

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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Transgender Rights Amendment Bill

Source: The post “Transgender Rights Amendment Bill” has been created, based on “Transgender Rights Amendment Bill: Key Changes to 2019 Act Explained” published in “Indian Express” on 17th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was enacted in line with the Supreme Court’s judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (2014), which recognised transgender persons as the third gender and affirmed the right to self-identification. The 2026 Amendment Bill introduces significant changes that alter the foundational principles of the 2019 framework.

Key Changes Proposed in the 2026 Amendment

1. Narrower Definition of Transgender

- The amendment restricts the definition of transgender persons to those belonging to specific socio-cultural groups and those with certain congenital biological variations.
- It removes the earlier inclusive and umbrella-based definition that covered diverse gender identities.

2. Removal of Right to Self-Identification

- The amendment deletes the provision that allowed individuals to self-identify their gender.
- It replaces self-identification with a more controlled and restrictive recognition mechanism.

3. Introduction of Medical Certification

- The amendment mandates the creation of a medical board to evaluate and recommend gender identity certification.
- It introduces clinical assessment as a prerequisite for legal recognition.

4. Creation of a Separate Category

- The bill introduces a category for persons forced into transgender identity through coercion or harmful procedures.
- This aims to address exploitation but adds a new classification within the law.

5. Institutional Changes

- The amendment formalises the role of medical boards led by senior officers.
- It also prescribes higher-ranking officials as representatives in the National Council.

6. Enhanced Penal Provisions

- The amendment introduces stricter punishments, including long-term imprisonment for severe offences.
- It provides differentiated penalties for crimes against adults and children.

Implications of the Amendment

Positive Implications

- The amendment strengthens legal provisions against exploitation and coercion of vulnerable individuals.
- It introduces stricter penalties that may act as a deterrent against serious offences.
- It attempts to bring administrative clarity through structured institutional mechanisms.

Negative Implications

- The amendment undermines the right to self-identification recognised by the Supreme Court.
- It medicalises gender identity by making recognition dependent on clinical approval.
- It excludes many individuals who do not fall within narrow socio-cultural or biological categories.
- It creates procedural barriers due to reliance on medical boards and documentation.
- It shifts the approach from a rights-based framework to a restrictive and eligibility-based system.

Way Forward

1. Restore the Principle of Self-Identification

- The law should reinstate the right to self-identification as affirmed by the Supreme Court.
- Any regulatory mechanism should not override individual autonomy and dignity.

2. Adopt a Balanced Certification Framework

- The certification process should remain primarily administrative with optional medical support rather than mandatory medical approval.
- Safeguards can be introduced without making medical evaluation compulsory.

3. Ensure Inclusivity in Definition

- The definition of transgender persons should remain broad and inclusive to cover all gender-diverse identities.
- It should avoid limiting recognition to specific socio-cultural or biological categories.

4. Strengthen Anti-Discrimination Measures

- The focus should be on preventing discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and public access.
- Implementation mechanisms should be strengthened rather than restricting eligibility.

5. Improve Accessibility and Sensitisation

- The government should ensure that institutions, especially healthcare systems, are sensitised to transgender issues.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted to reduce stigma and social barriers.

6. Engage with Community Stakeholders

- Policymaking should involve consultations with transgender persons and advocacy groups.

- This will ensure that laws reflect lived realities and practical challenges.

Conclusion: The 2026 Amendment Bill introduces important protections against exploitation but raises serious concerns regarding autonomy and inclusivity. A balanced approach that safeguards both dignity and protection is essential to uphold constitutional values and human rights.

Question: In light of the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, critically examine the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026. Discuss its implications on autonomy and inclusivity.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Oil shock's impact on India's BoP

Source: The post "Oil shock's impact on India's BoP" has been created, based on "Oil shock's impact on India's BoP" published in "BusinessLine" on 17th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- International relations

Context: India is highly dependent on crude oil imports, especially from the Gulf region, making it vulnerable to global oil shocks. The recent conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has disrupted global oil supply and increased prices. This has significant implications for India's Balance of Payments.

Causes of the Oil Shock

1. The conflict has damaged Iran's oil production capacity, which reduces global supply.
2. Iran's threat to block the Strait of Hormuz disrupts a major global oil transit route.
3. Attacks on oil facilities in the Gulf region have created uncertainty in supply chains.
4. Speculative activities by global trading firms have amplified price volatility.

Channels of Impact on India's BoP

1. Increase in Oil Import Bill: India imports a large share of its crude oil requirements, so higher global prices directly increase the import bill. This leads to a higher outflow of foreign exchange.

2. Worsening Trade Balance: The rise in oil import costs increases total imports significantly. Since exports do not increase proportionately, the trade deficit widens.

3. Imported Inflation and Currency Depreciation: Higher oil prices increase transportation and production costs across sectors. This leads to inflation in the domestic economy. Inflation and increased demand for foreign exchange contribute to depreciation of the rupee.

4. Pressure on Current Account Deficit: The widening trade deficit directly increases the current account deficit. A higher current account deficit weakens external sector stability.

5. Decline in Remittances: Economic disruptions in Gulf countries may reduce employment and income of Indian workers. This leads to a decline in remittance inflows, which are an important source of foreign exchange.

6. Reduction in Refined Petroleum Exports: India exports refined petroleum products using imported crude oil. In case of shortages, crude oil may be diverted for domestic use. This reduces export earnings from the petroleum sector.

7. Structural Vulnerability due to Non-Oil Imports: Non-oil imports such as gold and other goods have been rising rapidly. The oil shock adds to this existing pressure on the trade balance.

Way Forward

1. Diversification of Energy Sources

- India should diversify its sources of crude oil imports to reduce dependence on any single region.
- It should also promote renewable energy to reduce long-term reliance on fossil fuels.

2. Expansion of Strategic Petroleum Reserves

- The government should expand strategic reserves to manage supply disruptions.
- These reserves can be used to stabilise domestic supply during crises.

3. Rationalisation of Imports

- Non-essential imports such as gold should be regulated during periods of crisis.
- Policies should encourage domestic production to reduce import dependence.

4. Promotion of Exports

- India should strengthen its export sectors, especially services and manufacturing.
- Increased exports can help offset the higher import bill.

5. Exchange Rate and Monetary Management

- The central bank should take steps to prevent excessive currency volatility.
- Maintaining adequate foreign exchange reserves is essential.

6. International Engagement

- India should engage with oil-producing countries to secure stable supply agreements.
- Cooperation with global institutions can help manage crisis situations.

Conclusion: The oil price shock affects India's Balance of Payments through multiple channels including trade, inflation, and capital flows. A combination of short-term policy responses and long-term structural reforms is necessary to reduce vulnerability to such external shocks.

Question: An oil price shock can significantly impact India's Balance of Payments (BoP). Analyse the channels through which a global oil crisis affects India's external sector.

Source: [Businessline](#)

Why India Must Electrify Its Kitchens

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

India spends **\$26.4 billion annually on LPG imports**, mostly through vulnerable supply routes. It has **332 million LPG connections**, yet **37% households still rely on firewood and dung**. The cost dynamics have changed, as **electric cooking is now cheaper than unsubsidised LPG**. This creates a strong case for transition. However, shifting millions of kitchens to electricity raises issues of **grid capacity, peak demand, and cost management**, making the transition complex and policy-sensitive.

Why the Existing LPG-Based Model is Becoming Unsustainable

- 1. Rising import dependence and cost burden:** India imports **60% of LPG and 50% of natural gas**, pushing the import bill to **\$26.4 billion in FY25, a 50% increase in six years**.
- 2. Rapid expansion without sustainability:** LPG connections increased from **150 million (2015) to 332 million (2025)**, but this expansion depends on imports and subsidies.
- 3. Incomplete clean cooking transition:** Despite wide LPG coverage, **37% households still use traditional fuels**, showing limited sustained adoption.

Why Electric Cooking is Emerging as a Better Alternative

- 1. Strong cost advantage:** Electric cooking is **37% cheaper than non-subsidised LPG** and **14% cheaper than piped natural gas**, making it economically viable.
- 2. Higher energy efficiency:** Induction cooktops achieve **85% efficiency**, while LPG burners deliver only **40% efficiency**, leading to better energy use.
- 3. Lower fiscal burden compared to subsidies:** Only heavily subsidised LPG under PMUY is cheaper, but it requires **thousands of crores annually**, increasing fiscal pressure.
- 4. Superior appliance efficiency:** Electric pressure cookers use **less energy than any other tested cooking device**, improving overall efficiency.

Challenges in Transitioning to Electric Cooking

- 1. Mismatch with Indian cooking practices:** Indian cooking requires **multi-pot use and high heat**, which standard single-plate induction units cannot handle.
- 2. Technology gaps limiting adoption:** Lack of **multi-pot and flame-like induction systems** explains the low **5% share of electric cooking in 2021**.
- 3. High upfront cost and low awareness:** Initial cost of induction devices and utensils discourages adoption, along with limited consumer awareness.

4. Cultural resistance to non-flame cooking: Preference for flame-based cooking persists, though **fuel stacking** offers gradual transition.

Impact on Power System and Peak Demand Pressure

1. Rising peak electricity demand: Peak demand increased from **148 GW in 2014 to 242.5 GW in 2025**, with strong evening peaks between **9–11 p.m.**

2. High cost of peak power procurement: Electricity prices rise from **₹3.5 to ₹9–10 per unit** during peak hours, increasing discom costs.

3. Risk of outages and load shedding: When demand exceeds supply, discoms use costly options or impose **planned power cuts**, affecting economic activity.

4. Additional stress from mass e-cooking: Large-scale induction use during peak hours can **increase peak load and risk grid instability.**

Way Forward

1. Smart demand response using OpenADR: Automated systems can reduce peak demand, with pilots achieving **14% peak reduction** and potential **7% nationwide impact.**

2. Developing smart grid infrastructure: Need for **OpenADR systems, smart meters, and aggregator platforms** to manage distributed loads.

3. Strengthening distribution capacity: Upgrade household load from **3 kW to 5 kW** and invest in transformers and feeder systems.

4. Promoting rooftop solar and storage: Solar with batteries allows households to store energy and use it during peak cooking hours, reducing grid stress.

5. Enabling peer-to-peer energy trading: P2P trading reduced electricity cost by **43% in pilot projects**, helping flatten local demand.

6. Reforming subsidy and pricing policies: Redirect **₹40,000 crore LPG subsidy** to support e-cooking and introduce time-of-use tariffs.

7. Supporting technology and regulatory push: Invest in **multi-pot induction R&D**, promote efficient appliances, and mandate all-electric buildings.

Conclusion

Electrifying kitchens reduces dependence on imported fuels and shifts India towards domestic energy use. It improves efficiency, lowers costs, and supports sustainability goals. However, the transition requires careful planning to manage grid stress. With strong policy support, smart technology, and infrastructure upgrades, electric cooking can become a reliable and future-ready solution for clean cooking in India.

Question for practice:

Examine how the shift from LPG-based cooking to electric cooking can improve affordability, energy efficiency, and energy security in India, while creating challenges for the power grid.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) as a Test of a New Model of Forest Finance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3-Environment

Introduction

The Belém Climate Summit (2025) highlighted a key issue in forest conservation: finance alone is not enough without power shift. Despite commitments since 1992, funding for tropical forests has remained inadequate. Forests declined by **8% between 2002 and 2022**, showing failure of existing models. **The Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF)** was introduced as a new model to correct incentives and support long-term conservation.

What is New Forest Finance Model (TFFF)?

- 1. TFFF as a payment for standing forests:** The TFFF pays countries for maintaining forests, not just reducing deforestation, shifting focus from damage control to preservation.
- 2. Shift from traditional finance:** The TFFF moves away from grant-based systems and uses a return-generating mechanism, making conservation an investment.
- 3. Blended finance structure:** It aims to raise **\$125 billion**, combining public and private funds, unlike traditional grant-based systems.
- 4. Performance-based system:** Payments depend on keeping deforestation below **0.5%**, measured using satellite monitoring.
- 5. Return-generating mechanism:** The fund invests capital to generate **\$3–4 billion annually**, ensuring long-term financial flow.
- 6. Global participation framework:** It includes **74 developing countries** with over **1 billion hectares of forests**, expanding global coverage.

Positive Features of the TFFF Model

- 1. Correcting economic incentives:** It aims to make conservation financially attractive compared to deforestation, addressing the core economic problem.
- 2. Large-scale financial ambition:** The **\$125 billion target** shows potential to transform forest finance at a global level.
- 3. Support for indigenous communities:** At least **20% of funds** are reserved for local and indigenous communities, recognising their role.

4. **Direct access and decision role:** Communities may directly access funds and influence usage, improving local control.
5. **Participatory design process:** More than **400 community leaders** were involved in consultations, ensuring representation.
6. **Transparency and accountability:** Countries must disclose fund usage, allowing public scrutiny and feedback.
7. **Use of modern technology:** Satellite-based monitoring ensures consistent and credible measurement of forest cover.
8. **Institutional support platform:** A digital platform was launched with **UNDP, FAO, WWF, and GATC** to provide technical assistance and capacity building.

Major Issues in Forest Finance Model

1. **Inadequate financial valuation:** Payments of around **\$4 per hectare** may not reflect the full value of ecosystem services.
2. **Distributional issues:** Funds may be absorbed by governments or intermediaries, limiting direct benefits to indigenous and local communities.
3. **Weak decision-making power:** Indigenous groups lack voting rights in governance bodies, reducing true participation.
4. **Market-driven approach concerns:** Focus on financial returns may ignore root causes like like agribusiness, mining, and infrastructure expansion.
5. **Limited focus on degradation:** Current design mainly considers fire damage, ignoring other forms like logging and mining.
6. **Deforestation leakage risk:** Forest loss may shift to other regions not covered under the model.
7. **Criticism from civil society:** The **Global Forest Coalition (GFC)** called the model “colonialistic” and argued that it may benefit intermediaries more than forest peoples.

Broader Political Economy of Forest Finance

1. **Economic drivers of deforestation:** Clearing forests for agriculture and timber remains more profitable than conservation.
2. **Failure of past commitments:** Since 1992, global promises on forest finance have largely remained unmet.
3. **Global demand and subsidies:** Commodity demand and harmful subsidies continue to push deforestation.
4. **Weak governance systems:** Poor and corrupt forest governance accelerates forest loss.

5. **Power imbalance in conservation:** Indigenous communities often lack control despite being key protectors of forests.

6. **Land rights as central issue:** Without secure land rights, conservation finance cannot ensure long-term protection.

7. **Global funding commitments:** The **Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership (FCLP)** pledged **\$1.8 billion (2026–2030)** for indigenous and local communities.

8. **Link between climate justice and conservation:** Conservation efforts must integrate community governance and human rights.

Way Forward

1. **Increase global financial commitments:** Countries must contribute more to reach the **\$25 billion initial capital** and full funding target.

2. **Improve valuation of forests:** Payments should reflect the true ecological and economic value of forests.

3. **Strengthen monitoring systems:** Use better satellite data and include degradation beyond fire damage.

4. **Ensure equitable distribution:** Build strong local institutions to ensure funds reach communities directly.

5. **Enhance governance and participation:** Provide real decision-making power and ensure continuous consultation with communities.

6. **Prevent leakage and ensure coverage:** Expand monitoring to include other ecosystems and prevent displacement of deforestation.

Conclusion:

The TFFF is a bold step to transform forest finance and align incentives with conservation. However, its success depends on **adequate funding, fair distribution, strong governance, and real community participation**. Without addressing structural drivers and power imbalances, it may not deliver lasting results. Belém thus serves as a critical test of whether forest finance can truly support sustainable conservation.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) represents a new model of forest finance and examine its key features, challenges, and broader implications for forest conservation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Prison outbreak: On the health crisis in India's prisons

Source: The post "**Prison outbreak: On the health crisis in India's prisons**" has been created, based on "**Prison outbreak: On the health crisis in India's prisons**" published in "BusinessLine" on 18th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: Indian prisons are facing a serious public health crisis due to overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and inadequate healthcare services. This situation persists despite the recognition of prisoners' right to health under Article 21 of the Constitution. Recent disease outbreaks in prisons highlight systemic neglect and significant governance gaps.

Evidence of Health Crisis

1. The herpes simplex virus (HSV) outbreak in Jalpaiguri Central Correctional Home during 2025–26 infected around 92 inmates and led to 7 deaths, indicating the severity of health risks in prisons.
2. Prisoners in India are nearly five times more likely to contract tuberculosis compared to the general population, reflecting poor living conditions.
3. The prevalence of HIV among inmates is also higher than the national average due to inadequate screening and unsafe practices.
4. In Kerala prisons in 2023, nearly 30% of inmates were found to be suffering from skin diseases caused by overcrowding and lack of hygiene.
5. Earlier, major COVID-19 outbreaks in Nagpur and Indore central jails demonstrated the vulnerability of prisons to infectious diseases.

Causes of Health Crisis

1. Overcrowding

- a. Indian prisons frequently operate at occupancy rates of 150–170% or even higher, which severely strains existing infrastructure.
- b. In extreme cases, such as Kandi Sub-Jail, occupancy levels have exceeded 400%, making basic living conditions extremely poor.
- c. Overcrowding leads to lack of personal space, poor sanitation, and the inability to isolate infected individuals, thereby accelerating the spread of diseases.

2. Weak Healthcare Infrastructure

- a. There is a significant shortage of medical personnel, with about 43% of medical officer positions lying vacant in prisons.
- b. The inmate-to-doctor ratio is approximately 2.6 times higher than the recommended standards, leading to inadequate medical attention.
- c. Mental health services are also severely lacking, with only 25 psychologists available for around 5.7 lakh inmates.
- d. The absence of proper screening facilities and emergency care further aggravates the health crisis.

3. Poor Prison Conditions

- a. Many prisons suffer from unventilated and congested barracks, which create an unhealthy living environment.
- b. Sanitation facilities and access to clean water are often inadequate, increasing the risk of infections.
- c. Delayed diagnosis and treatment of illnesses further worsen inmates' health conditions.
- d. Poor nutrition among inmates also contributes to weakened immunity.

4. Systemic and Legal Issues

- a. Undertrial prisoners constitute the majority of the prison population, reflecting inefficiencies in the judicial system.
- b. Delays in trials result in prolonged incarceration, contributing significantly to overcrowding.
- c. There is excessive reliance on imprisonment even for minor offences, which increases the burden on prisons.
- d. Alternatives such as bail, plea bargaining, and non-custodial punishments are not adequately utilized.

Implications

1. Prisons become breeding grounds for infectious diseases due to overcrowding and poor hygiene conditions.
2. There is a high risk of disease transmission to the general population through prison staff and visitors.
3. The situation amounts to a violation of the fundamental right to life and health under Article 21.
4. It also undermines human dignity and places an additional burden on the public health system.

Steps Taken

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs in 2025 directed the organization of tuberculosis screening camps in prisons to detect and control infections.
2. Some states, such as West Bengal in 2020, temporarily released undertrial prisoners to reduce overcrowding.
3. The Model Prison Manual provides guidelines for healthcare, sanitation, and staffing in prisons, although its implementation remains inconsistent across states.

Way Forward

1. Decongestion of Prisons: The government should ensure the fast-tracking of cases involving undertrial prisoners to reduce unnecessary detention. Greater emphasis should be placed on bail reforms, plea bargaining, and non-custodial punishments such as community service and fines.

2. Strengthening Healthcare: Prisons should be integrated with the National Health Mission to improve healthcare delivery. Vacancies for doctors, nurses, and psychologists must be filled on priority. Mandatory health screening at the time of entry and regular medical check-ups should be ensured.

3. Infrastructure Improvement: Efforts should be made to improve ventilation, sanitation, and water supply in prisons. Dedicated isolation wards should be established to manage infectious diseases effectively. Disease surveillance systems should be strengthened within prison settings.

4. Governance and Institutional Reforms: The provisions of the Model Prison Manual should be implemented uniformly across all states. Telemedicine services and digital health records should be introduced to improve access to healthcare. Regular inspections and accountability mechanisms should be institutionalized.

5. Special Measures: The repatriation of foreign prisoners should be expedited to reduce overcrowding. Prison staff should be trained in managing health emergencies and disease outbreaks. Coordination between health departments and prison authorities should be strengthened.

Conclusion: The health crisis in Indian prisons reflects deeper structural issues in governance, the criminal justice system, and public health management. A comprehensive and coordinated approach focusing on decongestion, healthcare strengthening, and systemic reforms is essential to uphold prisoners' rights and prevent prisons from becoming centres of disease transmission.

Question: "Overcrowding in Indian prisons has transformed them into public health hazards." Discuss with reference to recent outbreaks and suggest reforms.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's West Asia reset — more sinned against than sinning

Source: The post "India's West Asia reset — more sinned against than sinning" has been created, based on "India's West Asia reset — more sinned against than sinning" published in "The Hindu" on 18th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: India's West Asia policy is undergoing a strategic reset in response to changing geopolitical realities in the region. This new approach emphasizes realism, hard diplomacy, and the prioritisation of national interests over traditional ideological positions. However, the shift has also generated debate regarding its balance and long-term implications.

Background: Growing Importance of West Asia for India

1. West Asia, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has emerged as India's largest socio-economic partner.
2. India has significantly increased its diplomatic engagement in the region over the past decade through high-level visits and strategic agreements.
3. India's bilateral trade with the region exceeds \$160 billion, reflecting deep economic interdependence.
4. The presence of nearly 10 million Indians in the region makes diaspora welfare a key concern for India's foreign policy.
5. India has also signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Oman, further strengthening economic ties.

Features of India's West Asia Reset

1. **Shift to Hard Diplomacy:** India has adopted a more clear-sighted and interest-driven diplomatic approach in the region. It is increasingly avoiding vague or overly balanced statements that previously limited its strategic influence.
2. **Strategic Assertion and Autonomy:** India is now expressing its positions independently without relying on external validation or third-party references. This reflects growing confidence as an autonomous and credible global actor.
3. **Stronger Engagement with Key Players:** India has strengthened its engagement with Israel in areas such as defence and technology cooperation. It continues to deepen ties with GCC countries for energy security, trade, and diaspora protection. At the same time, India maintains engagement with Iran due to its importance in energy and connectivity initiatives.

4. **De-hyphenation Policy:** India has moved away from viewing its relations with Israel and Palestine as interlinked or mutually restrictive. It now engages with each country based on bilateral interests and strategic priorities.

Drivers Behind the Reset

1. **Changing Regional Geopolitics:** The region has witnessed significant instability and conflict, especially after developments since 2023. The traditional U.S.-led security framework in West Asia is weakening, necessitating new alignments.
2. **Security Concerns of Gulf States:** GCC countries are increasingly facing threats such as missile and drone attacks and disruptions in key maritime routes like the Strait of Hormuz. These developments have pushed them to seek diversified and reliable security partnerships.
3. **India's Expanding Interests:** India's growing energy needs make the region crucial for its energy security. Expanding trade, investment opportunities, and diaspora welfare further deepen India's stakes in the region. India also seeks a stronger strategic presence to enhance its global role.

Criticism of the Reset

1. **Timing and Optics:** India's high-level engagement with Israel coincided with escalating regional tensions, raising concerns about diplomatic timing and perception.
2. **Perceived Abandonment of Traditional Positions:** Critics argue that India's policy reflects a dilution of its long-standing support for the Palestinian cause and balanced engagement with Iran.
3. **Strategic Overreach:** There are concerns that increased activism in the region may expose India to security risks and costly defence commitments.
4. **Concerns over Autonomy:** Some critics believe that India's approach may align too closely with Western or U.S. strategic interests.

Counter-Arguments

1. India's policy shift is rooted in pragmatism and is aligned with its national interests rather than ideological considerations.
2. Other major powers such as China, Russia, and Pakistan have also pursued interest-based policies in the region.
3. India continues to maintain a multi-vector engagement strategy, balancing its relations with all key stakeholders.

Emerging Opportunities for India

1. **Diversification of Security Partnerships:** GCC countries may reduce their dependence on the United States and look for alternative partners such as India. This presents an opportunity for India to emerge as a credible and reliable security partner.
2. **Economic Opportunities:** Instability in the GCC region may encourage global investors to explore India as an alternative economic hub. India can leverage this opportunity to attract capital and talent.
3. **Strategic Leverage:** India's balanced engagement with Israel, Iran, and Arab countries enhances its role as a regional stabiliser. This also strengthens India's position in global geopolitics.

Way Forward

1. **Maintain Strategic Balance:** India should continue engaging with Israel, GCC countries, Iran, and Palestine in a balanced manner. It must avoid excessive alignment with any one bloc.
2. **Flexible and Agile Diplomacy:** India should adopt a dynamic approach to respond effectively to rapidly changing regional developments. It should keep its diplomatic options open.
3. **Humanitarian and Soft Power Role:** India should increase humanitarian assistance during regional conflicts to build goodwill. This will enhance its image as a responsible global actor.
4. **Careful Security Engagement:** India should undertake defence partnerships only after careful cost-benefit analysis. Clear rules of engagement must be established to avoid strategic overreach.

Conclusion: India's West Asia reset represents a mature and pragmatic shift towards interest-based diplomacy. However, sustaining long-term gains will require a careful balance of consistency, sensitivity, and strategic agility in a highly volatile region.

Question: "India's recent 'reset' in West Asia reflects a shift towards pragmatic and interest-based diplomacy." Critically examine.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A bit of a blur over India's new carbon credit plan

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3-Environment

Introduction

The **Union Budget 2026 announced a ₹20,000 crore carbon credit programme**, creating confusion about its purpose. One view links it to industrial **Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)**, while another sees it as income support for farmers. Official evidence supports the industrial focus, but a parallel narrative has led to uncertainty and mixed expectations.

What is DST's (Department of Science and Technology) CCUS Roadmap

1. **What is CCUS:** It is a process of capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from industrial sources, transporting it, and then using it or storing it underground to prevent its release into the atmosphere.
2. **Policy basis and intent:** The programme is based on the **DST's CCUS roadmap (Dec 2025)**, which clearly defines its industrial focus and technical scope.
3. **Target sectors:** It focuses on **hard-to-abate industries** such as power, steel, cement, refineries, and chemicals where emissions are concentrated and measurable.
4. **Nature of emissions:** These sectors have **process emissions that are difficult to reduce through renewable energy alone**, making them key targets.
5. **Financial allocation:** The **₹20,000 crore over five years** is meant for large-scale deployment of CCUS technologies.
6. **Technology focus:** It aims at **large-scale deployment of technologies to capture CO₂ from industrial sources and manage it effectively**.

Exclusion of Agriculture

- 1. Not part of CCUS sectors:** Agriculture is not included in the roadmap's target sectors, showing a clear boundary of the programme.
- 2. Nature of agricultural emissions:** Agricultural emissions are **diffuse and biologically mediated, mainly methane and nitrous oxide**.
- 3. Technical limitation:** These emissions are **not suitable for point-source capture technology, which is central to CCUS**.
- 4. Conceptual distinction:** The **roadmap separates CCUS (industrial emission prevention) from CDR (removal of atmospheric CO₂)**.
- 5. Role of agriculture in CDR:** Agriculture contributes through soil carbon sequestration, biochar, and agroforestry, but this is outside CCUS.

What are the concerns with DST's CCUS Roadmap

- 1. Terminology confusion:** The use of the term "carbon credit programme" **created ambiguity about the scheme's actual scope**.
- 2. Conflation of concepts:** There is **confusion between CCUS (industrial carbon capture) and voluntary carbon markets** (agriculture-based credits).
- 3. Media-driven narrative:** Reports and discourse promoted the **idea of farmers earning carbon credits from this fund**, which is **not accurate**.
- 4. Communication gap:** The technical clarity of the roadmap was not matched by clear public communication, leading to misinterpretation.
- 5. Expectation mismatch:** The mention of a "programme" led to expectations of a funded scheme for farmers, which is not part of this allocation.

What are the opportunities

- 1. Growing carbon market demand:** There is **rising global and domestic demand for nature-based carbon credits**, especially from agriculture.
- 2. Existing pilot initiatives:** Private sector and State-level projects are already testing models where farmers earn from sustainable practices.
- 3. Scope for soil carbon enhancement:** Practices that improve soil organic carbon can generate measurable benefits and credits.
- 4. Policy readiness:** The Agriculture Ministry has been working on soil health and climate-resilient farming, creating a base for future policy.

5. **Potential income source:** A structured framework can create a new income stream for farmers, aligning climate action with livelihoods.

Way Forward

1. **Ensure policy clarity and effective communication:** The confusion shows a gap between technical design and public understanding, so there must be a clear separation between CCUS (industry) and carbon farming (agriculture), along with precise communication to avoid misinterpretation.

2. **Develop a separate policy framework for agriculture:** The absence of a structured agricultural carbon system highlights the need for dedicated institutions, funding, and mechanisms for carbon farming.

3. **Align policy with emerging narrative:** The growing farmer-centric climate narrative should be aligned with actual policy design to prevent mismatch between perception and reality.

4. **Adopt a parallel strategy:** Both industrial decarbonisation and agricultural carbon sequestration should be promoted through separate but coordinated approaches.

Conclusion

The ₹20,000 crore programme clearly targets **industrial decarbonisation through CCUS**, not agriculture. At the same time, agriculture offers a strong but separate opportunity in carbon markets. India needs a **dual-track approach**, with clear policy separation and equal focus on industry and farming, to ensure effective climate action and avoid confusion.

Question for practice:

Discuss the confusion surrounding India's ₹20,000 crore carbon credit programme announced in Union Budget 2026, and explain its actual focus, concerns, opportunities, and the way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

On scientific collaborations in BRICS

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International Relations

Introduction

BRICS is a major global grouping with strong share in global GDP, population, natural resources, and scientific capacity. It promotes a multipolar system and reduces dependence on Western dominance. In a time of geopolitical tensions, sanctions, and techno-nationalism, cooperation in **science, technology, and innovation (STI)** has become important, though it remains less visible than economic cooperation within BRICS.

Evolution of STI Cooperation in BRICS

1. **Formal recognition and institutional base:** STI cooperation became formal in **2011** and was strengthened by the **2015 memorandum**, which made it a core pillar with a clear institutional framework.

2. Framework Programme and funding mechanism: The **2016 BRICS STI Framework Programme** created a system for multilateral R&D projects, requiring at least three member countries and involving national funding agencies.

3. Action Plan and working group structure: The **2017–2020 Action Plan** assigned implementation to the **Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Partnership (STIEP)** Working Group, focusing on structured collaboration and programme execution.

4. Shift towards innovation and technology transfer: Early focus on basic science shifted to **innovation, entrepreneurship, business incubators, and technology transfer**, including youth and women participation.

5. Ministerial coordination and national agencies: Annual STI Minister meetings approve plans, while agencies like the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** and the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** coordinate project calls and implementation at the national level.

6. Technology platforms and limited commercialisation: Initiatives like **iBRICS** and **TTC** created policy links for technology transfer, but **large-scale commercialisation remains limited**.

Emerging Areas and Sectoral Focus of STI Cooperation

1. Transition to development-oriented sectors: Focus moved to **energy, water, health, and environment**, reflecting shared development challenges of member countries.

2. COVID-19 driven priority shift: The pandemic increased focus on **public health, vaccines, biosecurity, and digital health**, making STI cooperation more urgent and practical.

3. Inclusion of advanced and frontier technologies: Recent calls include **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), High-Performance Computing (HPC), advanced materials, and space technologies**, showing a shift to high-end scientific collaboration.

4. Sectoral progress remains uneven: Strong progress is seen in **ICT, HPC, and space cooperation**, but **mega-science projects and ocean or polar research are slow** due to high infrastructure needs.

5. Growing importance of AI governance: The **2025 AI Declaration** made AI a central pillar, promoting **inclusive and development-oriented governance frameworks**.

BRICS+ Expansion and Strategic Shift

1. Expansion into BRICS+ platform: BRICS, a grouping of major emerging economies (**Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**), expanded in 2022 to include **Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Iran**, making it a broader Global South platform.

2. Goal of reducing technological dependence: Expansion aims to **build shared capacities and reduce dependence on external technologies**, especially for developing economies.

3. Shift from networking to impact-driven projects: New action plans focus on **biotechnology, climate tech, industrial innovation, and AI**, aiming for larger and scalable outcomes.

4. **India's 2026 Presidency priorities:** The theme “**Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**” focuses on **digital divide, public health, and climate resilience**.

5. **Uneven participation of new members:** Participation is limited, as **only Egypt and Iran joined recent project calls**, showing integration challenges within BRICS+.

6. **New institutional initiatives:** The **China-BRICS Research Centre** supports academic exchange and technological research, strengthening collaboration platforms.

Key Challenges and Structural Limitations

1. **Low research investment across members:** Except China, BRICS countries have **low GERD**, creating a wide gap with advanced systems like South Korea.

2. **Weak National Innovation Systems:** Many members have **weaker innovation indicators**, requiring improvement and long-term strengthening.

3. **Heterogeneity of members:** Differences in **economic development and scientific capacity** create coordination problems and conflicting interests.

4. **Limited funding and programme scale:** Funding is **modest and competitive**, which restricts the scale and effectiveness of collaborative projects.

5. **Lack of research and data framework:** There is **no regular mechanism to study STI cooperation**, limiting data-based policy decisions.

6. **Rotational and weak institutional structure:** The system depends on **annual rotating leadership**, which is not suitable for long-term planning and continuity.

Way forward

1. **Establishing a permanent central mechanism:** A **BRICS Secretariat**, similar to the EU model, can manage funds, monitor progress, and ensure long-term coordination.

2. **Launching mega-science projects:** Long-term **large-scale projects** can strengthen collaboration and build deeper scientific capacity among members.

3. **Strengthening innovation systems of members:** Focus should be on improving **research capacity and innovation indicators**, especially in weaker countries.

4. **Expanding focus to STI governance:** Cooperation should include **governance of emerging technologies**, ensuring better global negotiation capacity.

5. **Encouraging targeted partnerships:** Developing “**paired links**” between members can reduce coordination issues and improve outcomes.

Conclusion

STI cooperation in BRICS has grown since 2015, shifting towards innovation and development-focused collaboration. However, low funding, weak institutions, and uneven participation limit its impact. Strengthening governance, creating permanent structures, and scaling projects are necessary. India's 2026 leadership offers a key opportunity to improve effectiveness and global credibility of BRICS scientific cooperation.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the evolution, scope, and challenges of scientific collaborations within BRICS, and examine the need for strengthening its institutional and innovation framework.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Futility of cabotage law

Source: The post "Futility of cabotage law" has been created, based on "Futility of cabotage law" published in "BusinessLine" on 19th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: Cabotage refers to the restriction of domestic coastal shipping to vessels registered in a particular country. In India, it is governed by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways with the objective of promoting domestic shipping. However, the recent rollback in 2026 of cabotage relaxation for foreign vessels has revived the debate regarding its effectiveness.

Rationale behind Cabotage Law

1. Cabotage laws are intended to protect the domestic shipping industry from foreign competition.
2. They aim to ensure strategic and economic security by maintaining national control over coastal trade.
3. They also seek to promote the development of indigenous fleet capacity in the long run.

Issues with Cabotage in India

1. Limited Impact of Relaxation

- a. The relaxation provided between 2018 and 2026 was limited only to trans shipment container trade.
- b. As a result, it benefitted less than 8 per cent of India's total port traffic, thereby limiting its overall impact.

2. Inadequate Domestic Capacity

- a. India currently has only around 30 feeder container ships with a carrying capacity of about 56,000 TEUs.
- b. This capacity is insufficient to efficiently service a long coastline of 7,500 km along with numerous major and non-major ports.

3. Higher Freight Costs

- a. Limited competition due to protectionist policies often leads to cartelisation tendencies among domestic players.

- b. Consequently, domestic shipping companies tend to keep freight rates higher than competitive global standards.

4. Risk of Cargo Diversion

- a. The rollback of relaxation may lead to diversion of cargo to foreign transshipment hubs.
- b. Major hubs likely to benefit include the Port of Colombo, Port Klang, and the Port of Singapore.

5. Weak Global Competitiveness

- a. The global shipping market is dominated by large companies such as Maersk and MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company).
- b. These companies collectively control around 78 per cent of the global container shipping market, creating high entry barriers for Indian firms.

International Practices

1. Countries such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand have adopted relatively liberal regimes in coastal shipping.
2. Australia follows a conditional licensing system that allows foreign vessels under certain conditions.
3. Malaysia and Indonesia have introduced sector-specific relaxations in their cabotage laws.
4. These examples indicate a broader global trend towards controlled liberalisation rather than strict protectionism.

Way Forward

1. India should adopt gradual liberalisation of cabotage laws to enhance competition.
2. Greater competition would help in reducing logistics and freight costs.
3. The domestic fleet should be strengthened through targeted incentives rather than excessive protection.
4. India should also focus on developing its own trans shipment hubs to reduce dependence on foreign ports.

Conclusion: While cabotage laws are intended to protect domestic shipping, excessive protection often results in inefficiency and higher costs. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines strategic protection with competitive liberalisation is essential for India to realise its maritime potential.

Question: Critically examine the relevance of cabotage laws in India. Do such protectionist measures help or hinder the growth of the shipping sector?

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

Infrastructure Financing in India: Trends, Institutions, and Innovations

Source: The post “Infrastructure Financing in India: Trends, Institutions, and Innovations” has been created, based on “Infrastructure Financing in India: Trends, Institutions, and Innovations” published in “PIB” on 19th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: Infrastructure financing is critical for economic growth as it ensures a steady flow of long-term funds for large projects. In recent years, India has shifted from a budget-dependent model to a blended financing framework combining public investment, institutional support, and market-based instruments.

Key Trends in Infrastructure Financing

1. Public capital expenditure has increased significantly from ₹2 lakh crore in FY2014–15 to ₹12.2 lakh crore in FY2026–27, reflecting the government's infrastructure push.
2. Higher capex has helped crowd in private investment, generate employment, and boost demand in core sectors like steel and cement.
3. The focus has expanded to Tier-II and Tier-III cities through initiatives like City Economic Regions (CERs) for balanced regional development.

Institutional Mechanisms

1. The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) mobilises global and domestic capital and invests in core sectors like transport and energy.
2. The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) provides long-term development finance, supports PPP projects, and promotes bond market development.
3. The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) acts as the dedicated financing arm for Indian Railways through a leasing model.

Financial Innovations and Instruments

1. Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) have enabled asset monetisation, unlocking over ₹1.5 lakh crore and recycling capital into new projects.
2. Debt market reforms, including ESG bonds and improved Electronic Book Provider (EBP) mechanisms, have strengthened long-term financing.
3. The Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund introduced in the Union Budget 2026–27 reduces risk for lenders and attracts private investment.
4. Asset monetisation models such as Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT) have enhanced efficiency and funding availability.

Key Issues in Infrastructure Financing in India

1. **Fiscal Constraints:** The government finances nearly half of infrastructure investment, but faces competing demands like health, education, and employment.
2. **Asset-Liability Mismatch:** Commercial banks struggle to provide long-term infrastructure loans due to short-term deposit structures.
3. **Weak PPP Participation:** Private investment remains subdued due to legacy issues, stressed balance sheets, and low investor confidence.
4. **Regulatory Constraints on Institutional Investors:** Insurance and pension funds are mandated to invest heavily in government securities, limiting infrastructure funding.
5. **Underdeveloped Corporate Bond Market:** The bond market is not deep enough to meet long-term financing needs of infrastructure projects.
6. **Low User Charges:** Many sectors like water supply and sanitation are not commercially viable, restricting cost recovery.

7. **Legal and Procedural Delays:** Land acquisition and environmental clearances create uncertainty, reducing investor interest.

Way Forward

1. Greater reliance on PPP models and asset monetisation should be encouraged to reduce fiscal pressure.
2. Long-term financing institutions such as National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development should be strengthened.
3. Regulatory reforms should enable insurance and pension funds to invest more in infrastructure.
4. The corporate bond market should be deepened through credit enhancement and investor diversification.
5. User charges should be rationalised along with targeted subsidies to ensure viability.
6. Single-window clearance systems and streamlined regulations should be implemented to reduce delays.

Conclusion: India's infrastructure financing ecosystem is evolving through higher public investment, strong institutions, and innovative financial instruments. Addressing structural challenges through reforms and enhanced private participation will be essential to sustain inclusive and resilient growth in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Question: Discuss the recent trends, institutional mechanisms, and innovations in infrastructure financing in India. How do they contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth? Also examine the challenges and suggest measures to address them.

Source: [PIB](#)

India's Future Demographic Challenges

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- Society- population and associated issues

Introduction

India is entering a new demographic phase marked by **slower population growth and rising ageing trends**. The population is projected to increase from **1,355.8 million (2021) to 1,590.1 million (2051)** with a **low annual growth of 0.5%**. This shift reduces fears of population explosion and signals a transition towards a **more urban, balanced, and ageing population**, creating new economic and social challenges.

Structural Changes in Population

1. **Declining population growth:** Population growth is slowing significantly, moving below earlier estimates and indicating the end of rapid expansion.
2. **Falling child population:** The 0–4 age group is projected to fall sharply from **113.5 million (2021) to 8.6 million by mid-century**, showing sustained fertility decline.
3. **Peak and decline of workforce:** The working-age population will rise to **1,009 million (65.5%) by 2041**, then decline to **998.1 million (62.8%) by 2051**, signalling a limited demographic dividend window.

4. Rapid ageing trend: Elderly population will increase from **130.5 million (9.62%) in 2021 to 325.3 million (20.5%) by 2051**, reflecting a major demographic shift.

5. Rising median age: Median age will increase from **28 to 40 years**, showing movement towards an advanced demographic stage.

Sectoral Consequences of These Changes

1. Educational Impact

a) **Falling enrolments and uneconomic schools:** Declining child population is reducing demand for schools, leading to **uneconomic schools** and risk of teacher job losses.

b) **Decline of government schools:** Government schools reduced from **11.07 lakh to 10.18 lakh**, showing a drop of nearly **90,000 schools**.

c) **Rise of private schooling:** Private schools increased from **2.88 lakh to 3.31 lakh**, driven by affordability and perceived better quality.

2. Economic and Fiscal Impact

a) **Workforce and economic risks:** The demographic dividend will weaken after **2041**, affecting long-term economic growth.

b) **Fiscal pressure on the state:** Rising elderly population will increase spending on **healthcare, pensions, and social security**, putting pressure on public finances.

3. Healthcare Impact

a) **Changing healthcare demand:** Lower fertility reduces maternity needs, but ageing population increases demand for **geriatric care and long-term healthcare services**.

4. Employment and Regional Imbalance

a) **Uneven regional transition:** Southern States are ageing faster, while northern States still have rising working-age populations, creating imbalance in growth.

b) **Employment and skill concerns:** Youthful States face issues of **employability and stagnant education spending**, despite having a large workforce.

5. Social Impact

a) **Gender dimension of ageing:** Elderly women face higher vulnerability due to **longer life expectancy and lower financial security**.

b) **Weakening family support systems:** Migration and nuclear families are reducing traditional support for the elderly.

What Should Be Done?

- 1. Reform education and skill systems:** Education must focus on skills to prepare youth before the demographic dividend declines.
- 2. Increase female workforce participation:** Expanding women's participation can offset workforce decline and create a **gender dividend**.
- 3. Strengthen healthcare systems:** There is a need to expand **geriatric care and healthcare infrastructure** for ageing population.
- 4. Continue family planning efforts:** Investments are needed to ensure reproductive rights and prevent unintended pregnancies.
- 5. Develop employment and industrial policy:** Job creation in new sectors like **green energy and care economy** is essential.
- 6. Expand social security systems:** Public pensions and elderly support systems must be strengthened to reduce dependency risks.
- 7. Leverage silver economy:** Growing elderly population can create new economic opportunities and support a second demographic dividend.

Conclusion

India is shifting from a **youth-driven population to an ageing society**, with a narrowing demographic dividend window. The challenge lies in **using the workforce advantage before 2041 while preparing for rising elderly needs**. Without strong reforms in employment, healthcare, and social security, demographic transition may become a burden rather than an opportunity for growth.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key structural changes in India's population and analyse their sectoral consequences, along with the policy measures needed to address emerging demographic challenges.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The opportunity in Cameroon to rebalance the WTO

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Introduction

Trade is no longer driven only by economics. It is increasingly shaped by geopolitics, where tariffs are used as pressure tools and economic dependence is used strategically. **The Munich Security Report 2026, which highlights global security trends and served as the basis for the Munich Security Conference (MSC)**, shows a shift toward disruption and short-term, power-driven actions. In this context, the **WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14)**, which is the highest decision-making body of the WTO, will be held in Cameroon from March 26–29, 2026. It is important because it provides an opportunity to assess whether the WTO can adapt to the changing global trade order.

What is the present context of global trade and WTO?

1. **Shift toward geopolitical use of trade:** Trade is now used for strategic pressure through tariffs and dependence. This reflects a move away from purely economic objectives.
2. **Rise of “wrecking-ball politics”:** The **Munich Security Report 2026** highlights a shift toward disruption and short-term deals. This weakens rule-based global systems.
3. **Declining adherence to WTO norms:** Countries are increasingly using unilateral tariffs and bypassing multilateral commitments. This reduces the relevance of WTO rules.

What are the Key Challenges Facing the WTO?

1. **Dispute settlement paralysis:** The Appellate Body remains stalled, weakening enforcement. **Rules lose value without enforceability**, reducing trust.
2. **Slow decision-making structure:** With **166 members**, consensus is difficult and slow. This leads to weak outcomes and unresolved issues.
3. **Outdated rules for modern trade:** Digital commerce has expanded rapidly. WTO rules have not kept pace with these changes.
4. **Market distortions due to geopolitics:** Tariffs and coercive practices are distorting trade. This weakens fair competition.

What are its Implications?

1. **Unstable and unpredictable trade system:** Weak enforcement and rising unilateral tariffs can make global trade uncertain and fragmented.
2. **Vulnerability of smaller and poorer countries:** These countries depend on common rules for protection. Weakening rules exposes them to pressure from stronger economies.
3. **Shift toward power-driven trade order:** Trade may move toward arrangements shaped by power and coercion rather than shared rules.
4. **Distortion of global markets:** Use of tariffs as political tools and economic coercion disrupts fair competition.
5. **Weakening of multilateral institutions:** Bypassing WTO commitments reduces the credibility and authority of the WTO.
6. **Decline of rules-based global order:** “Wrecking-ball politics” reflects a move toward disruption and short-term deals, weakening institutional stability.

What Should Be Done?

1. **Restore dispute settlement credibility:** A **binding and trusted system** must be rebuilt. This will ensure enforcement and reduce political interference.

2. Ensure fairness along with predictability: Issues like **agricultural subsidies, market distortions, and unequal market access need transparent solutions.** This will make WTO rules both legally sound and developmentally fair.

3. Reform Special and Differential Treatment (SDT): SDT provisions should be updated to reflect current economic realities. This will ensure meaningful support to developing countries.

4. Improve transparency on subsidies: Members should clearly report subsidies and follow stricter rules. This will help identify and control distortive trade practices.

5. Adopt cooperative and rules-based reform approach: Instead of relying on unilateral tariffs and short-term deals, countries should work through WTO mechanisms. This will strengthen trust in multilateral rules.

6. Strengthen collective commitment to multilateralism: Countries supporting a rules-based system should cooperate more closely and invest in WTO frameworks. This will prevent dominance by powerful economies.

Conclusion

The MC14 presents a critical opportunity to rebalance the WTO. Reform must restore enforcement, update rules, and ensure fairness. Without action, trade may shift toward power-based dominance and weaken protection for smaller countries. Strengthening a rules-based system is essential to ensure stability and prevent economic coercion in global trade.

Question for practice:

Examine how the changing geopolitical use of trade is creating challenges for the WTO and why the MC14 in Cameroon is seen as an opportunity to rebalance and reform the global trading system.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

New GDP series, charting the path ahead

Source: The post “New GDP series, charting the path ahead” has been created, based on “New GDP series, charting the path ahead” published in “The Hindu” on 20th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: India has introduced a new GDP series with base year 2022–23, replacing the earlier 2011–12 series. This revision aims to provide a more accurate and updated estimate of the Indian economy.

Significance of the New GDP Series

1. The new GDP series reflects the current structure of the economy by incorporating recent changes in production and consumption patterns.
2. It improves the accuracy and reliability of economic estimates compared to the outdated base year.
3. It enables better policy formulation by providing realistic macroeconomic indicators.
4. It aligns India’s national accounts methodology with international standards.

Key Features and Findings

9 PM Compilation [Third Week] March 2026

1. The GDP at current prices is estimated at ₹261.18 lakh crore for 2022–23, ₹289.84 lakh crore for 2023–24, and ₹318.07 lakh crore for 2024–25.
2. The new estimates are lower by about 3–4% compared to the previous series.
3. The share of the primary sector is 21.4%, the secondary sector is 25.8%, and the tertiary sector is 52.9% in 2024–25.
4. The manufacturing sector has shown strong growth, with 12.7% growth in 2023–24 and 9.3% in 2024–25.
5. Private Final Consumption Expenditure accounts for around 56% of GDP.

Major Methodological Improvements

1. The new series allocates Gross Value Added of multi-activity companies across different activities based on revenue shares instead of assigning it to a single main activity.
2. It uses blow-up factors based on paid-up capital to account for active companies that do not file returns.
3. It includes Limited Liability Partnerships in the estimation using data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
4. It estimates the household sector GVA using GVA per worker from ASUSE and worker data from PLFS, which improves accuracy.
5. It incorporates high-frequency survey data such as ASUSE, PLFS, and HCES for better estimation.
6. It uses improved techniques like double deflation and volume extrapolation for estimating real GVA.
7. It derives private consumption expenditure more directly using data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022–23.

Challenges Ahead

1. The allocation of national-level GVA of companies across States remains difficult due to the lack of state-wise corporate data.
2. The Annual Survey of Industries has a limited sampling frame, which leads to under-representation of manufacturing units.
3. This limitation can distort Gross State Domestic Product estimates.
4. The household sector estimates show volatility due to fluctuations in GVA per worker data from ASUSE.
5. The dependence on multiple surveys may lead to inconsistencies in estimation.

Suggested Reforms

1. The sampling frame of the Annual Survey of Industries should be updated using MCA and GST databases.
2. A dedicated survey of active companies should be conducted to improve state-level GVA estimation.
3. A rotating panel design should be introduced in ASUSE to reduce volatility in estimates.
4. Moving averages should be used to smooth fluctuations in annual data.

Conclusion: The new GDP series represents a major improvement in India's national accounting system. However, further refinements in data collection and methodology are necessary to ensure more accurate GDP and GSDP estimates.

Question: Discuss the significance of the new GDP series (base year 2022–23) in India. What methodological improvements have been introduced, and what challenges remain in ensuring accurate GDP and GSDP estimation?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's crude oil and gas reserves and why we are lagging on this count

Source: The post “India's crude oil and gas reserves and why we are lagging on this count” has been created, based on “All you want to know about India's crude oil and gas reserves and why we are lagging on this count” published in “BusinessLine” on 20th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: Energy security is a critical component of economic stability, especially for an import-dependent country like India. In the context of rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in West Asia, maintaining adequate reserves of crude oil and gas has become increasingly important.

Importance of Strategic and Commercial Reserves

1. Fossil fuel storage capacity acts as a buffer against supply disruptions caused by geopolitical conflicts, natural disasters, and technical failures.
2. Strategic reserves help ensure continuity of economic activities during crises.
3. These reserves also reduce vulnerability to global price volatility and external pressure.
4. They act as a deterrent against the use of energy supplies as a geopolitical tool.

Status of Crude Oil Reserves in India

1. India maintains a combined crude oil and petroleum product buffer of approximately 74 to 90 days of consumption.
2. Strategic reserves managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited have a total capacity of 5.33 MMT.
3. These reserves provide around 9.5 days of crude oil coverage and are about 80% filled.
4. The reserves are located at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, and Padur.
5. Oil Marketing Companies maintain commercial stocks equivalent to about 64.5 days of consumption.
6. The government has approved an additional 6.5 MMT capacity under a Public-Private Partnership model.
7. India plans to expand total strategic storage capacity to 15 MMT in the coming decade.

Status of LPG Storage in India

1. India's LPG storage capacity is critically low, covering less than two days of national consumption.
2. The country relies mainly on operational storage rather than strategic reserves.
3. Major storage facilities include Visakhapatnam and Mangaluru with a combined capacity of about 1.4 lakh tonnes.
4. The infrastructure is designed for rapid distribution rather than long-term storage.

Status of Natural Gas Storage

1. India currently does not have a dedicated strategic natural gas reserve system.
2. The government is planning to establish strategic gas reserves in response to recent supply shocks.
3. A proposal to mandate additional storage capacity at LNG terminals is under consideration.
4. Feasibility studies are being conducted for new storage sites, including salt caverns.

Reasons for India Lagging in Strategic Storage

1. India's energy infrastructure has historically prioritised efficient distribution over long-term storage.
2. Earlier availability of cheap and abundant global LPG reduced the urgency for building reserves.
3. Geological constraints limit the availability of suitable locations such as salt caverns.
4. High capital costs make large-scale storage projects economically challenging.
5. Land acquisition issues, local resistance, and administrative delays slow down project implementation.
6. Policy focus has been reactive rather than proactive in building strategic reserves.

Global Comparison

1. Countries like Japan maintain large strategic reserves sufficient for about 146 days of imports.
2. China has developed massive storage capacity and is continuously expanding it.
3. South Korea has an advanced and integrated oil and gas storage system.
4. Singapore maintains large reserves due to its role as a global energy trading hub.

Way Forward

1. India should expand its strategic petroleum reserves to meet international benchmarks of at least 90 days of imports.
2. There is a need to develop dedicated strategic reserves for LPG and natural gas.
3. Public-Private Partnerships should be encouraged to finance storage infrastructure.
4. Faster land acquisition and streamlined clearances are required to avoid delays.
5. Advanced technologies and alternative storage solutions should be explored.

Conclusion: While India has made progress in crude oil storage, significant gaps remain in LPG and natural gas reserves. Strengthening strategic storage capacity is essential for enhancing long-term energy security and economic resilience.

Question: Discuss the status of India's crude oil and gas reserves. Why is India lagging in building strategic energy storage compared to other major economies?

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

AI-powered tax governance in India and its challenges

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

India faces a **low tax-GDP ratio (16.36%)** and **high tax evasion (around 4.3% annual revenue loss)**. At the same time, AI is gaining importance in governance, as seen at the India AI Impact Summit (February 2026). In

this situation, the use of AI in tax administration through Project Insight shows a shift towards **data-driven governance to improve compliance, fairness, and revenue mobilisation.**

AI in Tax Governance in India

1. Project Insight and core objective: Project Insight, launched in 2017 and operational in 2019, aims to increase voluntary compliance, reduce tax evasion, and ensure fair and unbiased tax enforcement through AI and data analytics.

2. Three components of Project Insight:

- **INTRAC (analytical engine):** INTRAC uses AI to analyse data from **banking, property, securities, GST, credit cards, and high-value transactions** to build a **360-degree financial profile of taxpayers.**
- **Compliance Management Centralized Processing Centre:** It uses INTRAC data to **monitor taxpayer behaviour and guide compliance actions.**
- **NUDGE strategy for voluntary compliance:** It sends **SMS and email reminders** to help taxpayers correct or confirm their returns.

3. Working mechanism of AI system: AI identifies gaps between declared income and actual financial activities, enabling detection of potential tax evasion.

Benefits of AI in tax governance:

- 1. Risk-based prioritisation:** AI helps authorities **focus on high-risk and complex evasion cases**, improving enforcement efficiency.
- 2. Automation of routine tasks:** AI reduces manual work, allowing officials to **focus on cases requiring human judgment.**
- 3. Improved taxpayer services:** AI supports **correct return filing, chatbot assistance, and prevention of tax scams**, improving compliance experience.

Effectiveness and Global Validation of AI in tax governance

- 1. Rise in voluntary compliance:** Since 2020-21, over one crore revised returns have been filed, generating ₹11,000 crore additional tax revenue.
- 2. Improved foreign asset disclosure:** In targeted campaigns, 62% taxpayers corrected returns, and 30,161 filers disclosed ₹29,208 crore assets and ₹1,089 crore income.
- 3. Correction of false deductions:** NUDGE campaigns led to correction of ₹963 crore false claims and payment of ₹410 crore additional taxes.
- 4. Faster refund processing:** Refund time reduced from 93 days to 17 days, improving efficiency and taxpayer experience.

5. **Detection of large-scale evasion:** AI tools uncovered ₹70,000 crore suppressed turnover in restaurants using advanced manipulation methods.

6. **Global acceptance of AI systems:** Countries like Australia, Italy, the UK, and the US have adopted similar AI-based systems and generated additional revenue.

Challenges and Risks in AI-Based Tax Governance

1. **Data quality and false positives:** AI depends on data quality and may wrongly flag legitimate financial behaviour as evasion, especially in complex income cases.

2. **Algorithmic bias in decision-making:** AI models may reflect existing socio-economic or geographic biases, leading to unequal targeting of taxpayers.

3. **Lack of transparency and explainability:** Taxpayers may not know why they are flagged or how decisions are made, weakening trust in the system.

4. **Limited human oversight:** Absence of easy human review forces taxpayers to justify flagged transactions, increasing compliance burden.

5. **Privacy and data security risks:** Use of sensitive financial data creates risk of misuse and cyber threats.

6. **Institutional gaps in AI governance:** Lack of AI ombudsperson, audit systems, and public reporting of errors reduces accountability.

What should be done?

1. **Improve data quality systems:** Strong data systems are needed to reduce false positives and incorrect targeting.

2. **Ensure human-in-the-loop oversight:** Human review must be included in key decisions to protect fairness and due process.

3. **Enhance transparency and accountability:** Taxpayers should know how AI decisions are made and how to challenge them.

4. **Strengthen data protection frameworks:** Robust safeguards are required to protect sensitive financial and personal data.

5. **Establish institutional safeguards:** Create systems for independent audits, ombudsperson, and reporting of error and appeal rates.

6. **Maintain trust in tax system:** Strong governance is needed to prevent AI systems from becoming opaque and surveillance-driven.

Conclusion

AI can strengthen tax compliance, improve efficiency, and increase revenue. However, weak safeguards can reduce fairness and trust. India must ensure **transparency, accountability, human oversight, and data protection** in AI systems. A balanced approach will help build a tax system that is both effective and trusted, ensuring sustainable compliance and fair governance.

Question for practice:

Examine how Artificial Intelligence is transforming tax governance in India, highlighting its effectiveness, key challenges, and the need for safeguards.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's Power Sector: Progress and Reforms

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

Electricity is essential for economic activity, daily life, and digital systems. India has moved from power shortages to a system with improved capacity, reliability, and access. This shift is due to sustained investments, better policies, and institutional reforms. The sector now reflects adequacy in supply, expansion in infrastructure, and stronger governance. It also supports economic growth while preparing for future energy needs and sustainability.

Growth and Infrastructure Expansion in India's Power Sector

- 1. Rising Electricity Demand and Capacity Expansion:** Electricity demand has increased across households, industry, and agriculture. In FY 2025–26, a record **52,537 MW capacity** was added, including **39,657 MW renewable energy**, marking the highest-ever annual addition.
- 2. Growth in Installed Capacity:** India's total installed capacity reached **520.51 GW by January 2026**, showing over **11% growth**. This ensures the system can meet rising consumption needs.
- 3. Strengthening Transmission Infrastructure:** New substations, upgraded transformers, and high-capacity transmission corridors improved power flow. These steps reduced bottlenecks and improved grid stability.
- 4. Expansion of National Grid:** The transmission network crossed **5 lakh circuit km**, with **1,407 GVA transformation capacity**. This strengthens integration of diverse energy sources across regions.

From Deficit to Reliable Power Supply

- 1. Reduction in Power Shortages:** Peak demand of **242.49 GW** was successfully met in FY 2025–26. Power shortages declined sharply from **4.2% in FY14 to 0.03% in 2025**, showing strong supply adequacy.
- 2. Improved Rural and Urban Supply:** Rural supply increased from **12.5 hours to 22.6 hours daily**, while urban supply rose to **23.4 hours**. This improved reliability across regions.
- 3. Increase in Electricity Consumption:** Per capita consumption rose to **1,460 kWh in 2024–25**, up by **52.6%** from 2013–14. This reflects better access and economic activity.

4. Reduced Dependence on Traditional Fuels: Reliable electricity reduced reliance on diesel and traditional fuels. This lowered costs and improved environmental outcomes.

Universal Access and Distribution Strengthening

1. Last-Mile Connectivity Expansion: Schemes like **DDUGJY, IPDS, and Saubhagya** strengthened rural and urban distribution networks. These improved infrastructure and ensured electricity access.

2. Mass Electrification Achievements: About **18,374 villages** were electrified and **2.86 crore households** received connections. Total investment was around **₹1.85 lakh crore**.

3. Modernisation of Distribution Systems: Urban systems adopted IT tools like smart metering, ERP, and real-time monitoring. These improved efficiency and service delivery.

4. Importance of Distribution Companies (DISCOMs): DISCOMs connect consumers with the power system. Their performance affects service quality and financial stability of the entire sector.

Distribution Sector Reforms and Financial Turnaround in India

1. Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS): Launched with an outlay of **₹3.03 lakh crore**, with **₹2.8 lakh crore approved**. It aims to improve efficiency and financial sustainability.

2. Smart Metering and Consumer Empowerment: Around **5.62 crore smart meters** have been installed. These provide real-time usage data and help consumers manage consumption.

3. Reduction in Financial Stress: Outstanding dues reduced from **₹1.4 lakh crore to ₹4,109 crore** due to LPS Rules. This improved liquidity across the sector.

4. Improvement in DISCOM Finances: DISCOMs reported **₹2,701 crore profit in FY25**, reversing large losses in FY14. This marks a major financial turnaround.

5. Decline in AT&C Losses: Losses reduced from **22.62% to 15.04%**, showing better efficiency. Billing and collection systems improved significantly.

6. Narrowing ACS-ARR Gap: The gap reduced from **₹0.78/unit to ₹0.06/unit**, showing better cost recovery. This supports long-term financial sustainability.

Policy Reforms and Clean Energy Transition in India's Power Sector

1. National Electricity Plan (2023–2032): Targets **458 GW peak demand by 2032** with **₹9.15 lakh crore investment**. Transmission network will expand to **6.48 lakh ckm** and **2,345 GVA capacity**.

2. Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Focuses on cost-reflective tariffs and reduced cross-subsidies. It allows industries to procure power directly and improves competitiveness.

3. Automatic Cost Adjustment Mechanisms: Monthly adjustments align costs with tariffs. This prevents financial losses for distribution utilities.

4. **Green Energy Open Access Rules:** Consumers above **100 kW load** can access renewable energy with simplified approvals. This promotes clean energy use.

5. **Growth in Renewable Energy Capacity:** India ranks **4th globally** in renewable capacity. Solar grew from **3 GW (2014) to 140 GW (2026)**, while wind reached **54.65 GW**.

6. **Record Renewable Energy Contribution:** On **29 July 2025**, renewables met **51.5% of electricity demand (203 GW)**. Solar, wind, and hydro played major roles.

7. **Promotion of Rooftop Solar:** Under PM Surya Ghar scheme, **31.04 lakh households** installed rooftop solar. The target is **1 crore households by 2026-27**.

8. **Strengthening Transmission for Renewables:** Investment limits of POWERGRID increased to support large projects. This helps in efficient evacuation of renewable energy.

Institutional Strengthening and Global Engagement

1. **Role of Bharat Electricity Summit 2026:** The summit provides a global platform for collaboration and innovation. It focuses on sustainability and energy transition.

2. **Large-Scale Participation and Investment:** Over **25,000 attendees**, **500 exhibitors**, and **₹50 lakh crore investment opportunities** are expected. This reflects global interest in India's power sector.

3. **Platform for Technology and Partnerships:** The summit includes discussions, exhibitions, and knowledge exchange. It supports innovation and global cooperation.

Conclusion

India's power sector has moved from shortage to stability through sustained reforms, infrastructure expansion, and policy support. Reliable access, financial improvement, and renewable growth show structural progress. Continued focus on distribution efficiency, clean energy integration, and future demand planning is needed. The sector now plays a key role in supporting growth, inclusion, and long-term sustainability.

Question for practice:

Discuss how infrastructure expansion, distribution reforms, and policy measures have contributed to improving reliability, access, and sustainability in India's power sector.

Source: [PIB](#)

For public-health reform, fix urban governance

Source: The post "For public-health reform, fix urban governance" has been created, based on "For public-health reform, fix urban governance" published in "Indian Express" on 23rd March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: Urban public health crises in India are often discussed mainly in terms of shortages of hospitals and workforce. However, deeper structural weaknesses exist in everyday urban governance systems such as

sanitation, drainage, water supply, and waste management. Recent initiatives such as the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) and Finance Commission grants to Urban Local Bodies reflect increasing recognition of cities as important governance units for improving public health outcomes.

Urbanisation Pattern and Governance Challenges in India

1. India's urbanisation is driven less by migration to megacities like Mumbai and Delhi and more by expansion into surrounding suburbs such as Gurugram, Noida, and Navi Mumbai.
2. Rapid conversion of villages into real estate and industrial hubs has taken place without adequate provision of transport services, drinking water supply, drainage infrastructure, and safe disposal systems for solid and liquid waste.
3. Spatial expansion of cities has occurred faster than the institutional readiness of urban governance systems.
4. Urban Local Bodies control barely 1 per cent of India's GDP compared to 5 to 8 per cent in BRICS and OECD countries.
5. Master plans in many cities function more as symbolic planning tools rather than enforceable development frameworks.
6. Slums and low-income settlements often become sites of concentrated disadvantage, while redevelopment projects frequently prioritise engineering solutions over dignity and social integration.

Triple Crisis Facing Indian Cities

1. Weak urban governance has placed Indian cities at the intersection of deteriorating public health conditions, increasing climate vulnerability, and rising migration pressures.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of the urban social contract, especially in informal settlements where municipal capacity was limited.

Role of the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)

1. The Union Cabinet approved the Urban Challenge Fund with a total value of ₹4 lakh crore to support urban development initiatives.
2. The Central Government will provide assistance of ₹1 lakh crore, while at least 50 per cent of the remaining funds will be raised through market financing.
3. Projects under the fund will be selected through a challenge-based framework across sectors such as economic corridors, urban mobility, climate resilience, disaster management, and water and sanitation.
4. However, the emphasis on competitive selection, market finance, and private participation raises concerns regarding equity among cities with different financial capacities.

Role of Finance Commission Grants to Urban Local Bodies

1. The Finance Commission allocated ₹3.6 trillion to Urban Local Bodies over a period of five years.
2. This allocation reflects recognition of cities as important governance units rather than merely implementation agencies.
3. The Commission recommended a 455 per cent increase in financial allocation to this sector.
4. A substantial portion of these grants has been linked to sanitation services, waste management systems, and water supply infrastructure.

5. The Commission also provided untied grants that allow Urban Local Bodies to identify and respond to local priorities such as flood-proofing low-income settlements, improving informal waste management systems, and strengthening last-mile water access.

Link Between Urban Governance and Public Health Outcomes

1. Urban public health crises are not limited to shortages of hospitals and workforce but are strongly influenced by failures in basic municipal services.
2. Weak sanitation systems, inefficient waste management, inadequate drainage networks, unsafe water supply, and poor air quality significantly affect public health outcomes.
3. Strengthening water supply and sanitation infrastructure can act as a frontline defence against the spread of infectious diseases, including drug-resistant infections.
4. The Finance Commission recognised this relationship by linking grants directly to improvements in municipal services.

Climate Risks and Urban Governance Limitations

1. Cities face increasing risks from heat waves, urban flooding, water stress, and air pollution.
2. Despite these risks, climate adaptation continues to remain largely a national and state-level policy responsibility.
3. Urban Local Bodies often lack sufficient fiscal autonomy to design and implement local climate adaptation strategies.
4. Predictable and flexible fiscal transfers can help strengthen the capacity of cities to address climate-related risks effectively.

Institutional Constraints in Urban Governance

1. Financial support alone cannot compensate for weaknesses in institutional design within Urban Local Bodies.
2. Most Urban Local Bodies continue to face administrative constraints due to limited autonomy over staff recruitment, planning authority, and revenue generation instruments.
3. Fragmentation across multiple urban agencies creates coordination challenges and reduces governance efficiency.
4. Fiscal devolution must therefore be accompanied by functional and political devolution to strengthen urban governance systems.

Way Forward

1. Urban governance reforms should focus on strengthening functional and political devolution alongside fiscal transfers to Urban Local Bodies.
2. Urban Local Bodies should be provided greater autonomy over staffing, planning powers, and revenue instruments to improve institutional capacity.
3. Coordination mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure synergy across fragmented urban agencies involved in service delivery.
4. Market-based financing under initiatives such as the Urban Challenge Fund should be implemented carefully to avoid widening inequalities between financially strong and weak cities.
5. Greater emphasis should be placed on improving sanitation systems, waste management infrastructure, drainage networks, water supply services, and air quality management as core components of public health reform.

6. Cities should be given predictable and flexible fiscal transfers to strengthen their role in climate adaptation and migration management.
7. Untied grants should continue to support locally relevant interventions such as flood-proofing vulnerable settlements, strengthening informal waste systems, and improving last-mile water access.

Conclusion: Improving urban public health outcomes in India requires strengthening municipal governance systems rather than focusing only on healthcare infrastructure expansion. Initiatives such as the Urban Challenge Fund and Finance Commission grants represent important progress, but lasting improvements depend on stronger institutional capacity, greater fiscal autonomy, and better coordination among Urban Local Bodies.

Question: Urban public health challenges in India are closely linked to weaknesses in urban governance rather than only shortages in healthcare infrastructure. Examine the context of recent initiatives such as the Urban Challenge Fund and Finance Commission grants to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Youth suicides in India

Source: The post “Youth suicides in India” has been created, based on “Youth suicides in India: When oppression forces people to choose death” published in “Indian Express” on 23rd March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-1- Society

Context: Youth suicide is a leading cause of mortality among young people in India and reflects deeper structural and social challenges beyond individual psychological distress. Suicides driven by oppression from families or communities, especially in matters of marriage, identity, and social mobility, can be understood as a form of “honour suicide,” which is morally comparable to honour killings. Addressing youth suicides therefore requires broader social and policy reforms in addition to strengthening mental-health services.

Nature and Extent of Youth Suicide in India

- Data from the Million Death Study and the National Crime Records Bureau show that suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young people in India.
- Nearly two-thirds of suicide deaths among females occur before the age of 25 years.
- Youth represents a vulnerable life stage marked by transitions related to education, employment, relationships, and identity formation.
- Many young people, particularly women, end their lives when forced into marriages against their wishes, reflecting severe restrictions on personal autonomy.

Social Determinants of Youth Suicide

1. Role of Social and Economic Conditions

- a. Suicidal behaviour is shaped significantly by social and economic conditions such as poverty, exclusion, and violence rather than individual psychopathology alone.
- b. A major driver of youth suicide in India is the widening gap between the aspirations of young people and the opportunities permitted by society.

2. Development Paradox in Suicide Rates

- a. Suicide rates are highest in relatively developed states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- b. Suicide rates are comparatively lower in less developed states such as Bihar.
- c. This pattern reflects the tension between rising aspirations and rigid social constraints.

3. Role of Oppressive Social Norms

- a. Rapid social change in India has intensified the conflict between youth aspirations and traditional norms.
- b. Many young people face restrictions in choosing their partners due to laws and social pressures against inter-caste, interfaith, same-sex, and live-in relationships.
- c. Such restrictions reduce personal autonomy and increase psychological distress.
- d. Deaths by suicide in such circumstances can be described as honour suicides resulting from social oppression.

4. Sociological Understanding of Youth Suicide

- a. The sociologist Emile Durkheim described suicide as a social phenomenon shaped by levels of social integration and regulation.
- b. Two types of suicides described by Durkheim are particularly relevant in India today.
 - **Anomic Suicides:** Anomic suicides occur during periods of rapid social and economic change when traditional norms weaken and aspirations increase without adequate opportunities.
 - **Fatalistic Suicides:** Fatalistic suicides occur in situations of excessive social control where individuals feel trapped and unable to change their circumstances.

Role of Structural Inequalities and Identity-Based Discrimination

1. Youth suicides also reflect deeper structural inequalities related to caste, class, gender, and religion.
2. Deaths by suicide among students in higher educational institutions, particularly among Dalit youth, highlight the political and social context of such tragedies.
3. Oppressive social norms and discrimination often push young people into situations where they feel they have no control over their lives.

Limitations of a Mental Health-Only Approach

1. Investment in mental-health services alone cannot fully address youth suicides.
2. Evidence from China shows that a significant decline in suicide rates since the 1990s resulted mainly from structural changes such as economic development, urbanisation, and rural transformation rather than expansion of mental-health services alone.
3. Reducing exposure to social strain, especially for women, played a crucial role in lowering suicide rates.

Constitutional and Social Concerns

1. Laws restricting interfaith marriages, inter-caste marriages, live-in relationships, and same-sex relationships limit personal freedom and social mobility among youth.
2. Such restrictions contradict the constitutional values of equality, liberty, and dignity.
3. Youth suicides caused by social oppression represent a serious challenge to the spirit of the Constitution.

Way Forward

1. Policy responses should address the gap between youth aspirations and available opportunities in education, employment, and social mobility.
2. Greater social acceptance of inter-caste, interfaith, same-sex, and choice-based marriages should be encouraged to strengthen personal autonomy.
3. Legal and institutional frameworks should protect the rights of young people to choose their partners and life paths freely.
4. Mental-health services should be expanded alongside structural reforms addressing poverty, exclusion, and discrimination.
5. Educational institutions should strengthen mechanisms to prevent discrimination and support vulnerable students, especially those from marginalised communities.
6. Community-level engagement involving faith leaders, policymakers, youth organisations, and mental-health professionals should be promoted to challenge oppressive social norms.
7. Social transformation is necessary to ensure that caste, gender, religion, and class identities do not become drivers of exclusion and despair among young people.

Conclusion: Youth suicides in India reflect deeper structural and social inequalities rather than only individual psychological distress. Preventing such deaths requires building a society where young people's aspirations for education, employment, dignity, and freedom of choice are respected in line with constitutional values.

Question: Youth suicides in India are deeply linked to social oppression, rigid norms, and structural inequalities rather than only mental-health factors. Examine the causes and suggest measures to address this challenge.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

'Double engine' — cute slogan, a serious federal question

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Introduction

The idea of a "double-engine sarkar" presents coordination between Union and State governments as a path to faster development. It appears simple and appealing. However, it raises a deeper constitutional concern. It suggests that development may depend on political alignment. This creates tension with federal balance, equal citizenship, and rule-based governance within the Union.

Concept of Double-Engine Governance vs Cooperative Federalism

1. **Meaning of Double-Engine Governance:** It implies that when the same party governs at both levels, development becomes faster due to better coordination.
2. **Difference from Cooperative Federalism:** Cooperative federalism ensures coordination across governments irrespective of political ideology and electoral outcomes.
3. **Implicit Political Condition:** It suggests that development may depend on alignment, creating a perception that non-aligned States may face disadvantages.

Challenges to Federalism

1. **Preferential Development Narrative:** Election messaging often suggests that aligned States will receive faster development and greater benefits.

2. **Violation of Constitutional Structure:** The Constitution defines Union and States as partners, not as entities dependent on political goodwill.

3. **Unequal Access to Public Resources:** Taxes are collected from citizens across all States, so distribution cannot depend on which party governs a State.

4. Fiscal Federal Concerns:

- Use of recent population data in allocation formulas may penalise States that controlled population growth.
- Increasing use of cesses and surcharges reduces the divisible pool shared with States.

5. **State-Level Grievances:** States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have raised concerns about fairness and autonomy.

6. **Legislative Obstruction through Governors:** In some States, Governors have delayed assent to Bills passed by elected legislatures, affecting governance.

7. **Governance Conflict:** Disputes between the elected government, Lieutenant-Governor, and Union government created administrative delays.

Constitutional and Institutional Safeguards for Federal Balance

1. **Seventh schedule:** It classifies legislative subjects into the **Union List, State List, and Concurrent List**, ensuring a balance of power and cooperation between different levels of government.

2. **Article 261 (Full Faith and Credit Clause):** Mandates that public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of one state be recognized and upheld across all states, promoting legal uniformity.

3. **All India Services (Article 312):** Provides for centrally-recruited officers serving in both the Centre and states, ensuring administrative cooperation.

4. **Goods and Services Tax (GST) (Article 279A):** Establishes the GST Council, where states negotiate and compete over taxation policies, striving for a favorable business environment.

5. **Role of Finance Commission (Article 280):** It is appointed every five years to recommend rule-based sharing of Union revenues using objective criteria like income gap, population, geographic size, and fiscal capacity.

6. Judicial Safeguards on Governors:

- In **State of Punjab vs Principal Secretary (2023)**, the Court held that Governors cannot stall legislation through inaction.
- In **State of Tamil Nadu vs Governor (2025)**, prolonged delay in assent was declared unconstitutional.

7. **Protection from Misuse of Article 356:** The **S.R. Bommai judgment** limited misuse of central power to dismiss State governments.

8. **Ensuring Neutral Constitutional Roles:** Governors must not act as parallel political authorities over elected State governments.

9. **NITI Aayog (Executive Initiative, Replacing Planning Commission):** Encourages a competitive approach through performance-based rankings, incentives, and best governance practices among states.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthening Fiscal Federalism:** Finance Commission recommendations should be made more binding to ensure fair and rule-based distribution.

2. **Time-bound Decision by Governors:** A fixed statutory timeline, such as three months, can ensure timely assent to Bills.

3. **Restoring Trust in the Federal System:** Institutional reforms are needed to address concerns of States and ensure fair participation.

4. Fiscal Reforms

- Increase untied transfers to States through Finance Commissions.
- Restore fiscal autonomy by expanding States' taxation powers.
- Simplify GST structure and ensure timely compensation.
- Reduce the number of centrally sponsored schemes.

5. Political and Democratic Reforms

- **Revitalising Inter-State Council (Article 263):** It should function as an active forum for cooperation rather than a ceremonial body.
- Respect electoral mandates of State governments.
- Promote cooperative federalism through NITI Aayog and policy councils.

Conclusion

The “double-engine” idea raises serious constitutional concerns when it links development with political alignment. Federalism requires equal treatment of all States and citizens. While institutions exist, their effective functioning is essential. Development must depend on rules and fairness, not political alignment. This balance is central to preserving the spirit of India’s federal democracy.

Question for practice:

Evaluate whether the idea of “double-engine governance” strengthens cooperative federalism or poses challenges to India’s federal balance.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India must use the AYUSH opportunity

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

Introduction

India is pushing AYUSH into the mainstream through higher funding, new institutes, and global trade openings. The India–EU FTA expands its global reach. This shift brings both opportunity and responsibility. If India wants AYUSH to succeed globally, it must combine tradition with strong scientific proof, regulatory standards, and credible research systems.

What is AYUSH?

- AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.
- These systems are based on traditional medical philosophies. They represent a way of healthy living with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health.
- In 2015, the Ministry of Ayush had also **included Sowa Rigpa** into the AYUSH system.

AYUSH Knowledge Systems

1. **Holistic View of Health:** Systems like Ayurveda see the body as interconnected with environment, diet, and lifestyle, focusing on balance rather than isolated disease.
2. **Different Medical Logic:** Illness is seen as imbalance in relationships, not just a specific defect, unlike modern medicine's focus on targeted causes.
3. **Strength of Biomedicine:** Modern medicine is effective in identifying precise causes and delivering targeted treatments with accuracy.
4. **Complementary Approaches:** AYUSH and modern medicine represent different but valuable frameworks that can expand understanding of health.

Institutional Framework for AYUSH

1. The Ministry of AYUSH is the apex body, established in 2014. It promotes and propagates Indian systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy.
2. The **National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB)** coordinates activities relating to conservation, cultivation, marketing, export and policy-making for the development of the medicinal plant's sector.
3. The **Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)** and the **Central Council of Homoeopathy (CCH)** are two statutory regulatory bodies. They are responsible for –
 - Laying down minimum standards of education,
 - Recommending recognition of medical qualifications,

- Registering the practitioners and laying down ethical codes.

Current Status & Policy Push for AYUSH

- 1. Rising Budget Allocation:** The AYUSH Ministry budget has nearly doubled in five years, reaching ₹4,408 crore, showing strong policy priority.
- 2. New Institutional Expansion:** Three new All-India Institutes of Ayurveda are planned to set high standards in treatment, education, and research, similar to top modern medical institutions.
- 3. Strengthening Infrastructure:** The National AYUSH Mission funding increased by 66% to modernise dispensaries, create AYUSH units in government hospitals, and upgrade drug-testing labs.
- 4. Mainstreaming Healthcare Role:** These steps aim to integrate AYUSH into the public health system, rather than keeping it as a separate alternative stream.

Key Challenges to Realising AYUSH Potential

- 1. Need for Scientific Evidence:** Entry into global markets requires **rigorous, independent, and transparent evaluation**, as treatments will be judged under strict regulatory systems.
- 2. Risk of Credibility Loss:** If claims move ahead of proof, it can lead to **legal disputes, reputational harm, and reinforcement of 'unscientific' stereotypes**.
- 3. Conflict of Interest in Research:** Many studies are funded or overseen by the same institutions that promote AYUSH, creating **structural bias and weak credibility**.
- 4. Regulatory Compliance Pressure:** AYUSH products must meet **international standards of safety, manufacturing quality, and claims regulation** to circulate in markets like the EU.

What should be done?

- 1. Independent Research:** Clinical trials must be conducted by independent bodies with transparent methods and peer-reviewed results to ensure credibility.
- 2. Regulatory Harmonisation:** Standards for safety, manufacturing, and claims must align with global norms, especially for entry into EU markets.
- 3. AYUSH + Biomedicine Complementarity:** The focus should be on coexistence, where both systems work together and expand understanding of health.
- 4. Evidence-Based Approach:** All treatments must be validated through rigorous scientific evaluation, and both positive and negative findings should be accepted.
- 5. Transparency:** Research processes, funding sources, and methodologies must be open to scrutiny to build global trust.
- 6. Institutional Reforms:** Strengthen research institutions, remove conflict of interest, and improve governance for better credibility and accountability.

Conclusion

India has a strong opportunity to position AYUSH globally through policy support and trade access. However, success depends on scientific validation, regulatory compliance, and institutional credibility. Balancing tradition with evidence will decide its future. Sustainable global expansion requires transparency, independent research, and openness to scrutiny, ensuring AYUSH evolves as a trusted and credible healthcare system worldwide.

Question for practice:

Discuss the opportunities and challenges in mainstreaming AYUSH in India and its global expansion, and suggest measures to ensure its credibility and effectiveness.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Realising solar power's potential for energy security

Source: The post "Realising solar power's potential for energy security" has been created, based on "Realising solar power's potential for energy security" published in "BusinessLine" on 24th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: India remains heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels, which exposes the country to global geopolitical uncertainties and energy price volatility. In this context, solar energy has emerged as a critical pillar of India's strategy to improve energy security, with the country expanding its installed solar capacity to nearly 130 GW over the past decade through both large-scale solar parks and decentralised rooftop installations.

Role of Decentralised Solar Energy in Strengthening Energy Security

Decentralised solar energy contributes to India's energy security in several important ways:

1. Rooftop solar installations reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and thereby improve India's strategic and economic resilience.
2. Decentralised solar systems generate electricity close to the point of consumption, which reduces transmission and distribution losses significantly.
3. Rooftop solar installations reduce the need for expensive long-distance transmission infrastructure required for large-scale solar parks located in remote areas.
4. Government initiatives such as the PM Surya Ghar scheme encourage household participation in energy generation and promote energy self-sufficiency at the local level.
5. Decentralised solar systems can support the transition toward electric mobility by supplying clean electricity for EV charging.

Challenges Associated with Decentralised Solar Energy

Despite its advantages, decentralised solar generation creates several operational and financial challenges:

1. Electricity distribution networks in India were originally designed for one-way power flows from centralised plants to consumers, and they face difficulties in handling bidirectional flows from rooftop solar installations.
2. Large-scale rooftop solar integration can lead to voltage fluctuations and grid instability during periods of high solar generation.
3. Distribution companies experience revenue losses when residential consumers offset their electricity purchases through net metering mechanisms.
4. Several State governments have introduced additional charges and regulatory restrictions that reduce the attractiveness of rooftop solar installations.
5. There exists a mismatch between daytime solar generation and evening peak electricity demand, which leads to surplus power being exported to the grid during the day and imported at night.

Way Forward

Linking decentralised solar generation with EV charging infrastructure can help address many of these challenges:

1. EV charging during daytime hours can absorb surplus electricity generated by rooftop solar installations and reduce reverse power flows into the grid.
2. Such integration can reduce stress on distribution networks and improve grid stability.
3. Expanding EV charging infrastructure under schemes such as the PM-DRIVE initiative can accelerate India's transition toward clean transportation.
4. Community-level pooling of rooftop solar power in residential colonies and apartment complexes can enable the establishment of shared EV charging stations.
5. Successful examples such as the integration of solar generation with EV fleets at VOC Port in Tutu corin demonstrate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of this model.

Conclusion: Decentralised solar energy has the potential to significantly strengthen India's energy security while supporting the clean energy transition. Linking rooftop solar generation with local EV charging infrastructure can improve grid stability, enhance renewable energy utilisation, and promote sustainable mobility in an integrated and efficient manner.

Question: Decentralised solar energy can strengthen India's energy security but also creates grid management challenges. Discuss. How can linking rooftop solar generation with EV charging infrastructure help address these challenges?

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

The other Ether-blend solution: How DME could ease India's LPG crisis

Source: The post "**The other Ether-blend solution: How DME could ease India's LPG crisis**" has been created, based on "**The other Ether-blend solution: How DME could ease India's LPG crisis**" published in "Economic Times" on 24th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Economy

Context: India imports a significant proportion of its Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) requirements, which exposes the country to global supply disruptions and price volatility. In this context, blending **Dimethyl ether**

(DME) with LPG has emerged as a promising strategy to enhance energy security, promote cleaner fuel use, and reduce dependence on imports.

Significance of DME Blending for India's Energy Security

- 1. Reduction in Import Dependence:** DME can be produced domestically from coal, biomass, natural gas, and municipal waste, which helps reduce India's dependence on imported LPG.
- 2. Cleaner Combustion Characteristics:** DME burns with lower particulate emissions and produces less soot compared to conventional fuels, which supports India's clean cooking energy transition.
- 3. Compatibility with Existing Infrastructure:** DME can be transported and stored using existing LPG cylinders and distribution networks with minor technical adjustments, which reduces infrastructure costs.
- 4. Promotion of Energy Self-Reliance:** Domestic production of DME supports the objective of achieving energy self-reliance under the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- 5. Support to Waste-to-Energy and Rural Economy:** Production of DME from agricultural residues and municipal waste can promote waste-to-energy initiatives and generate additional rural income opportunities.

Challenges in Implementing DME-LPG Blending

- 1. Lower Energy Density Compared to LPG:** DME has a lower calorific value than LPG, which means a larger quantity is required to produce the same amount of energy.
- 2. Requirement of Appliance Modifications:** Higher blending ratios of DME may require modifications in cooking appliances and storage systems to ensure safety and efficiency.
- 3. Limited Domestic Production Capacity:** India currently lacks large-scale infrastructure for the commercial production of DME.
- 4. Regulatory and Safety Framework Gaps:** Existing regulatory standards and safety protocols for blending, storage, and transportation of DME need further strengthening.
- 5. Low Consumer Awareness:** Consumer awareness regarding the safety and performance of DME-blended LPG remains limited, which may slow adoption.

Policy Measures Required for Successful Adoption

- 1. Promotion of Pilot Demonstration Projects:** The government should promote pilot projects to test higher blending ratios and demonstrate the technical feasibility of DME blending.
- 2. Incentives for Domestic Production Facilities:** Financial incentives should be provided for establishing DME production plants using coal, biomass, and waste-based feedstocks.
- 3. Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks:** Regulatory standards should be updated to ensure safe blending, transportation, and distribution practices.
- 4. Integration into Oil Marketing Company Strategies:** Public sector oil marketing companies should incorporate DME blending into their long-term fuel diversification strategies.

5. Consumer Awareness and Capacity Building: Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to build consumer confidence in the safety and reliability of DME-blended LPG.

Conclusion: Blending DME with LPG offers a practical and scalable pathway to reduce India's import dependence, promote cleaner cooking energy, and strengthen domestic energy security. With appropriate policy support and infrastructure development, DME can become an important component of India's diversified energy transition strategy.

Question: India is exploring Dimethyl Ether (DME) blending with LPG to reduce import dependence and strengthen energy security. Examine the potential benefits, challenges, and policy measures required for its successful adoption.

Source: [Economic Times](#)

A Decade of Building India's TB Champion Movement

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

Introduction

India diagnoses and treats over **25 lakh TB cases every year**, yet stigma and social exclusion remain strong barriers. Early responses focused mainly on clinical care and ignored lived experiences. Over the last decade, the **TB Champion movement has emerged as a community-driven response**, where survivors support others and improve awareness. At the same time, new diagnostic tools and policies are expanding India's efforts to eliminate TB.

Current Status of TB in India

- 1. High disease burden and social impact:** India treats **over 25 lakh TB patients annually**, but patients continue to face stigma, isolation, and discrimination during treatment.
- 2. Stigma across vulnerable groups:** Stigma affects **women, men, transgender persons, children, adolescents, elderly, and socially vulnerable groups**, reducing care-seeking behaviour.
- 3. Undetected cases and transmission risk:** Nearly **1,00,000 TB cases remain undetected each year**, leading to continued spread in communities.
- 4. Drug-resistant TB burden:** India contributes **almost one-fourth of global DR-TB cases**, with **1.3–1.5 lakh new cases annually**, making it a major public health concern.
- 5. Progress in incidence and treatment coverage:** TB incidence has declined by **21%**, while treatment coverage has improved from **53% to 92%**.
- 6. Nature and severity of DR-TB:** DR-TB involves resistance to first-line drugs and requires **long, toxic treatment with lower cure rates and higher mortality**.

Initiatives and Innovations in TB Control

1. Community-driven initiatives

a) **TB Champion movement:** TB survivors act as **peer supporters and advocates**, challenging the belief that survivors disengage after treatment.

b) **Survivor to Champion training:** A structured curriculum has been **formally adopted under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)**.

c) **Peer counselling and support:** Champions provide **one-to-one and group counselling**, improving treatment literacy and reducing self-stigma.

c) **Awareness and last-mile outreach:** Community meetings help **dispel myths, spread knowledge on symptoms, and guide people on where to seek care**.

d) **Role during COVID-19:** TB Champions acted as **trusted sources of information on COVID-appropriate behaviour**.

e) **Survivor-led networks:** Networks formed across States act as a **bridge between patients and service providers**, supporting vulnerable groups.

2. System and programme interventions

a) **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP):** Provides **free, high-quality diagnostics and treatment**, improving cure rates and reducing mortality.

b) **Improved case-finding and care models:** Active case-finding and **differentiated care approaches** have strengthened service delivery.

c) **Improved treatment regimens:** Use of **shorter and less toxic treatment regimens** improves patient experience.

d) **Nutrition and patient support:** Expanded nutrition support helps address **treatment challenges and recovery needs**.

3. Technological and diagnostic innovations

a) **WHO recommendations (2025):** The **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommended **near point-of-care molecular tests (NPOC), tongue swab samples, and sputum pooling strategies**.

b) **AI-enabled portable screening:** Portable **chest X-ray (CXR) machines with AI** are used under the **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan**.

c) **Community-level active screening:** Mobile vans equipped with **portable CXR and AI** enable screening in communities.

d) **Opportunistic screening using AI:** AI algorithms in digital X-rays help identify **TB and other respiratory diseases quickly**.

e) **Shift to molecular testing:** India scaled up **CBNAAT in 2016** and introduced **indigenous Truenat in 2020**, improving detection.

f) **Decentralisation of diagnostics:** Access to molecular testing has expanded to **primary care levels**.

Challenges and Gaps

1. Social and community challenges

a) **Persistent stigma and myths:** Misconceptions continue, causing **delay in diagnosis and treatment avoidance**.

b) **Long-term impact on survivors:** Patients face **physical, social, and economic challenges even after cure**.

c) **Network sustainability concerns:** Survivor-led networks depend on **external funding**, making long-term sustainability uncertain.

2. Health system gaps

a) **Uneven diagnostic access:** Molecular testing remains **uneven, especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas**.

b) **Delays in resistance testing:** Delayed diagnosis leads to **empiric first-line treatment and continued transmission**.

c) **Public-private divide:** Differences in care and reporting create **fragmentation and inconsistency**.

d) **Drug stock-outs and weak referrals:** Interruptions in supply and referral systems affect **treatment continuity**.

e) **Weak data systems:** Inconsistent reporting, especially from the private sector, limits **accurate assessment of the crisis**.

3. Drug-resistant(DR) TB challenges

a) **Severe treatment burden:** Patients face **nausea, joint pain, hearing loss, psychiatric effects, and fatigue**.

b) **Limited scale-up of new regimens:** Newer **all-oral shorter regimens like BPaLM** are not yet widely accessible.

c) **Socio-economic inequalities:** Poverty, overcrowding, food insecurity, and unstable livelihoods increase **risk and worsen outcomes**.

d) **Wider consequences:** DR-TB leads to **preventable deaths, disability, psychological trauma, high health expenditure, income loss, and intergenerational poverty**.

e) **Public health risks:** Uncontrolled DR-TB can **increase resistance and threaten national health security and economic stability.**

4. Diagnostic and research gaps

a) **Incomplete NAAT coverage:** Achieving **100% NAAT testing before treatment** requires better sample collection and transport systems.

b) **Challenges in key populations:** Diagnosis remains difficult in **children, extra-pulmonary TB (EP-TB), and asymptomatic TB cases.**

c) **Need for new tools:** There is a requirement for **biomarkers, saliva-based tests, and non-sputum diagnostics.**

d) **Limited real-world evidence:** New tools need **implementation research and field testing for scale-up decisions.**

Way Forward

1. Strengthening community participation

a) **Expand TB Champion role:** Community engagement can **reduce stigma and improve treatment adherence.**

b) **Develop sustainable networks:** Focus on **self-sustaining socio-economic models for survivor-led groups.**

2. Improving diagnostics and treatment

a) **Universal drug-resistance testing:** Ensure **testing for all TB patients before starting treatment.**

b) **Expand new diagnostic tools:** Scale up **AI-enabled CXR, molecular tests, NPOC tests, and tongue swabs.**

c) **Reduce diagnostic delays:** Improve **sample transport systems and turnaround time.**

3. Comprehensive DR-TB response

a) **Scale up safer regimens:** Accelerate access to **shorter and all-oral treatments like BPaLM (Bedaquiline + Pretomanid + Linezolid + Moxifloxacin).**

b) **Provide holistic care:** Include **mental health care, nutrition support, and income protection.**

c) **Active case finding and prevention:** Focus on **household contacts, children, and latent TB infection (LTBI).**

4. Strengthening governance and systems

a) **Integrate private sector:** Ensure **mandatory reporting, standardised treatment, and accountability.**

b) **Improve monitoring systems:** Strengthen platforms like the **Nikshay Portal** for real-time tracking.

5. Promoting research and innovation

a) **Develop better diagnostics:** Invest in **cost-effective biomarkers and tools for children and EP-TB.**

b) **Support implementation research:** Ensure **evidence-based adoption of new technologies.**

c) **Streamline evaluation and procurement:** Ensure tools are assessed by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** with proper health technology assessment.

Conclusion

India's TB response now combines **community leadership, improved diagnostics, and stronger programmes.** The TB Champion movement shows that survivors can drive awareness and support at the grassroots level. However, **DR-TB, stigma, and system gaps remain serious challenges.** A coordinated approach with **early diagnosis, better treatment, strong community participation, and sustained policy commitment** is essential to achieve a TB-free India.

Question for practice:

Examine the role of TB Champions, alongside systemic and diagnostic interventions, in strengthening India's efforts to eliminate tuberculosis.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Why the CAPF Bill is a victory for internal security

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Introduction

The CAPF General Administration Bill 2026 strengthens internal security by combining welfare reforms with strong coordination mechanisms. It codifies service rules, ensures transparent promotions, and removes uncertainty in careers. At the same time, it preserves the integrated command structure built on All India Services. This balance protects national security while addressing long-standing grievances of CAPF personnel across diverse operational conditions.

Key Features of the CAPF Bill

1. **Single statutory framework:** The Bill replaces fragmented rules and executive instructions with one unified legal system governing CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP and SSB.
2. **Codification of service rules:** Clear rules for recruitment, promotions, postings, transfers, discipline, and grievance redressal become enforceable rights instead of discretionary decisions.
3. **Fixed tenure and transparency:** Field and staff postings follow defined tenure norms, while medical, family and hardship allowances are clearly structured.

4. **Grievance redressal system:** Statutory timelines ensure that complaints are addressed quickly, reducing administrative uncertainty.
5. **Career progression reforms:** Hundreds of new posts at DIG, IG and Additional DG levels are created to reduce stagnation among Group-A officers.
6. **Implementation of OGAS ruling:** The Supreme Court's Orderly Gradation and Seniority system is applied to ensure fair promotion pathways.
7. **Removal of pay disparities:** Long-standing pay-related issues are addressed to bring parity and fairness across ranks.
8. **Coverage of over ten lakh personnel:** The reforms benefit a large workforce, especially constables and lower ranks who form the backbone of CAPFs.

Significance of the CAPF Bill

1. **Ends administrative uncertainty:** Service conditions earlier depended on discretion, but now legal clarity ensures predictability in careers.
2. **Improves morale and efficiency:** When promotions and postings are rule-based, personnel focus more on operations rather than administrative struggles.
3. **Addresses harsh service conditions:** Jawans operate in forests, deserts, high altitudes and industrial zones, and codified welfare ensures dignity in such conditions.
4. **Strengthens operational coordination:** IPS leadership ensures seamless coordination between state police, CAPFs and intelligence agencies.
5. **Supports federal security structure:** CAPFs assist state police under unified command, maintaining cooperative federalism in internal security.
6. **Enhances intelligence flow:** Ensures real-time intelligence sharing between IB, CAPFs, and state police improves operational response speed.
7. **Builds institutional trust networks:** Officers moving across roles create long-term trust, which converts intelligence into effective action.
8. **Prevents fragmentation of forces:** Unified leadership avoids silo-based functioning, which can delay response and weaken outcomes.
9. **Reflects Patel's steel frame vision:** The Bill sustains national integration by ensuring coordination across diverse regions and forces.

Debate around the CAPF Bill

1. **Demand for removal of IPS leadership:** Some groups seek complete removal of IPS officers from senior CAPF roles.

2. **Framing as dignity versus discrimination:** The issue is presented as unfair treatment, but this framing is rejected.
3. **Risk to coordination structure:** Removing IPS leadership can break trust networks and weaken intelligence sharing.
4. **Threat of fragmented response:** Insular functioning of forces can delay operations and reduce effectiveness.
5. **Short-term benefit versus national cost:** Faster promotions for a few can create serious long-term risks for national security affecting 1.4 billion people.

Conclusion

The CAPF General Administration Bill 2026 delivers both fairness and strength to India's internal security system. It ensures clear service rules, better career growth, and improved welfare for personnel. At the same time, it preserves the unified command and coordination essential for effective operations. By maintaining this balance, the Bill protects institutional integrity and national security, ensuring that CAPFs continue to function as a cohesive and reliable force across the country.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the CAPF General Administration Bill 2026 strengthens internal security while addressing welfare and career concerns of CAPF personnel.

Source: [The Print](#)