. This board consists of a doctor nominated by the district Chief Medical Officer and two subject experts with at least five years of experience.
- c. The secondary board is required to review the case and make a decision within 48 hours.

4. Informing the Magistrate

- a. After approval by the secondary medical board, the hospital must inform the jurisdictional magistrate before withdrawing life-supporting treatment.
- b. The magistrate's approval is not mandatory, but the information must be formally communicated.

Role of Living Will

- 1. A living will is a legal document through which a person can express their wishes regarding medical treatment in advance.
- 2. It becomes applicable when the person loses the capacity to make decisions due to illness or incapacity.
- 3. Through a living will, individuals can specify whether they want life-supporting treatments to be continued or withdrawn.
- 4. The document also allows a patient to nominate a trusted person who can take medical decisions on their behalf.

Key Hurdles in Implementation

1. **Lack of Medical Expertise:** Many hospitals, especially in smaller towns, do not have enough experienced specialists to form the required medical boards.
2. **Delay in Formation of Secondary Boards:** The process requires a list of nominated doctors from the district Chief Medical Officer, but many states have not yet prepared such lists.
3. **Administrative and Procedural Complexity:** The requirement of multiple boards and formal procedures often makes the process slow and difficult to implement in practice.
4. **Fear of Legal Consequences:** Many private hospitals hesitate to withdraw life-supporting treatment because they fear litigation and legal complications.
5. **Emotional and Ethical Concerns:** Families often experience emotional distress and guilt while taking decisions related to withdrawing life-sustaining treatment.

Way Forward

1. The government should enact a **clear law on euthanasia** to replace reliance on judicial guidelines.
2. States should **prepare lists of qualified doctors** for secondary medical boards to ensure timely decisions.
3. Hospitals should strengthen **palliative care and ethics committees** to guide end-of-life decisions.
4. Awareness about **living wills** should be increased to respect patient autonomy.
5. **Legal protection for doctors** acting in good faith should be ensured to reduce fear of litigation.

Conclusion: Passive euthanasia in India attempts to balance patient autonomy, medical ethics, and legal safeguards. Although the Supreme Court has provided a framework to ensure the right to die with dignity, effective implementation requires better awareness, institutional preparedness, and simplification of procedures.

Question: Explain the concept of euthanasia and discuss the procedure and challenges in implementing passive euthanasia in India.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Kisan Credit Card: Fueling Growth in Agriculture

Source: The post “Kisan Credit Card: Fueling Growth in Agriculture” has been created, based on “Kisan Credit Card: Fueling Growth in Agriculture” published in “PIB” on 12th March 2026

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The Kisan Credit Card Scheme was introduced in 1998 to provide timely and affordable institutional credit to farmers for crop cultivation and allied activities. The scheme aims to reduce dependence on informal moneylenders and promote financial inclusion among farmers. With around 46.1% of India’s population dependent on agriculture, strengthening institutional credit remains a key policy priority.

Key Features of KCC

1. The scheme provides short-term crop loans, working capital, and investment credit for agriculture and allied activities.
2. It offers a RuPay-enabled card allowing flexible withdrawals and digital payments.

3. It provides a single-window credit system covering cultivation, post-harvest expenses, marketing, and farm maintenance.
4. The credit is delivered through commercial banks, regional rural banks, and cooperative banks.

Eligible Beneficiaries

1. Individual farmers and joint borrowers who are owner-cultivators.
2. Tenant farmers, oral lessees, and sharecroppers.
3. Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), ensuring wider financial inclusion.

Recent Reforms and Initiatives

1. Expansion of Credit Limits

- a. Under the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme**, the crop loan limit has been increased from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh.
- b. The **collateral-free credit limit** has been **raised from ₹1.6 lakh to ₹2 lakh per borrower**.
- c. Short-term loans up to ₹3 lakh are available at 7% interest, reduced to 4% for timely repayment.

2. Digital Transformation: The Kisan Rin Portal integrates farmer data, loan disbursement details, and interest subvention claims, improving transparency and monitoring.

3. Simplified Application

- a. A one-page application form linked with PM-KISAN records has simplified the application process.
- b. Common Service Centres (CSCs) assist farmers in applying digitally.

Scale and Outreach

1. More than 7.72 crore KCCs are currently active in India.
2. The total outstanding credit under the scheme is around ₹10.2 lakh crore.
3. Around 457 banks participate in the scheme, including commercial, regional rural, and cooperative banks.
4. The scheme has been extended to allied sectors such as animal husbandry, fisheries, and dairy.

Challenges

1. Many tenant farmers and sharecroppers lack land records, making it difficult to access KCC loans.
2. Limited awareness among farmers in remote areas reduces scheme utilization.
3. Delays in loan processing and bureaucratic procedures still exist in some banks.
4. Continued dependence on informal moneylenders persists in certain regions.
5. Low credit coverage in allied sectors like fisheries and animal husbandry in some states.

Way Forward

1. The government should expand awareness campaigns and financial literacy programmes to increase adoption of KCC.
2. Banks should simplify procedures and improve digital infrastructure to ensure faster credit delivery.
3. Special measures should be taken to include tenant farmers and sharecroppers through flexible eligibility norms.

4. Greater focus should be placed on credit support for allied sectors to diversify farmers' incomes.

Conclusion: The Kisan Credit Card scheme has become a crucial instrument for ensuring affordable agricultural credit. Strengthening digital platforms, expanding coverage, and addressing implementation challenges will further enhance its role in promoting agricultural productivity, financial inclusion, and rural development.

Question: Discuss the role of the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme in improving access to institutional credit for farmers. Highlight recent reforms, challenges, and the way forward.

Source: [PIB](#)

A Revision of GDP and Its Implications

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Annual **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** measures the final value of goods and services produced in an economy during a year. It is the most widely used indicator of a country's economic size. GDP estimates are prepared using data on output and prices following the **UN System of National Accounts (UNSNA)** framework. India has revised its **National Accounts Statistics (NAS)** with **2022-23 as the new base year**, replacing the **2011-12 series**, which had faced criticism regarding the accuracy of growth estimates and sectoral structure.

Why the New GDP Series Was Highly Anticipated

1. **Long gap since previous revision:** The revised GDP series was released **after 11 years**, while base year revisions usually take place every **5-10 years**, increasing interest in the new estimates.
2. **Questions over reliability of earlier GDP estimates:** Many official and independent analysts raised doubts about the **veracity of GDP estimates in the 2011-12 series released in 2015**.
3. **Unusual manufacturing growth patterns:** The **manufacturing sector showed higher annual growth rates and a different direction of change**, compared with earlier estimates.
4. **Large expansion of private corporate sector estimates:** The **non-financial private corporate sector (PCS)** appeared much larger in the **2011-12 series**, which differed sharply from earlier economic structures.
5. **Claims of overestimated GDP growth:** Several experts argued that **official GDP growth rates during the last decade were significantly overestimated** in the earlier series.
6. **International criticism of statistical quality:** The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** awarded India a **'C' grade for the quality of National Accounts Statistics**, raising concerns about data credibility.

Why Revision Was Needed

1. **GDP as the main measure of economic size:** **GDP represents the final value of goods and services produced in a year, net of material inputs** and is the most widely used measure of economic size.

2. Use of international statistical framework: GDP estimates follow the **UN System of National Accounts (UNSNA)**, and the latest revision aligns with its **2025 edition**.

3. Periodic revision of national accounts: The base year of **National Accounts Statistics (NAS)** is revised roughly every **five to ten years** to update GDP and related aggregates.

4. Updating other macroeconomic aggregates: The revision also updates **national savings, consumption, and investment estimates**.

5. Changes in production structure over time: As the economy expands, the **mix of goods and services produced changes**, and their prices also change.

6. Capturing the real size of the economy: These changes influence the **real size of the economy, excluding price rise**, which makes periodic revision necessary.

7. Complex statistical exercise: Revising National Accounts Statistics (NAS) requires **large datasets, multiple statistical procedures, and institutional effort**, usually undertaken by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.

Key Changes in the New GDP Series

1. Reduction in the absolute size of GDP: The revised estimates show that **GDP's absolute size declined by about 3-4%** compared with the earlier series.

2. Minimal change in growth rates: Despite the revision, **annual growth rates in the new and old series differ only by about ±1 percentage point**.

3. Change in sectoral composition: The share of **agriculture and industry increased**, while the **share of services declined** in the new series.

4. Marginal rise in manufacturing share: The **manufacturing sector's share increased slightly from 14.3% to 14.7% of GDP**.

5. Decline in manufacturing's absolute size: Even with a higher share, the **absolute size of manufacturing declined by about 1.5-1.6%**, which remains significant because the sector was central to earlier debates.

6. Reduced share of the private corporate sector: The **non-financial private corporate sector's share declined from 35.4% to 33.9% in 2022-23**, showing a **1.5 percentage point drop**.

7. Steeper decline in the following year: The difference between the old and new GDP series in the **private corporate sector (PCS) share widens to 3.4 percentage points in 2023-24**, compared with **1.5 percentage points in 2022-23**.

8. Increase in the household or informal sector share: The **household sector share increased by 0.7 percentage points in 2022-23 and 2.7 percentage points in 2023-24**, mainly due to agriculture.

9. Comparison using overlapping years: The new series compares **growth rates and sectoral shares for 2022-23 and 2023-24 with the 2011-12 series at current prices**.

Implications for India's Economy

1. **Unexpected fall in GDP size after rebasing:** In principle, rebasing should **not reduce the absolute GDP size at current prices**, because the underlying economy remains the same.
2. **Possible correction of earlier overestimation:** The **3–4% reduction in GDP size** may represent a **correction** to earlier overestimated growth rates.
3. **Reassessment of economic performance:** Even a modest correction changes the **understanding of sectoral contribution and overall economic performance**.
4. **Impact on long-term economic targets:** With a **smaller estimated GDP size**, achieving the **\$5-trillion economy target announced in 2019** may take longer.
5. **Partial response to earlier criticisms:** The revised estimates appear to **partly address concerns about sectoral shares and corporate sector size**.

Way Forward

1. **Need for detailed methodological disclosure:** Greater transparency about **datasets, statistical methods, and estimation procedures** is necessary to assess the new series.
2. **Clarifying causes of growth differences:** Differences in growth rates may arise from **methodological changes, new datasets, or revised statistical ratios**.
3. **Strengthening credibility of national accounts:** Clear methodological explanations will improve **confidence in the reliability of India's GDP estimates**.
4. **Further examination of other GDP components:** A fuller understanding also requires analysis of **consumption, expenditure, and price estimates**, which remain outside the current discussion.

Conclusion

The **2022–23 GDP revision** introduces important adjustments in India's economic measurement. The new series shows a **3–4% reduction in GDP size**, modest changes in sectoral shares, and a **decline in the private corporate sector's contribution**. These changes may correct earlier overestimation of growth. However, **greater methodological transparency and further evaluation** are essential to fully assess the reliability of the revised GDP estimates.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the significance of the revision of India's GDP base year to 2022–23 and discuss its key changes and implications for understanding the country's economic performance.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

What is the Essential Commodities Act, why has it been invoked for LPG supply?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

The Union Government has invoked the **Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955** due to supply disruptions caused by the **US-Israel-Iran war in West Asia**. The conflict has affected the **global energy supply chain and LPG shipments from the Persian Gulf to India**. Since LPG is used by crores of households, the government has used emergency powers under the Act to prevent shortages, regulate supply and ensure continuous availability of cooking gas for domestic consumers.

What is Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955

- 1. Legal authority of the Act:** The **Essential Commodities Act, 1955** empowers the Union Government to regulate or prohibit the production, supply, distribution, trade and commerce of commodities declared as essential.
- 2. Scope of essential commodities:** The schedule of the Act includes **food items, fertilizers, drugs and petroleum products**, and the **Central Government can modify the list and add new items when required**.
- 3. Crisis management instrument:** The Act is typically invoked during emergencies to **prevent hoarding, black marketing, artificial shortages and price gouging in essential commodities**.
- 4. Control over supply chain:** The government can **direct production levels, regulate storage, prioritise allocation and control distribution of essential commodities** under the Act.
- 5. Price stabilisation tool:** The Act also allows the government to **fix price caps and regulate trade practices** to ensure citizens continue to access basic necessities during supply disruptions.

Reasons for Invoking the ECA for LPG Supply

- 1. High import dependence:** India imports **more than 60% of its total LPG requirement**, making domestic supply highly dependent on international markets.
- 2. Concentration of supply region:** Nearly **90% of LPG imports come from the Persian Gulf**, which increases vulnerability to disruptions in this region.
- 3. Disruption of the Strait of Hormuz route:** The **US-Israel-Iran conflict has halted vessel movements through the Strait of Hormuz**, a key maritime route used for transporting LPG to India.
- 4. Limited domestic inventory:** India currently holds only **25-30 days of LPG inventory**, creating a serious risk of shortage if imports remain disrupted.
- 5. Preventing consumer hardship:** Invoking the Act allows the government to **act quickly to prevent shortages and protect crores of domestic LPG consumers** from supply disruptions.

Government Measures to Secure LPG Supply

- 1. Mandatory diversion for LPG production:** All public and private refineries must divert propane, butane and other C3/C4 streams exclusively for LPG production, increasing domestic supply.
- 2. Priority allocation for households:** The entire additional LPG output must be supplied only to three public sector oil marketing companies — IndianOil, BPCL and HPCL — for domestic consumers.
- 3. Restriction on petrochemical diversion:** Producers are not allowed to divert propane or butane streams for petrochemical production, ensuring that LPG production remains the top priority.
- 4. Anti-hoarding consumer control:** A 25-day inter-booking period for LPG cylinder refills has been introduced to prevent hoarding and unnecessary stockpiling.
- 5. Introduction of pooled gas pricing:** The government has introduced pooled pricing to prevent sharp price increases and distribute the cost burden across users.
- 6. Role of GAIL in gas reallocation:** GAIL (India) Ltd has been tasked with reallocating gas from lower-priority users to priority sectors such as domestic PNG, CNG, LPG plants and pipeline operations.
- 7. Role of PPAC in pooled price determination:** The Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) will periodically calculate and notify a single pooled gas price based on the average cost of diverted gas.
- 8. Mandatory acceptance of pooled pricing:** Entities receiving gas must legally accept the pooled price even if it overrides previous contracts, ensuring equitable cost sharing.

Impact of the West Asia Conflict on India's LPG Supply

- 1. Search for alternative suppliers:** India has begun sourcing spot LPG cargoes from distant suppliers such as the United States, Norway and Algeria, which may increase supply costs.
- 2. Pressure on commercial LPG markets:** Reports show commercial LPG supply is under severe pressure in cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Pune.
- 3. Thin domestic stock buffer:** The available 25–30 days of LPG inventory provides only a limited cushion if supply disruptions continue.
- 4. Risk of larger supply gaps:** A prolonged conflict in West Asia could create significant LPG shortages if alternate supplies are not increased quickly.
- 5. Impact on hospitality sector:** Hotels, restaurants, eateries, bakeries and food courts have already reported supply halts or reduction in menu items due to LPG shortages.
- 6. Disruption of service activities:** Gas crematoriums and gas-based laundry and ironing services are also facing shortages due to supply constraints.

Conclusion

The invocation of the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955** highlights the importance of government intervention during supply disruptions of essential fuels like LPG. The Act enables the government to control production, regulate distribution and stabilise prices to protect domestic consumers. However,

the situation also underlines the **strategic risk of high import dependence and the need for diversified supply sources to strengthen India's energy security.**

Question for practice:

Discuss the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 and explain why the Union Government has invoked it to secure LPG supply in India amid the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Source: [Businessline](#)

Renewable Transition in India: Policy and Institutional Bottlenecks

Source: The post "**Renewable Transition in India: Policy and Institutional Bottlenecks**" has been created, based on "**India's renewable transition caught between stranded power and institutional Inertia**" published in "The Hindu" on 13th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India has made significant progress in expanding renewable energy capacity and attracting investment in the sector. However, operational challenges in the power transmission system are emerging as critical constraints.

Transmission Congestion in Rajasthan

1. Rajasthan currently has around **23 GW of commissioned renewable energy capacity**, but the available evacuation margin is only about **18.9 GW**.
2. Due to this mismatch, **more than 4,000 MW of fully commissioned renewable capacity cannot evacuate power during peak solar hours.**
3. If curtailment were distributed proportionately among all generators, the losses would be approximately **15 percent**, which would be operationally inconvenient but financially manageable.
4. However, the entire burden of curtailment falls on projects operating under **Temporary General Network Access (T-GNA)**, while projects with **Permanent GNA continue to operate without interruption.**
5. This binary treatment creates financial distress for renewable developers who completed projects on time and obtained all required approvals.

Under-utilisation of Transmission Infrastructure

1. High-capacity **765 kV double-circuit transmission corridors** are designed to evacuate around **6,000 MW of power.**
2. Each of these corridors costs approximately **₹4,000-₹5,000 crore to build.**
3. Despite this design capacity, many corridors are currently operating at only **600-1,000 MW**, which means utilisation is often **below 20 percent.**
4. As a result, several renewable plants remain connected to the grid but are **unable to inject electricity due to gaps in transmission readiness.**
5. Since these investments are recovered through consumer tariffs, **customers end up paying for infrastructure that delivers only a fraction of its intended value.**

Government Initiatives to Improve Clean Energy Utilisation

1. Green Energy Corridor (GEC)

1. The **Green Energy Corridor** programme was launched to strengthen the power transmission network for evacuating renewable energy from generation centres to demand centres.
2. The project focuses on building dedicated transmission lines and substations to integrate large-scale renewable energy into the national grid.
3. It includes **intra-state and inter-state transmission infrastructure**, particularly in renewable-rich states such as **Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu**.
4. The initiative helps reduce renewable energy curtailment and improves grid stability.

2. National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM)

1. The **National Smart Grid Mission** aims to modernise the electricity grid using advanced communication and digital technologies.
2. It promotes smart meters, automation, and real-time monitoring of power flows.
3. Smart grid systems enable better demand management and facilitate efficient integration of renewable energy sources.

3. Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)

1. The **Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme** focuses on strengthening power distribution companies (DISCOMs).
2. It aims to reduce technical and commercial losses and improve the financial health of the distribution sector.
3. Improved distribution infrastructure helps utilities absorb higher shares of renewable energy without causing grid stress.

4. National Electricity Policy and Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO)

1. The government mandates **Renewable Purchase Obligations** requiring power distribution companies and large consumers to procure a certain share of electricity from renewable sources.
2. This policy ensures stable demand for renewable energy and encourages better utilisation of installed capacity.
3. Compliance mechanisms and penalties are used to ensure adherence to these targets.

5. Energy Storage and Battery Initiatives

1. The government is promoting **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)** to address the intermittency of solar and wind power.
2. Energy storage allows excess renewable energy generated during peak production hours to be stored and used later.
3. This improves grid flexibility and reduces renewable energy curtailment.

6. Real-Time Power Market and Green Day-Ahead Market

1. Power exchanges now operate **real-time electricity markets** that allow renewable energy generators to sell surplus electricity efficiently.
2. The **Green Day-Ahead Market (GDAM)** enables trading exclusively in renewable power.
3. These market mechanisms improve renewable energy utilisation by enabling flexible power trading.

Institutional and Operational Issues

1. Limited Institutional Mandate

1. The national grid operator, **Grid Controller of India Limited**, is primarily mandated to maintain grid stability.
2. However, it does not have explicit accountability for **maximising the utilisation of transmission assets within safe operating limits**.
3. Consequently, there are **no formal utilisation benchmarks or automatic review mechanisms** when infrastructure operates significantly below capacity.

2. Planning-Operations Disconnect

1. Transmission corridors are planned by **Central Transmission Utility of India Limited** based on projected renewable capacity.
2. Developers receive General Network Access and invest in projects assuming that the planned transmission capacity will allow evacuation.
3. However, when corridors designed for **6,000 MW are operationally restricted to around 1,000 MW**, a credibility gap emerges between planning and actual operations.
4. This mismatch places the **commercial risks primarily on renewable generators**, rather than on the institutions responsible for planning and operations.

3. Operational Conservatism

1. Grid operators often cite **voltage oscillations and potential instability** as reasons for restricting power flow.
2. Although these challenges are real, modern technologies such as **STATCOMs, reactive power devices, and special protection schemes** can effectively address them.
3. Many renewable plants already have **static VAR generators and harmonic filters**, yet they are not allowed to inject power due to conservative operational limits.
4. This indicates that the challenge is increasingly **institutional responsiveness rather than technical feasibility**.

Way Forward

1. The mandate of **Grid Controller of India Limited** should be expanded to include **maximising transmission asset utilisation while maintaining grid stability**.
2. Curtailment in congested regions should be **distributed proportionately across all generators instead of being imposed entirely on T-GNA projects**.
3. Unused or under-utilised General Network Access capacity should be **dynamically reallocated through transparent real-time mechanisms**.
4. Persistent under-utilisation of major transmission assets should trigger **automatic technical reviews and public reporting**.
5. Advanced grid management approaches such as **dynamic security assessment, probabilistic risk evaluation, and adaptive line ratings** should be adopted to improve utilisation while ensuring reliability.

Conclusion: India's renewable energy transition depends not only on expanding generation capacity but also on ensuring efficient grid operations. Addressing transmission congestion, improving institutional accountability, and adopting modern grid management techniques are essential to ensure that renewable infrastructure delivers its full economic and environmental benefits.

Question: Transmission congestion and operational conservatism are emerging as major constraints in India's renewable energy transition. Discuss with reference to the situation in Rajasthan.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Internationalising Higher Education in India: A Reality Check

Source: The post "**Internationalising Higher Education in India: A Reality Check**" has been created, based on "**A reality check on Indian ambition for internationalising higher education**" published in "The Hindu" on 13th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: India is increasingly focusing on internationalising its higher education system by encouraging foreign universities, branch campuses, and academic collaborations. This ambition has gained momentum amid changing global higher education dynamics and policy initiatives by institutions such as NITI Aayog.

Changing Global Higher Education Landscape

1. International higher education has entered a phase of instability due to rising immigration restrictions and geopolitical tensions.
2. Countries such as the **United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia** have tightened student immigration policies.
3. As a result, these countries increasingly prefer to establish **branch campuses and transnational education programmes** in student-origin countries rather than hosting students domestically.

India's Efforts to Become an Education Hub

1. India aims to attract foreign universities and position itself as a global education destination.
2. Several leading U.K. universities such as **Queen's University Belfast, University of Bristol, University of Liverpool, and University of York** have committed to establishing campuses in India.
3. The **University of Southampton** has already opened a campus in the Delhi region.
4. These developments indicate growing international confidence in India's higher education market.

Opportunities for India

1. Expanding Global Education Market

- a. Increasing restrictions in traditional destination countries create opportunities for India to host international programmes and campuses.
- b. India's large youth population and expanding middle class make it an attractive destination for foreign universities.

2. Academic Collaboration and Quality Improvement

- a. International partnerships can improve teaching standards, research collaboration, and curriculum innovation.
- b. Exposure to global academic practices can strengthen India's higher education ecosystem.

3. Economic and Knowledge Benefits

- a. Hosting foreign campuses can attract international students and investment.
- b. It can also generate employment and strengthen India's knowledge economy.

Challenges and Limitations

1. Infrastructure Deficits

- a. Most Indian higher education institutions lack basic infrastructure required for international collaboration.
- b. There is a shortage of adequate hostels, laboratories, and support services for international students.

2. Strong Global Competition

- a. Countries such as **Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, and China** have already established strong education hubs.
- b. For example, Malaysia's **EduCity Iskandar** hosts several international university campuses.

3. Risk of Academic Enclaves

- a. Foreign branch campuses may function as isolated institutions without meaningful integration with local universities.
- b. This may limit knowledge transfer and reduce broader benefits to the national education system.

4. Brain Drain Concerns

- a. A significant proportion of students studying abroad do not return to their home countries.
- b. Although hosting foreign campuses may reduce outward migration, the aspiration to emigrate for better opportunities may still persist.

Way Forward

1. India should strengthen **infrastructure and student support services** in universities capable of attracting international collaboration.
2. Institutions must professionalise international offices to facilitate global partnerships and student mobility.
3. Policies should ensure that foreign campuses **integrate with local academic ecosystems rather than operating as isolated enclaves**.
4. The internationalisation strategy must focus on **quality improvement, research collaboration, and mutual academic benefits**.

Conclusion: India's ambition to become a global education hub presents significant opportunities, but success depends on addressing structural gaps in infrastructure, governance, and academic integration. A balanced

approach that strengthens domestic institutions while encouraging international collaboration will be crucial for achieving sustainable internationalisation of higher education.

Question: India aims to become a global hub for international higher education. Examine the opportunities and challenges in internationalising India's higher education sector.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Women's Political Participation in India

UPSC Syllabus: GS paper- Issues related to women, **GS paper II-** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Introduction

Women's participation in electoral politics in India has expanded significantly over the past six decades. Women now vote in numbers almost equal to men, and in many State elections they even surpass male turnout. However, this growth in electoral participation has not produced similar gains in representation or political power. **India therefore presents a clear democratic paradox: women are active voters but remain underrepresented in legislative institutions and political decision-making.**

Rise of Women in Political Participation in India

- 1. Early Gender Gap in Electoral Participation:** In the decades after Independence, women's turnout remained lower than men. In the **1967 Lok Sabha election, male turnout was 66.7% while female turnout was 55.5%, creating a gap of 11.2 percentage points**, which widened slightly to **11.8 points in 1971**.
- 2. Structural Reasons for Low Participation:** Lower female literacy, restricted mobility, domestic responsibilities, and limited political outreach reduced women's engagement with elections during the early decades.
- 3. Steady Reduction in Gender Turnout Gap:** From the **1980s onward the turnout gap declined steadily**, reflecting gradual social and political change. By **2009 the gap had reduced to 4.4 percentage points**, indicating growing electoral inclusion.
- 4. Near Parity in Recent Lok Sabha Elections:** A major shift occurred in the last decade. The gender turnout gap fell to **1.5 percentage points in 2014**, and in **2019 and 2024 women voted at nearly the same rate as men**, showing significant progress in participation.
- 5. Rise in Women's Turnout in State Assembly Elections:** In the early **1990s women's turnout was 4-5 percentage points lower than men**, but the gap narrowed steadily during the 2000s.
- 6. Women Surpassing Men in State Elections:** After **2011 women began voting at slightly higher rates than men**, with the turnout gap becoming **+1.13 percentage points during 2011-13 and rising to 2.82 points in 2015-16**, remaining **1.6 points during 2020-25**.

Limits of Participation

- 1. Gender Gap:** Despite high voter turnout, women participate less in visible political activities such as rallies, meetings, processions, and door-to-door canvassing. Women attending election meetings increased from **9% in 2009 to around 16% in recent elections**, while participation in processions and canvassing rose from **5-6% to about 11%**, yet male participation remains much higher.
- 2. Family Permission Constraint:** The **Lokniti-CSDS Survey on Women and Politics (2019)** shows that many women require family approval to attend rallies, meet candidates, or take part in campaigning.
- 3. Impact of Social Norms:** Women's public political engagement is shaped by family and social expectations, which limit their participation in campaign activities.
- 4. Low Representation in Parliament:** Women remain underrepresented in legislative institutions. In the **first Lok Sabha in 1952 only 22 women were elected**, and representation remained modest for several decades.
- 5. Gradual Rise in Women MPs:** The number of women MPs increased from **59 in 2009 to 62 in 2014**, reached a **historic high of 78 in 2019**, and slightly declined to **74 in 2024**.
- 6. Representation Gap:** Even at its peak, women constituted only **about 14% of the Lok Sabha**, despite forming **nearly 50% of the electorate**, highlighting the gap between participation and political power.

Structural and Social Barriers

- 1. Limited Nomination of Women Candidates:** The number of women candidates increased from **45 in 1957 to 599 in 1996**, and further to **668 in 2014, 726 in 2019, and 800 in 2024**, yet male candidates continue to dominate the contest.
- 2. Women's Higher Electoral Success Rate:** Success rate data challenges the claim that women are less electable. In **1957, 49% of women candidates won compared to 33% of men**, and in **1962 women's success rate was 47% against 25% for men**.
- 3. Comparable Success in Recent Elections:** In **2019, 11% of women candidates won compared to 6% of men**, and in **2024 the success rates were 9% for women and 6% for men**, showing that women perform competitively when nominated.
- 4. Limited Political Autonomy:** Women's voting decisions are not always independent. In **2014, 51% reported voting without advice**, and this declined slightly to **50% in 2024**.
- 5. Family Influence on Political Choices:** Around **52% of women consider it important to share the same political views as their family**, showing the role of household influence in shaping political preferences.
- 6. Perceived Unequal Political Opportunities:** According to survey responses, **58% believe women from political families have easier entry into politics**, while **57% feel women from higher economic backgrounds have an advantage**.
- 7. Preference for Male Candidates:** Nearly **44% believe political parties prefer men when allocating tickets**, and a similar proportion believe voters also favour male candidates.

8. Patriarchal and Social Constraints: Patriarchal structures were cited by 22% of women as the biggest obstacle, followed by household responsibilities (13%), lack of confidence or experience (12%), cultural norms (7%), and financial or structural constraints (6%).

Way Forward

- 1. Women's Reservation:** The **Women's Reservation Bill** can increase women's presence in legislatures and help bridge the gap between high voter participation and low political representation.
- 2. Electoral Reforms:** Measures to **check criminalisation of politics and the influence of black money** are necessary to create fair conditions for women candidates.
- 3. Party Democracy:** Institutionalising **intra-party democracy** can widen the pool of women candidates and improve their chances of receiving party nominations.
- 4. Balanced Nominations:** Political parties can promote representation by **nominating about 33% women in elections to Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils**.
- 5. Grassroots Leadership:** Strengthening **women's participation in Panchayati Raj institutions and women self-help groups** can create capable candidates for higher legislative positions.
- 6. Political Capacity:** Encouraging **girls' participation in university politics, debates, internships, and gender sensitisation programmes** can strengthen political awareness and leadership skills.
- 7. Institutional Support:** Strong **women's agencies and organisations** can promote equality of opportunity and support women's engagement in politics.
- 8. Global Commitment:** Reaffirming commitment to the **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration on women's political empowerment** can support progress toward the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Conclusion

Women's electoral participation in India has expanded significantly, and in several elections their turnout now matches or exceeds that of men. Yet **representation, political autonomy, and leadership opportunities remain limited** due to structural and social barriers. Bridging this gap requires **institutional reforms, greater party support, and sustained social change** so that women's participation leads to genuine political empowerment.

Question for practice:

Examine the rise in women's electoral participation in India and explain why this increase has not translated into proportional political representation and power.

Source: The Hindu

Preparing India for a true innovation-led economy

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

Introduction

India faces a clear paradox in **research, development, and innovation (RDI)**. Government ambition has grown through large funding commitments, regulatory reforms, and better global rankings. However, outcomes remain weak. **R&D spending is low, global technological influence is limited, and private-sector participation is inadequate.** India's challenge is no longer policy intent but execution. Real transformation requires stronger industry investment, better research commercialisation, and deeper systemic change across the innovation ecosystem.

Government Policy Push for Innovation

- 1. Large financial commitments for RDI:** The government announced a **₹1,00,000 crore Research, Development, and Innovation Fund** and a **₹20,000 crore corpus for deep-tech startups**. These measures aim to strengthen long-term technological research and innovation capacity.
- 2. Support for early-stage innovation ecosystems:** Funding for **Atal Tinkering Labs increased from ₹500 crore to ₹3,200 crore**, showing a focus on building innovation capacity among young students and future entrepreneurs.
- 3. Regulatory reforms to promote deep-tech research:** The removal of the **three-year existence requirement** allows deep-tech startups easier access to schemes under the **Industrial R&D Promotion Programme**.
- 4. Opening new sectors for innovation activity:** The **SHANTI Act, 2025** allows patents for the **peaceful uses of nuclear energy and radiation**, creating opportunities for private-sector research and technological development.
- 5. Improvement in global innovation indicators:** India's **Global Innovation Index ranking improved to 38 among 139 economies in 2025**, showing progress in innovation capacity.
- 6. Rising domestic patent activity:** Patent filings increased from **under 59,000 in 2020–21 to more than 1,10,000 in 2024–25**, and **domestic filings now account for about 62%** of the total.
- 7. Government initiatives for gender inclusion in science:** Programmes such as **Women's Instinct for Developing and Ushering in Scientific Heights and Innovations (WIDUSHI)** and **Women in Science and Engineering - KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN)** aim to increase women's participation in scientific research and engineering fields.

Structural Weaknesses in India's R&D Ecosystem

- 1. Low national R&D expenditure:** India spends **only 0.65% of GDP on R&D**, which is far below advanced economies and even lower than most **BRICS countries except South Africa**.

2. Weak private-sector participation in research: In many innovation-leading economies, **industry drives the majority of R&D spending**. In India, the **state still carries a disproportionate share**, showing weak corporate investment in long-term research.

3. Large gap in global patent scale: India's patent filings are far lower than **China's 1.8 million applications** and **about 600,000 applications in the United States**, showing limited technological influence.

4. Limited global patent protection by Indian innovators: Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) applications from India reached 4,547 in 2024, a 22% increase from 2023. However, this remains far below **China (70,000+), the U.S. (54,000+), and Japan (48,000+)**.

5. Scale matters for global technological leadership: Even **Switzerland filed more than 5,300 PCT applications**, highlighting the gap between India and major innovation leaders.

6. Innovation challenge linked to talent gaps: Weak research workforce, limited knowledge-sector employment, and gender imbalance together show that **India's innovation constraints involve both funding and human-capital limitations**.

7. Weak human capital base in innovation ecosystem:

- According to **Global Innovation Index 2025**, India ranks **95 in employment in knowledge-intensive sectors** and **80 in the number of full-time equivalent researchers**, showing a limited research workforce.
- It also ranks **101 among 119 economies in employment of women with advanced degrees**, indicating weak gender diversity in high-level scientific research.

Weak Research-Industry Linkages and Commercialisation Challenges

1. Missing industrialisation base in development trajectory: India did not experience **large-scale labour-intensive industrialisation** similar to East Asian economies, which affected the development of strong manufacturing-led innovation systems.

2. Technology entrepreneurship remains limited: Many Indian unicorns depend on **labour-intensive platforms rather than deep technology innovation**, showing weak investment in long-gestation R&D.

3. Weak research commercialisation and technology transfer: Innovation achieves impact only when ideas move from laboratories to markets. In India, this stage remains weak as **technology transfer systems, venture creation mechanisms, and risk-capital alignment between universities and industry remain underdeveloped**.

4. High uncertainty in deep-tech entrepreneurship: High-technology innovation requires **patient capital, strong intellectual property protection, and tolerance for failure**, conditions that remain limited in India.

Way Forward

1. Greater private-sector leadership in R&D investment: Industry must invest in **long-term and high-risk technological research** to strengthen India's innovation capacity.

2. **Strengthening the research–industry–finance ecosystem:** Innovation leaders build **strong bridges between academia, industry, and financial capital**. India must develop similar institutional connections.

3. **Encouraging deep-tech and frontier technologies:** The RDI fund can support deep-tech sectors, including emerging technologies with global impact.

4. **Leveraging emerging sectors for innovation growth:** Commercial space startups show promising progress, demonstrating the potential of private-sector technological entrepreneurship.

5. **Preparing for future global technology standards:** Participation in **6G technology standards and standard essential patents (SEPs)** will reflect India's ability to generate globally competitive technologies.

Conclusion

India has created **strong policy support, funding mechanisms, and regulatory reforms** for innovation. However, the real challenge lies in execution. **Low R&D spending, weak private-sector investment, talent gaps, and poor research commercialisation continue to limit outcomes**. Sustainable transformation requires **industry-led R&D, stronger research–enterprise linkages, and long-term investment in deep technology**, enabling India to build a truly innovation-driven economy.

Question for practice:

Evaluate whether recent government initiatives are sufficient to transform India into a true innovation-led economy despite persistent structural weaknesses in R&D, human capital, and research–industry linkages.

Source: The Hindu

SWAMIH: A Policy Lifeline for India's Housing Sector

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

Introduction

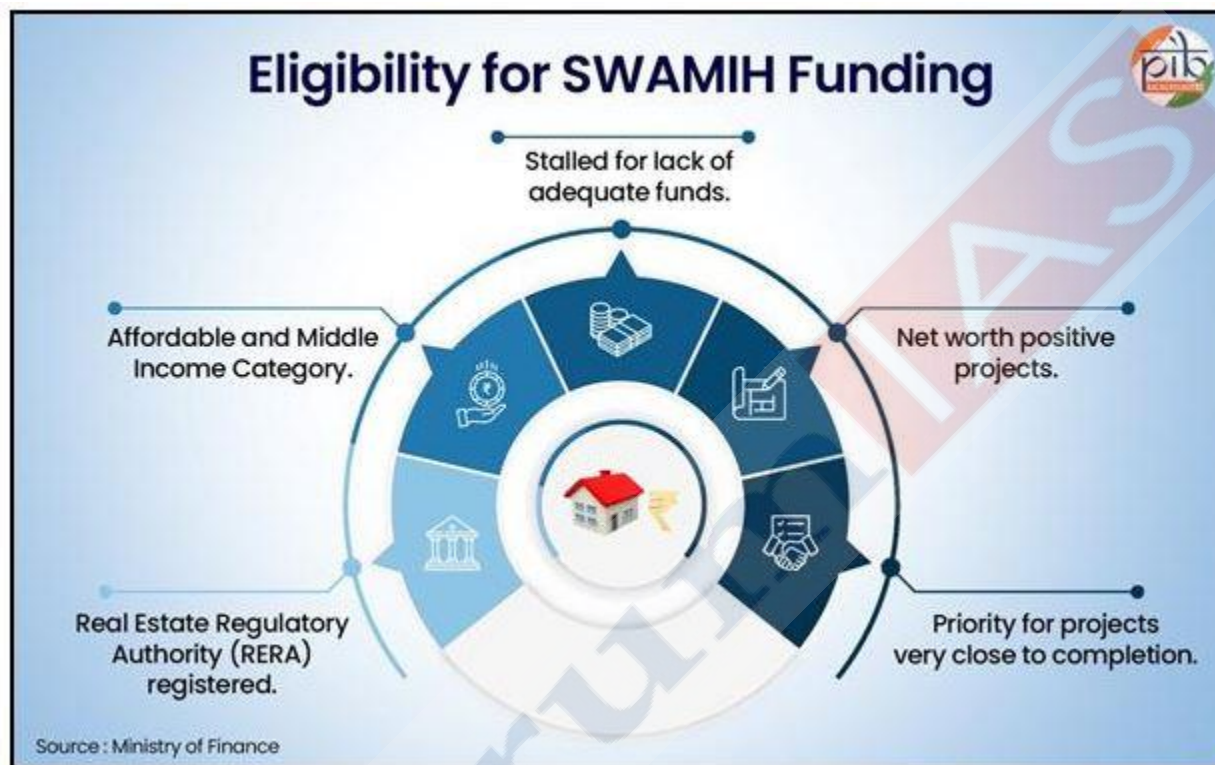
For millions of Indian families, a home represents a lifetime of savings and aspirations. Yet by 2019, nearly 4.58 lakh housing units across 1,509 stalled projects- requiring Rs. 55,000 crore to complete - left homebuyers trapped between unfinished apartments and mounting EMIs. The SWAMIH Investment Fund was the government's answer: not a subsidy, but a disciplined financial intervention to finish what the market had abandoned.

What is SWAMIH?

SWAMIH - Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing - is India's first social impact investment vehicle, registered as a **Category-II Alternate Investment Fund (AIF)** under SEBI. What makes it distinctive is its institutional architecture:

- **Governance:** Sponsored by the Department of Economic Affairs and managed by SBICAP Ventures Ltd. (an SBI subsidiary), bringing both policy direction and financial rigour under one roof.

- **Funding:** A corpus of Rs. 15,531 crore pooled from the Government of India, PSU banks, and LIC - deployed as priority debt exclusively for project completion, not fresh construction.
- **Eligibility:** Projects must be RERA-registered, net-worth positive, and stalled due to fund shortage. Importantly, even NPA-classified projects and those before the NCLT are eligible - acknowledging the real complexity on the ground.



Why was SWAMIH necessary?

The 2018 Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) crisis did not just shake balance sheets - it froze construction sites mid-brick. Developers who had already collected advances from buyers could no longer access credit to finish.

The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) gave homebuyers a legal voice, but courts cannot pour concrete. The MoHUA Expert Committee (2023) put it plainly — the problem was never about construction capacity, it was about **financial viability gaps**. Without targeted last-mile funding, no amount of regulation could convert steel frames into habitable homes.

Key achievements

- **58,000 plus homes** delivered across 146 projects in 20 cities and 12 states, benefiting over 2.38 lakh people (December 2025).
- **Rs. 49,500 crore** unlocked, with 44% directed toward Low Income Groups (LIG), and Middle Income Groups (MIG) housing segments.
- **30,000 plus jobs** created across construction and allied industries, consuming 20 lakh tonnes of cement and 5.5 lakh MT of steel.
- **Rs. 6,900 crore+** generated in government revenues through GST, stamp duty, and dues.

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- **Financial discipline maintained:** 50% of drawn capital already returned to investors; ₹3,500 crore recovered from the government's own ₹7,000 crore — proving the fund pays its way.

SWAMIH within India's Housing Ecosystem

SWAMIH was never designed to work alone. India's housing challenge is layered, and so is the policy response:

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U)** creates new housing for stock Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low Income Groups (LIG), and Middle Income Groups (MIG).
- **PMAY-U 2.0** extends this to one crore more families with a Rs. 10 lakh crore investment.
- **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes** offer rental options for migrants and urban workers.
- **SWAMIH** steps in at the most neglected stage — the finish line — ensuring that years of construction and homebuyer investment are not simply written off.

Way Forward

SWAMIH Fund-2, announced in Budget 2025-26 with a Rs. 15,000 crore blended finance corpus, will target one lakh more stalled units. But scaling the model requires more than money:

- Extend reach to **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities**, where distress is less visible but equally real.
- Link SWAMIH project data with **RERA portals** so homebuyers can track progress without chasing officials.
- Build **real-time monitoring systems** for fund deployment and construction timelines.
- Consider applying the blended finance approach to **slum redevelopment and rural housing** — sectors where market failure and human need collide most sharply.

Conclusion

What SWAMIH quietly demonstrates is that good policy does not always mean more spending - sometimes it means smarter structuring. By channelling institutional capital into projects the market had given up on, it turned broken promises into delivered homes. As India's cities grow faster than their infrastructure can keep pace, the SWAMIH model - disciplined, outcome-focused, and genuinely attentive to ordinary lives - offers a template worth building on.

Question for Practice- What were the key factors behind the stalling of affordable housing projects in India? Evaluate the role of SWAMIH in addressing this crisis.

Source- [PIB](#)

War in West Asia and the Crisis of Indian Seafarer Abandonment

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 2- Important International Institutions, Agencies and Fora — their Structure, Mandate

Introduction

The ongoing conflict in West Asia has brought a long-ignored maritime crisis into sharp focus - the abandonment of seafarers. With at least three Indian sailors killed in attacks near the Persian Gulf and dozens more stranded, the war has exposed the deep vulnerabilities of a workforce that quietly keeps global trade

moving. India, contributing nearly 15% of the world's seafarer workforce, bears a disproportionately heavy burden of this crisis.

What is Seafarer Abandonment?

Under the **Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006** - ratified by over 100 countries -abandonment occurs when shipowners cut off all support to their crew, leaving them stranded without wages, food, medical care, or a way home. For seafarers from low-income backgrounds, the situation is particularly desperate - many have already paid agents large sums for jobs and certifications, making it financially impossible to simply walk away.

Scale of the Problem

- A record **1,125 Indian seafarers** were abandoned in 2025 - nearly 18% of all global abandonment cases (ITF Report).
- Globally, abandoned ships rose sharply from **20 in 2016 to 410 in 2025**.
- Recent cases include 20 Indians stranded on **MV Manali** near Iran's Bandar Abbas Port (March 2026), 17 Indians on tanker **Global Peace** off UAE (2025), and crew members abandoned off Nigeria, Yemen, and Ukraine.

Root Causes

- **Flag of Convenience (FOC) System:** Ship owners register vessels in countries with lax regulations to avoid taxes, bypass safety standards, and obscure true ownership. Nearly **90% of abandoned ships** in 2024 flew FOC flags, with Panama recording the most abandonments in 2025.
- **Financial pressures on owners:** Soaring operational costs, unpredictable freight rates, mounting debt, and war-related disruptions push owners to abandon vessels rather than honour obligations.
- **Recruitment fraud:** Rogue agents in India - especially targeting Tier-3 and Tier-4 cities - charge exorbitant fees, promise phantom jobs, and place desperate recruits on financially unstable vessels. Families mortgage land and sell jewellery, only to see their kin stranded in conflict zones.
- **Regulatory gaps:** Easy access to Continuous Discharge Certificates (CDCs) through minimal courses creates false expectations, pushing vulnerable individuals toward exploitative agents.

Existing protections and recent steps

- Stranded seafarers can contact International Transport Workers' Federation (**ITF**) **inspectors** globally or the **Directorate General of Shipping's** round-the-clock helpline for embassy support and emergency funds.
- In the last six months, India has **withdrawn 51 Recruitment and Placement Service Licensee (RPSL) licences**, temporarily blocked 50 companies, and blacklisted **86 vessels** for repeated abuses.

Way Forward

- Strengthen the **MLC enforcement mechanism** internationally, particularly against FOC-registered ships.
- Reform **CDC issuance norms** to prevent exploitation of under-trained recruits.
- Create a **dedicated seafarer distress fund** for emergency repatriation independent of insurance delays.
- Enhance **bilateral diplomatic engagement** with Gulf nations to fast-track rescue operations during conflicts.

- Mandate **verified digital contracts** and eliminate fee-charging recruitment agents entirely.

Conclusion

Indian seafarers are the backbone of global shipping - yet many come from backgrounds where a maritime career is the only ladder out of poverty, making them easy prey for an exploitative system. The West Asia conflict has not created this crisis; it has merely illuminated what was always there. Protecting these workers demands not just better regulation, but a fundamental rethinking of how India prepares, deploys, and stands behind the sailors who carry its global maritime ambitions on their shoulders.

Question for Practice- The West Asia conflict has exposed the vulnerability of Indian seafarers to abandonment by shipowners. Examine the structural causes behind this crisis and evaluate the adequacy of existing legal and institutional mechanisms to address it.

Source- [IE](#)

The fate of the Washington Consensus, once talisman

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International Relations

Introduction

The **Washington Consensus** emerged in **1989** as a dominant framework for economic reform. It promoted **liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation** as solutions for economic crises in developing countries. International financial institutions promoted these reforms as a universal model for growth and stability. Over time, financial crises, social backlash, and new geopolitical realities exposed its limits, leading to debates about alternative development strategies and a more context-sensitive approach to economic policy.

Background of Washington Consensus

- 1. Origin of the concept:** The term **Washington Consensus** was coined by **John Williamson in 1989** to describe a policy package aimed at stabilising and reforming developing economies.
- 2. Ten policy prescriptions:** The framework included **fiscal discipline, reordering public spending, tax reform, interest rate liberalisation, competitive exchange rates, trade liberalisation, openness to foreign direct investment, privatisation of state enterprises, deregulation, and protection of property rights.**
- 3. Central policy philosophy:** The reforms were summarised through the principles "**liberalise, privatise, deregulate,**" which became the dominant approach to economic reform.
- 4. Universal reform model:** These policies were promoted as **near-universal remedies for crisis-hit economies**, promising macroeconomic stability and market-led growth.

Evolution of Washington Consensus

1. **Ideological foundations:** The consensus emerged from the economic ideas of **Reaganomics and Thatcherite structural adjustment**, which emphasised fiscal austerity, deregulation, and reduced state control.
2. **Adoption by global financial institutions:** Institutions such as the **International Monetary Fund and the World Bank**, along with regional bodies like the **Asian Development Bank**, adopted these principles during the **1980s debt crisis affecting many developing countries**.
3. **Conditional economic reforms:** Economic assistance often came with **policy conditions and reform commitments**, linking financial support with market-oriented restructuring.
4. **Spread through structural adjustment programmes:** These reforms were widely implemented in developing countries with the expectation that **market reforms would generate growth and prosperity through the “trickle-down” effect**.

Criticism and Limits of the Washington Consensus

1. **Financial crises exposing weaknesses:** Major economic shocks such as the **Asian Financial Crisis (1997)** and the **Global Financial Crisis (2008)** highlighted structural weaknesses in the liberalised economic framework.
2. **Breakdown of global trade negotiations:** Failures of **WTO ministerial meetings in Seattle (1999) and Cancún (2003)** revealed deep tensions between developed and developing countries in the global trading system.
3. **Rejection of industrial policy:** The consensus discouraged **state-led industrial strategies**, while WTO rules on Trade-Related Investment Measures (**TRIMs**), **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**, and **subsidies** limited policy space for developing economies.
4. **Deregulation in weak institutional environments:** Market deregulation was promoted even where **market institutions were weak or absent**, particularly in parts of **Africa and least developed countries**.
5. **Rising inequality and social hardship:** The belief that growth would “**trickle down**” ignored increasing inequality, and structural adjustment programmes often produced **economic stress in poorer countries**.
6. **Limited participation of developing countries:** Economic reforms were largely designed in **Western policy circles**, with limited consultation with developing countries.
7. **Mixed development outcomes:** Some economies such as **parts of East Asia and Chile** combined market reforms with state intervention successfully, while **several Latin American and post-Soviet economies** experienced debt crises and social unrest.

Current Global Shift in Economic Policy

1. **Growing global dissatisfaction:** Economic reforms linked with globalisation generated protests across the **Global South during the 1990s and later decades**, reflecting dissatisfaction with inequality and policy conditions.

2. **Political backlash in advanced economies:** Movements such as **Brexit and Make America Great Again (MAGA)** reflected growing dissatisfaction with globalisation and economic liberalisation.

3. **Rise of economic nationalism:** Governments increasingly use **tariffs, industrial subsidies, and strategic trade policies** to protect domestic interests.

4. **Supply chain restructuring:** Global supply chains are being reorganised to prioritise **national security and strategic dominance**, rather than pure economic efficiency.

5. **Return of geopolitics in economic policy:** Tariffs and subsidies now serve **strategic and political objectives**, with governments willing to accept short-term economic costs to protect national interests.

Way Forward

1. **Learning from successful industrialisation:** Countries such as **South Korea, Taiwan, and China** achieved economic growth through **state-led industrial strategies combined with market reforms**.

2. **Renewed focus on development fundamentals:** Long-term growth requires sustained investment in **education, public health, infrastructure, and support for infant industries**.

3. **Responding to new global challenges:** Economic strategies must address emerging issues such as **digital trade, climate resilience, and artificial intelligence governance**.

4. **Emergence of alternative policy frameworks:** Two trends are visible: a **post-Washington consensus emphasising social protection and redistribution**, and a **state-led development approach associated with the Beijing model**.

Conclusion

The **Washington Consensus** no longer represents a universal development model. Financial crises, inequality, and political backlash weakened its credibility. Economic policy is increasingly shaped by national priorities, geopolitical competition, and social needs. Countries now combine markets with state intervention and strategic policies. The focus has shifted from a single global template to **context-sensitive development strategies suited to national conditions**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the evolution, criticisms, and declining relevance of the Washington Consensus in the context of changing global economic policies.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Digital world should be made safe for children to inhabit

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

The digital world has become a central space where children learn, communicate, and interact. Social media platforms and digital technologies now shape everyday life for young users. **Children represent nearly one-third of global internet users**, yet digital platforms are not designed primarily for their protection. Many systems prioritise engagement and commercial gain rather than safety. Ensuring a secure digital environment therefore requires **responsible platform design, effective regulation, and active participation of governments, companies, parents, and children**.

What are the Concerns Over Children's Digital Safety?

- 1. Growing presence of children in digital spaces:** Children now form about one-third of all internet users globally, and many access social media and digital tools from increasingly young ages.
- 2. Children's rights not fully protected online:** Digital environments often overlook children's rights related to privacy, safety, participation, education, and protection from exploitation despite clear global guidance.
- 3. Manipulative design features encouraging prolonged engagement:** Platform features such as autoplay, endless scrolling, and algorithm-driven feeds are designed to maximise engagement and often exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of young users.
- 4. Commercial use of children's personal data:** Platforms frequently collect and analyse children's personal information through behavioural profiling and targeted advertising without meaningful consent.
- 5. Limited response from the technology industry:** The technology industry has had over a decade to address digital safety concerns, yet actions remain slow and largely cosmetic because engagement drives advertising revenue.
- 6. Responsibility shifted mainly to families:** Protection from digital harms is often left to children and their families rather than companies and governments that design and regulate digital platforms.

Impact of Growing Influence of Social Media on Children

- 1. Digital addiction and compulsive online behaviour:** Platform architecture using algorithmic feeds and autoplay can lead to compulsive usage patterns among adolescents whose self-regulation abilities are still developing.
- 2. Mental health concerns linked to excessive exposure:** Researchers continue to debate the exact relationship between social media and mental health decline, yet growing evidence supports precautionary regulation.
- 3. Cyberbullying harming emotional well-being:** Cyberbullying involves posting harmful or humiliating content online, which can cause embarrassment, anxiety, and psychological distress among children.
- 4. Online child abuse and exploitation risks:** Digital platforms may enable offenders to identify vulnerable children, gain their trust, and later exploit them through threats, coercion, or manipulation.
- 5. Exposure to hate speech affecting social confidence:** Hate speech online can create fear, anger, and isolation among children, and repeated exposure may normalise harmful behaviour.

- 6. Fake news creating confusion among young users:** Children often lack the ability to judge reliable information, making them vulnerable to misleading narratives and misinformation.
- 7. Malware and digital scams threatening privacy:** Children may unknowingly install applications that appear harmless but actually allow access to cameras, files, or personal data.
- 8. Excessive screen time affecting physical and academic life:** Digital addiction may lead to poor sleep quality, reduced physical activity, declining academic performance, and social withdrawal.

Initiatives Taken to Overcome the Concerns Over Children's Digital Safety

A. Global initiative:

- 1. Global Digital Compact commitments:** In September 2024, UN Member States adopted the Global Digital Compact, committing to strengthen legal frameworks protecting children's digital rights by 2030.
- 2. UNICEF "Kindly" campaign promoting positive online behaviour:** Global campaigns encourage **kind communication, mental well-being, and responsible digital engagement among young users.**
- 3. Convention on the Rights of the Child guidance:** International standards recognise **children's rights in digital environments** including privacy, safety, participation, education, play, and protection from exploitation.
- 4. Participatory initiative "Our Digital World, Our Say":** This initiative encourages children to share their experiences and opinions so that digital policies better reflect children's rights and realities.
- 5. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Child Online Protection (COP) Guidelines:** This global multi-stakeholder framework promotes safe online environments for children through cooperation among governments, technology firms, and civil society organisations.
- 6. African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy:** The policy provides principles, strategies, and goals for building a safer digital environment for children across Africa.
- 7. European Union Digital Services Act safeguards:** The law requires online platforms to ensure high levels of privacy, safety, and security for children in digital environments.
- 8. Indonesia's regulation on digital child protection:** Indonesia requires digital products likely to be accessed by children to implement privacy-by-design protections and prioritise children's best interests.
- 9. Brazil's ECA Digital framework:** Brazil requires technology companies to assess and mitigate risks to children and restrict manipulative design and exploitative behavioural profiling.
- 10. Australia's regulation on children's social media access: Australia has legislated a ban on social media access for children under 16,** which is expected to serve as an important global case study on regulating children's digital safety and platform responsibility.

B. Initiative taken by Indian government:

- 1. State-level initiatives in India:** Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are exploring time-bound regulations to restrict social media access for minors, signalling rising policy attention to child digital safety.
- 2. India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act 2023:** The law prohibits tracking, behavioural monitoring, and targeted advertising directed at children, and requires verifiable parental consent before processing children's data.
- 3. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012:** The law provides legal protection against online child sexual exploitation and abuse, strengthening accountability for digital crimes involving minors.
- 4. Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) programme:** Initiatives under MeitY's ISEA project promote digital hygiene and cybersecurity awareness to help users develop safer online habits.
- 5. AI-based monitoring of harmful digital content:** Artificial intelligence and machine learning tools are increasingly used to identify and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and harmful online content.
- 6. Parental control and digital safety technologies:** Safety tools allow parents to limit screen time, block unsafe websites, and disable location services, helping reduce children's exposure to digital risks.
- 7. Digital literacy and school-based education programmes:** Schools are integrating digital wellness, media literacy, and anti-cyberbullying education to help children understand online risks and responsible behaviour.
- 8. Student ambassador and peer awareness initiatives:** Programmes such as **Digital Safety Student Ambassadors** train students to educate peers about responsible internet use and digital protection.
- 9. Cyber crime reporting mechanisms in India: The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal and the 1930 helpline** allow citizens to report online abuse, fraud, and digital exploitation involving children.
- 10. NCPDR's POCSO e-Box reporting system:** This platform enables children or guardians to confidentially report cases of online abuse and exploitation, strengthening institutional response mechanisms.

Way Forward

- 1. Shift focus from access restrictions to platform design:** Regulation should not only determine who can access social media but also shape how platforms are designed and operated.
- 2. Introduce mandatory teen-safe platform architecture:** Platforms should provide default safeguards that disable addictive features such as autoplay and infinite scrolling.
- 3. Develop verified youth modes with stronger privacy settings:** Dedicated youth accounts should include stronger privacy protections and tighter messaging controls.
- 4. Ensure transparency of algorithms and data systems:** Technology companies must explain how their algorithms function so regulators can examine their influence on children.
- 5. Strengthen accountability of digital companies:** Platforms should face clear liability obligations for protecting children from harmful content and exploitation.

6. **Avoid over-reliance on strict age-based bans:** Pure prohibitions may push children toward unregulated digital spaces or encourage rule circumvention through technical loopholes.

7. **Need for national coordination in India:** Because digital platforms operate across borders, fragmented State-level rules are unlikely to succeed without a coordinated national framework led by the Centre.

8. **Promote digital literacy and parental awareness:** Children and parents should learn about online rights, safe digital behaviour, and the responsible use of technology.

Conclusion

The digital world offers opportunities for learning, connection, and creativity, but it also exposes children to significant risks. **Protecting children requires coordinated regulation, safer platform architecture, and stronger corporate accountability.** Digital systems must recognise children as rights-holders and prioritise their safety. Only then can technology remain beneficial while protecting young users from exploitation, manipulation, and harm.

Question for practice:

Examine the major concerns related to children's digital safety and discuss the initiatives taken globally and in India to create a safer digital environment for children.

Source: [Businessline and NITI Aayog](#)

Indian fertilizers' Hormuz choke

Source: The post "**Indian fertilizers' Hormuz choke**" has been created, based on "**Indian fertilizers' Hormuz choke**" published in "BusinessLine" on 16th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: The **Strait of Hormuz** is a critical global maritime chokepoint that facilitates large volumes of energy and fertilizer feedstock trade. The ongoing **Iran-Israel War** and the disruption of shipping routes in the Gulf region have created significant risks for India, which depends heavily on imported fertilizers and energy-linked inputs for sustaining agricultural productivity.

Implications for India

1. High Import Dependence

- a. India's fertilizer sector is closely integrated with global markets because domestic production capacity is uneven across nutrients.
- b. India imported fertilizers worth **\$7.2 billion**, accounting for **2.9 per cent of global fertilizer imports**, making it the **seventh largest importer globally**.
- c. This high dependence on international markets exposes India to supply disruptions and price volatility during geopolitical crises.

2. Vulnerability in DAP Supply

- a. India is the **largest global importer of Diammonium Phosphate (DAP)**, accounting for **28.7 per cent of global imports**.
- b. Major suppliers such as **Saudi Arabia (24 per cent)** and **Morocco (22 per cent)** depend on maritime routes passing through the **Strait of Hormuz** and the **Red Sea**.
- c. Any disruption in these routes can delay shipments, increase freight costs, and raise the landed price of fertilisers in India.

3. Risks in Urea Imports

- a. India imported approximately **\$2.2 billion worth of urea**, which meets around **20–25 per cent of domestic demand**.
- b. Key suppliers include **Oman (15 per cent)**, **Saudi Arabia (9.5 per cent)** and **Russia (18 per cent)**.
- c. Since urea production depends heavily on natural gas for ammonia synthesis, disruptions in gas supply chains in the Gulf region can significantly increase production costs.
- d. Global urea prices have already increased by **around \$80 per tonne**, tightening supply and raising import costs.

4. Impact on Domestic Fertiliser Production

- a. India operates **more than 30 urea manufacturing plants**, most of which depend on **natural gas or naphtha feedstock**.
- b. A significant portion of India's **LNG imports originates from Gulf countries**, making domestic fertiliser production indirectly vulnerable to geopolitical tensions.
- c. Any disruption in LNG supply can increase production costs or reduce the operational capacity of fertiliser plants.

5. Structural Dependence on Potash

- a. India has **near total import dependence (95–100 per cent)** for **Muriate of Potash (MOP)**.
- b. Major suppliers include **Russia and Canada**, which highlights the strategic importance of stable global supply chains.
- c. Similarly, **NPK complex fertilisers**, which meet **35–45 per cent of domestic demand through imports**, rely heavily on imported raw materials such as **phosphoric acid and potash**.

6. Logistics and Shipping Challenges

- a. War-related disruptions have led to higher **war-risk insurance premiums, vessel shortages, and rerouting of ships**.
- b. These logistics disruptions significantly increase freight costs and delay shipments.
- c. Since fertilisers are bulk commodities, even a small increase in freight costs can substantially raise the landed cost of imports.

7. Fiscal and Inflationary Impact

- a. India currently maintains fertilizer stocks sufficient for **more than two months of national consumption**, providing short-term relief against supply shortages.
- b. However, the greater risk lies in rising international prices rather than immediate scarcity.

- c. Higher prices can increase the **government's fertilizer subsidy burden**, strain fiscal resources, and raise agricultural input costs.
- d. These factors can ultimately lead to **cost-push inflation in food prices**.

Way Forward

1. Diversification of Import Sources

- a. India should diversify fertilizer imports beyond the Gulf region by increasing procurement from countries such as **Russia, Canada and South America**.
- b. Diversification will reduce excessive dependence on a single geopolitical corridor and enhance supply security.

2. Overseas Resource Acquisition

- a. India should strengthen long-term fertilizer security by investing in **phosphate rock and potash reserves abroad**.
- b. Strategic investments and joint ventures with resource-rich countries can help secure stable supplies.

3. Strengthening Domestic Production

- a. India should expand **gas-based urea plants**, modernize fertilizer manufacturing infrastructure and improve energy efficiency.
- b. Promotion of **nano-fertilizers and balanced nutrient use** can reduce dependence on imported DAP and potash.

4. Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices

- a. Encouraging the cultivation of pulses such as **moong and urad** after the rabi harvest can reduce pulse imports while improving soil fertility.
- b. These crops help enrich soil through **natural nitrogen fixation**, thereby lowering the need for chemical fertilizers.

5. Building Strategic Fertilizer Reserves

- a. Maintaining larger fertilizer reserves can help stabilise domestic markets during global disruptions.
- b. Strategic inventories ensure timely supply during critical agricultural seasons.

6. Strengthening Maritime Logistics

- a. India should diversify shipping routes and improve coordination between fertilizer importers and shipping companies.
- b. Strengthening **Protection and Indemnity (P&I) insurance mechanisms** can ensure uninterrupted fertilizer shipments during geopolitical tensions.

Conclusion: The crisis in the **Strait of Hormuz** highlights the structural vulnerabilities of India's fertilizer supply chain due to heavy import dependence and energy-linked production systems. Strengthening

diversification, domestic production capacity, overseas resource partnerships and logistics resilience will be essential to safeguard **India's agricultural productivity, fiscal stability and long-term food security.**

Question: Geopolitical disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz expose structural vulnerabilities in India's fertilizer supply chain." Examine its implications for India's agriculture and suggest measures to strengthen fertilizer security.

Source: [Business line](#)

Why Iran differs from Ukraine in terms of economic fallout for India and the world

Source: The post "**Renewable Transition in India: Policy and Institutional Bottlenecks**" has been created, based on "**Why Iran differs from Ukraine in terms of economic fallout for India and the world**" published in "Indian Express" on 16th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: The ongoing conflict in West Asia involving Iran, Israel and the United States has raised concerns about global energy security and economic stability. While the Russia-Ukraine war mainly affected global commodity prices and India's merchandise trade deficit, the West Asia conflict may impact **both merchandise trade and invisibles such as remittances**, making its economic consequences potentially more serious.

Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on India

1. The war began when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, leading to major disruptions in global supply chains.
2. The conflict caused a sharp increase in prices of **fuel, food and fertilisers**, commonly referred to as the "3Fs".
3. Global crude oil prices crossed **100 dollars per barrel**, which significantly increased India's import bill.
4. Global food prices rose sharply, with the FAO food price index reaching record levels during 2022.
5. Fertiliser prices such as di-ammonium phosphate and potash also surged due to disruptions in global supply.

Effect on India's Balance of Payments

1. The primary impact of the war was on India's **merchandise trade account**, as the value of imports increased significantly.
2. India's trade deficit rose sharply from about **102 billion dollars in 2020-21 to more than 265 billion dollars in 2022-23.**
3. However, the widening trade deficit was partially offset by a strong **surplus in the invisibles account.**
4. Invisibles include software exports, remittances from Indians abroad, and other services income.
5. Software exports and remittance inflows increased significantly during this period.
6. As a result, India's current account deficit remained manageable despite rising import costs.
7. Strong capital inflows, including foreign investment and external commercial borrowings, further helped maintain macroeconomic stability.

Why the Iran Conflict Could Have Greater Impact

1. Threat to Global Energy Supply

- a. The conflict threatens the strategic maritime route known as the Strait of Hormuz.
- b. This waterway carries nearly **one-fifth of global petroleum trade and a large share of LNG shipments**.
- c. Any disruption in this route can sharply increase oil prices and significantly raise India's energy import bill.

2. Risks to Fertiliser Supply and Agriculture

- a. India imports a large share of **LNG, sulphur and ammonia** from West Asian countries.
- b. These inputs are essential for producing fertilisers such as urea and complex fertilisers.
- c. A prolonged conflict could disrupt fertiliser supply chains and increase costs for Indian farmers.
- d. This may eventually affect agricultural productivity and food security.

3. Vulnerability of Remittances

- a. India has a large overseas workforce in Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.
- b. Nearly **8.9 million Indians live and work in these countries**, forming a significant source of remittance income.
- c. These Gulf countries contribute around **38 percent of India's total remittances**.
- d. If the conflict slows down Gulf economies, employment opportunities for Indian workers may decline.
- e. This could reduce remittance inflows and weaken India's invisible surplus.

4. Weak Capital Inflows

- a. India has already experienced a slowdown in capital inflows in recent years.
- b. Net capital inflows have fallen significantly compared to earlier years.
- c. Foreign portfolio investors have also been selling Indian equities, creating pressure on the rupee.
- d. If capital inflows remain weak while the current account deficit increases, India's external sector stability could be affected.

Way Forward

1. India should **diversify its sources of crude oil and natural gas imports** to reduce dependence on West Asian energy supplies.
2. The government should accelerate the development of **renewable energy and strategic petroleum reserves** to enhance energy security.
3. India should strengthen **domestic fertiliser production and alternative nutrient sources** to reduce reliance on imported inputs.
4. Diplomatic engagement with Gulf countries should be strengthened to **protect the interests of the Indian diaspora and ensure stable remittance flows**.
5. The government should promote **services exports such as IT, fintech and digital services** to maintain a strong invisible surplus.
6. Policy reforms should aim to attract **stable long-term foreign investment**, thereby strengthening capital inflows and reducing vulnerability in the Balance of Payments.

Conclusion: The Russia-Ukraine war primarily affected India through higher commodity prices and a widening trade deficit. In contrast, the West Asia conflict could simultaneously affect **energy imports**,

fertiliser supplies, remittances and capital flows. Therefore, prolonged instability around Iran could pose **greater economic risks for India**, making proactive economic and diplomatic measures essential.

Question: Why could the ongoing West Asia conflict involving Iran have greater economic consequences for India compared to the Russia–Ukraine War? Discuss in the context of India’s Balance of Payments (BoP).

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Building India’s Climate Resilience with Water at the Core

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environment

Introduction

COP 30, held in **Belém, Brazil in November 2025**, was branded the “**COP of Implementation.**” It marked a shift from abstract climate promises to **measurable and accountable adaptation systems.** **Water moved to the centre of climate resilience**, as global indicators for the first time integrated **water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)** into climate accountability. This reshaped the **water–food–climate nexus** and made water security a critical element of climate survival for countries including **India.**

Water as the Primary Medium of Climate Change Impacts

- 1. Climate change expressed through water:** Climate impacts are felt most directly through water systems. **Floods submerge cities, droughts weaken rural economies, glacial melt destabilises Himalayan rivers, saline intrusion contaminates coastal aquifers, and erratic monsoons threaten food security.**
- 2. Agriculture and methane emissions:** Agriculture contributes **around 40% of anthropogenic methane emissions**, mainly from **rice cultivation, livestock systems, and organic waste**, linking water management with climate mitigation.
- 3. Water management as climate strategy:** **Water-use efficiency, wastewater reuse, aquifer recharge, and resilient sanitation systems** are now essential **climate adaptation and development strategies.**

New Global Framework for Water Resilience

- 1. Global climate adaptation framework:** The **59 Belém Adaptation Indicators**, under the **UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience**, establish measurable targets for strengthening climate resilience.
- 2. Focus on climate-resilient water and sanitation systems:** The indicators emphasise **reducing climate-induced water scarcity, strengthening resilience to floods and droughts, ensuring universal access to safe drinking water, and upgrading sanitation systems to withstand extreme events.**
- 3. Risk governance and early warning systems:** The framework calls for **universal multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027, stronger hydrometeorological services, and updated national vulnerability assessments by 2030.**
- 4. Shift from asset creation to system reliability:** Water security now depends on **whether systems continue delivering services during climate stress**, not merely on creating infrastructure.

India's Institutional Foundations for Water-Based Climate Adaptation

1. Integrated water governance reforms:

- Water governance was consolidated under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2019**, strengthening integrated water management.
- **Water Vision 2047** promotes **sustainability, equity, and resilience** in water systems.

2. Groundwater management transformation: The **National Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme (NAQUIM) 2.0** has shifted from **aquifer mapping to aquifer-level management plans**, linking hydrogeological knowledge with policy action.

3. River rejuvenation and ecosystem resilience: The **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** has expanded beyond sewage treatment to include **biodiversity conservation, digital monitoring, and international collaboration**, making river systems stronger against climate volatility.

Systemic Challenges in Building Water-Centred Climate Resilience

1. Persistent and uneven water scarcity: Water scarcity remains **severe and uneven across regions**, while most climate disasters in India are **water-related**, making **WASH systems the first line of defence**.

2. Need for climate stress testing of infrastructure: Reliable water supply during floods or droughts requires **climate stress testing of infrastructure, diversification of water sources, and redundancy in service delivery**.

3. Fragile adaptation finance: Global discussions aim to mobilise **\$1.3 trillion annually by 2035** for climate adaptation, but **clear operational pathways remain uncertain**.

4. Risk to long-term resilience investments: Without predictable finance, **post-disaster recovery spending may crowd out long-term resilience planning**.

5. Digital fragmentation in water governance: Despite vast **hydrological and meteorological data**, **Artificial Intelligence-driven real-time integration into planning and governance systems remains limited**.

Way Forward

1. Alignment of global indicators with domestic missions: Many global adaptation targets already correspond with Indian initiatives on **drinking water coverage, sanitation expansion, irrigation efficiency, urban water reforms, and climate action plans**.

2. Integration of climate indicators into governance dashboards: **Climate stress indicators must be embedded into mission dashboards** across ministries and states to guide climate-resilient policy implementation.

3. Leveraging digital public infrastructure: India's digital capacity can integrate **hydrological data, crop advisories, insurance systems, and financial flows** into interoperable platforms.

4. **Promoting real-time climate decision-making:** Integrated digital platforms can support **real-time planning, budgeting, and local governance decisions** during climate stress.

5. **Focus on convergence rather than reinvention:** Effective climate adaptation requires **coordination and integration of existing missions instead of creating new programmes.**

Conclusion

The **Belém Adaptation Indicators** function as a **dashboard for climate survival**, turning adaptation into a measurable development strategy. **Water must anchor climate action.** With existing reforms, technological capacity, and community initiatives, India can operationalise climate resilience at scale. Aligning **missions, metrics, and finance** will help India strengthen resilience and demonstrate leadership in climate adaptation across the **Global South.**

Question for practice:

Discuss how water has emerged as a central pillar of climate resilience in global climate governance, and examine India's institutional initiatives and challenges in building water-centred climate adaptation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Oil prices reflect geopolitical risks, not only supply

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International relation And GS Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

Crude oil prices surged sharply after the war in West Asia, reaching **\$118 per barrel**, while Brent crude rose from **\$57.56 in mid-December 2025**, more than doubling within two months. Prices remain above three digits with no immediate easing. This situation shows that oil prices are now shaped strongly by **geopolitical tensions, maritime risks, and financial market reactions**, not only by the physical balance of supply and demand in global energy markets.

Geopolitical Transformation of the Global Oil Market

1. **Return of geopolitics to the energy debate:** Conflicts in West Asia, rising rivalry among major powers, and persistent uncertainty have brought geopolitics back to the centre of global energy discussions.
2. **Shift in the nature of geopolitical influence:** Earlier regional conflicts rarely removed Gulf oil from global markets. Current disruptions create **real barriers to supply**, changing trade conditions and market confidence.
3. **Oil security expanding beyond physical access:** For importing countries such as India, oil security now includes **financial, logistical, and political uncertainties** around every shipment.
4. **Strategic importance of maritime chokepoints:** Around **20% of global oil consumption moves through the Strait of Hormuz**, while **10% of seaborne crude passes through the Bab el-Mandeb-Suez corridor.**

5. **Conflict affecting global supply circulation:** The conflict involving Israel and Iran has sidelined about 20% of global supplies, increasing disruption risks.

6. **Growing market sensitivity to geopolitical signals:** Brent crude fluctuated by 5–10% within days of military or diplomatic developments, showing strong geopolitical influence.

Mechanisms Driving Oil Price Volatility

1. **Maritime insecurity affecting trade routes:** Rising tensions make key shipping routes vulnerable, and even limited attacks on commercial vessels can force rerouting of tankers and disrupt oil transportation.

2. **Rising shipping costs and war-risk premiums:** Daily rates for supertankers have more than doubled, shipping insurance premiums have increased, and container carriers imposed conflict and war-risk surcharges due to insecurity in major maritime routes.

3. **Supply chain pressure raising landed import prices:** Higher freight charges, insurance costs, and tighter vessel availability increase the final price of oil imports for consuming countries.

4. **Oil evolving into a geopolitical instrument:** Oil trade increasingly reflects political strategy, illustrated by the redirection of Russian crude toward Asian markets after the Ukraine conflict.

5. **Operational complexity in oil trade networks:** Russian exports continued in volume but required longer shipping routes, complex payment systems, and evolving compliance frameworks, increasing financial and operational risks.

6. **Weakening link between supply levels and prices:** Oil prices now respond rapidly to diplomatic signals, military developments, and regulatory announcements, reducing the traditional connection between production and prices.

7. **Financial markets amplifying price movements:** Oil is traded as a financial asset through futures, options, and derivatives, allowing investors to treat oil as an inflation hedge and risk-sensitive instrument during crises.

8. **Speculation influencing market behaviour:** Speculative investment often expands even when inventories are comfortable, meaning prices reflect expectations and portfolio strategies rather than immediate scarcity.

Global Responses to Market Instability

1. **Strategic Petroleum Reserves addressing market anxiety:** Strategic Petroleum Reserves were originally designed to counter supply disruptions but are now used to stabilise market sentiment during geopolitical crises.

2. **G-7 release aimed at calming markets:** G-7 leaders announced the release of 400 million barrels of oil, equivalent to about 20 days of usual oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

3. **Reserve announcements influencing market reactions:** News about potential reserve releases triggered sell-offs in oil markets, easing gains in Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate.

4. **United States shaping global oil dynamics:** The **United States, one of the largest petroleum producers**, influences markets through strategic reserves and diplomatic engagement with oil-producing nations.

5. **Asia becoming the centre of demand growth:** Asia accounts for **most of the increase in global oil consumption over the past decade**, making it a major driver of future demand.

6. **Producer coordination influencing supply management:** Organisations such as the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** continue to affect supply decisions, though their influence now interacts with geopolitical risk premiums.

Implications for India's Energy Security

1. **India emerging as a key demand centre:** India's oil demand is **not expected to peak soon** and will contribute significantly to future global consumption growth.

2. **Diversified sourcing reducing supply risks:** The ability to **import crude from multiple regions and process different crude grades** helps India reduce dependence on any single supplier.

3. **Strategic reserves strengthening resilience:** Maintaining **Strategic Petroleum Reserves** provides protection against sudden disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions.

4. **Need for advanced commercial and financial capabilities:** Complex global oil trade requires **expertise in trading systems, payment arrangements, and financial management**.

5. **Energy policy integrating diplomacy and maritime awareness:** Effective energy strategy must combine **diplomatic engagement, maritime monitoring, and market analytics**.

6. **Expanded definition of energy security:** Energy security now includes resilience against **financial disruptions, shipping risks, and contractual uncertainties**, not only physical supply shortages.

Conclusion

Global oil markets have entered a phase where **geopolitical risk influences prices as strongly as supply conditions**. Maritime security, financial trading, and political tensions shape price behaviour. Energy security now depends on managing **logistical, financial, and diplomatic risks**. Stability will rely on maintaining **predictable trade mechanisms and avoiding geopolitical ruptures that disrupt global oil flows**.

Question for practice:

Examine how geopolitical tensions are increasingly influencing global oil prices beyond traditional supply-demand factors, and discuss the implications for energy security in importing countries such as India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)