

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

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We need a national mission for negotiated justice

Source: The post “We need a national mission for negotiated justice” has been created, based on “We need a national mission for negotiated justice” published in “Indian Express” on 25th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Polity & Governance

Context: The Indian judicial system is facing a severe backlog of cases, with more than 5 crore cases pending across courts. As noted by Cesare Beccaria, the effectiveness of justice lies in certainty and timelines rather than severity. In this context, negotiated justice through plea bargaining offers a viable solution.

Need for a National Mission for Negotiated Justice

1. The Indian judiciary is burdened with an enormous backlog of cases, particularly in district courts where the majority of citizens seek justice.
2. Delays in the justice delivery system undermine the principle of timely justice and often result in prolonged suffering for both victims and the accused.
3. Undertrial prisoners frequently remain in jail for extended periods, which raises serious concerns about personal liberty and fairness.
4. A slow judicial process negatively impacts the economy by weakening contract enforcement and reducing investor confidence.
5. Prolonged litigation leads to emotional and financial distress for litigants, especially in civil disputes such as property and family matters.
6. Persistent delays reduce public trust in the legal system and create a crisis of institutional legitimacy.

Role of Plea Bargaining in Addressing Delays

1. Plea bargaining helps in the speedy disposal of cases by allowing both parties to reach a mutually agreed settlement without a full trial.
2. It reduces the burden on courts by diverting less serious cases away from lengthy judicial proceedings.
3. The process provides greater certainty and predictability in outcomes compared to traditional trials.
4. Victims benefit from quicker resolution of disputes and timely acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the accused.
5. It enables the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to focus their resources on serious and complex criminal cases.
6. International experience shows that plea bargaining is highly effective, as seen in countries where most criminal cases are settled through negotiated agreements.

Challenges in India

1. The adoption of plea bargaining in India remains extremely low despite its legal recognition since 2005.
2. There is a lack of awareness among litigants regarding the benefits and implications of negotiated settlements.
3. Prosecutors and defence lawyers often show hesitation due to limited training and institutional support.
4. There are concerns about the possibility of coercion, exploitation, or unfair agreements in the absence of proper safeguards.

5. The current legal and institutional framework does not provide adequate incentives for opting for plea bargaining.

Way Forward

1. The government should establish a national mission to promote negotiated justice with a clear policy framework and objectives.
2. Prosecutors should be trained to conduct fair and transparent negotiations that protect public interest.
3. The remuneration structure for lawyers should be reformed to encourage early settlement of cases.
4. Judges should actively promote pre-trial settlement mechanisms wherever appropriate.
5. Public awareness campaigns should be undertaken to inform litigants that plea bargaining is a strategic and beneficial option.
6. Strong legal safeguards must be introduced to ensure that all agreements are voluntary and free from coercion.
7. A national protocol should be developed, as suggested by R. Venkataramani, to standardise procedures and ensure transparency.

Conclusion: A National Mission for Negotiated Justice can significantly improve the efficiency of India's judicial system by ensuring faster, predictable, and fair outcomes. With proper safeguards and institutional support, plea bargaining can enhance both access to justice and public trust in the legal system.

Question: Discuss the need for a National Mission for Negotiated Justice in India. How can plea bargaining help address judicial delays while ensuring fairness?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Women Reservation act and Delimitation

Source: The post “Women Reservation act and Delimitation” has been created, based on “Women Reservation act and Delimitation” published in “The Hindu” on 25th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Polity & Governance

Context: The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 aims to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women. The Centre is considering delimitation based on the 2011 Census to expedite its implementation before the 2029 elections.

Key Features of the Proposed Amendment

1. The government proposes to conduct delimitation using the 2011 Census instead of waiting for the next Census cycle.
2. The total number of Lok Sabha seats is proposed to increase from 543 to 816 seats.
3. Out of the expanded seats, approximately 273 seats will be reserved for women.
4. The proportional representation of states is likely to be maintained to address federal concerns.
5. The amendment seeks to operationalise reservation earlier, instead of delaying it beyond 2030.

Significance of the Move

1. The proposal will ensure early implementation of women's reservation, thereby enhancing gender equality in political representation.
2. It will strengthen inclusive democracy by increasing women's participation in law-making processes.
3. The expansion of seats will reduce the zero-sum nature of reservation, as no existing seats will be drastically reduced.
4. It may improve governance outcomes, as greater representation of women has been linked to better policy focus on health, education, and welfare.
5. It reflects political consensus-building, as the government is consulting multiple opposition parties to secure the required majority.

Challenges and Concerns

1. Using the 2011 Census raises concerns about outdated population data, which may not reflect current demographic realities.
2. Southern states fear that delimitation may disadvantage them despite assurances of maintaining proportional representation.
3. The process requires a constitutional amendment with a two-thirds majority, making political consensus difficult.
4. There are logistical and administrative challenges in redrawing constituencies and expanding legislative bodies.
5. Critics argue that linking reservation to delimitation delays actual implementation, as procedural steps remain complex.
6. There are concerns regarding rotation of reserved seats, which may affect political accountability and continuity.

Way Forward

1. The government should ensure transparency in the delimitation process to build trust among states.
2. Updated population projections may be used alongside the 2011 Census to address data concerns.
3. A clear timeline should be established for implementation to avoid further delays.
4. Political consensus should be strengthened through wider consultations with all stakeholders.
5. Safeguards should be introduced to balance federal principles and demographic representation.

Conclusion: The move to implement the Women's Reservation Act through early delimitation is a significant step towards gender justice. However, its success will depend on balancing efficiency with fairness, federal concerns, and democratic legitimacy.

Question: Discuss the significance and challenges of implementing the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 through delimitation based on the 2011 Census.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Deepening Global Corruption as a Pointer for India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications.

Introduction

The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 shows a clear global decline in integrity, with the average score falling to **42 out of 100**. A total of **122 out of 182 countries score below 50**, and only **five countries score above 80**, compared to 12 earlier. Corruption is deepening where oversight weakens. India, with a **score of 39 and rank 91**, reflects this stagnation despite rising economic scale.

Global and Indian Trends in Corruption

1. **Global deterioration in scores:** The global average has dropped to **42**, with **122/182 countries below 50**, showing widespread decline in governance quality.
2. **Decline in high-performing countries:** Only **five countries now score above 80**, compared to **12 a decade ago**, indicating shrinking top performers.
3. **India's stagnant trajectory:** India's score moved narrowly between **38 and 41 over the past decade**, from **38 in 2014 to 39 in 2025**.
4. **India's global ranking:** India stands at **91 out of 182 countries**, placing it in the lower half despite being the **world's fourth-largest economy**.
5. **Comparative country performance:** **China scores 42, Sri Lanka is close to India**, while **Bangladesh and Pakistan score lower**, but India trails several East Asian and European economies.
6. **Role of institutional reform:** Countries with better CPI scores improved through **institutional independence, transparency frameworks, and regulatory predictability**.

Why CPI Matters for India

1. **Nature of the index:** CPI measures **perceived public sector integrity**, not actual corruption cases.
2. **Multiple data sources:** It uses **13 independent data sources** covering procurement, regulation, judiciary, and safeguards.
3. **Signal of governance gaps:** A score of **39 indicates weaknesses in transparency, oversight, and accountability**.
4. **Impact on economic decisions:** CPI affects **investment decisions, sovereign risk assessments, and long-term capital allocation**.
5. **Governance as economic variable:** Governance credibility now acts as a **competitive economic factor influencing growth outcomes**.

Impacts of Corruption

1. **Global economic burden:** Corruption costs at least **5% of global GDP**, equivalent to over **\$2.6 trillion annually**, including bribes and inefficiencies.
2. **India's direct economic loss:** Corruption leads to around **0.5% of GDP loss annually** in direct terms.

3. **Total economic impact in India:** Including indirect effects, losses rise to **1%–1.5% of GDP**, amounting to **tens of billions of dollars each year**.
4. **Reduced economic efficiency:** Corruption increases **transaction uncertainty and compliance costs**, lowering productivity.
5. **Misallocation of resources:** It diverts efforts towards **rent-seeking instead of value creation**, affecting growth.
6. **Loss of public trust:** It weakens **fiscal efficiency, regulatory credibility, and social trust**, creating long-term institutional damage.

Challenges to Overcome Corruption

1. **Extensive legal burden:** There are **26,134 imprisonment provisions** across India's business regulations.
2. **High compliance requirements:** A pharmaceutical start-up must comply with **998 obligations before starting operations**.
3. **Criminalisation in regulation:** Nearly **49% of these compliances carry criminal liability**, increasing risk for businesses.
4. **Policy and compliance mismatch:** Even with **₹10,000 crore allocation under the SHAKTI initiative (Union Budget 2026–27)**, regulatory burdens remain high.
5. **Expansion of discretion:** Complex rules increase **official discretion**, creating conditions for rent seeking.

What Should Be Done

1. **Digital public infrastructure impact:** Direct Benefit Transfers linked to bank accounts and digital identity have **reduced leakages in welfare schemes**.
2. **Growth in digital payments:** The **RBI Digital Payments Index (base March 2018)** increased from **493.22 (March 2025) to 516.76 (September 2025)**.
3. **Improved tax transparency:** The **Goods and Services Tax network** has increased **formalisation and traceability** in indirect taxation.
4. **Reduction in corruption opportunities:** E-procurement systems and digital payments reduce **human discretion and rent-seeking scope**.
5. **Need for institutional strengthening:** Improvements are required in **transparency, judicial efficiency, regulatory simplification, and institutional independence**.
6. **Balance between growth and governance:** Rapid economic expansion without parallel governance reforms creates **structural imbalance**.

Conclusion

The CPI 2025 should be seen as a benchmark, not a verdict. India has strong constitutional foundations, competitive elections, a capable judiciary, and growing digital capacity. Sustained improvements in transparency, judicial efficiency, regulatory design, and institutional independence can improve outcomes. Countries improved through continuous reform. India's governance must match its economic ambition to ensure balanced and durable progress.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the **global decline in corruption control reflected in the CPI 2025** highlights India's governance challenges, and examine its economic implications and required reforms.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The judicial push for environmental CSR

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environment

Introduction

India made CSR mandatory through the Companies Act, 2013 to direct corporate profits toward social good. However, environmental concerns remain underfunded despite rising climate challenges and the net-zero target for 2070. The Supreme Court has now reframed environmental CSR as a constitutional duty under Article 51A(g), linking business operations with ecological responsibility and pushing companies to prioritise restoration over voluntary charity.

What is Corporate Social Responsibility?

1. **Meaning of CSR:** CSR is a management concept where companies integrate social and environmental concerns into business operations and stakeholder interactions. It reflects responsibility toward society and the environment.
2. **Triple Bottom Line Approach:** CSR balances economic, social, and environmental goals. It aligns business growth with sustainability and stakeholder expectations.
3. **Link with Sustainability and ESG:** CSR supports long-term value creation by integrating environmental, social, and governance concerns. It ensures responsible and ethical business conduct.

Statutory Framework in India

1. **Legal Mandate:** India became the first country to mandate CSR through **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013** and the **Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014**.
2. **Eligibility Criteria:** CSR applies to companies with **net worth ₹500 crore, turnover ₹1,000 crore, or net profit ₹5 crore** in the previous financial year.

3. **2% Spending Requirement:** Eligible companies must spend at least **2% of their average net profits of the last three years** on CSR activities.
4. **Permitted Activities under Schedule VII of the Act:** CSR includes areas like education, healthcare, rural development, and **environmental sustainability, ecological balance, and conservation of natural resources**, along with support to welfare funds and research.
5. **Compliance and Penalties:** India moved to a “**comply or be penalised**” model in 2021. Unspent funds must be transferred to an **Unspent CSR Account within 30 days** and used within **3 years**, or transferred to a government fund within **6 months**.
6. **Penalties for Non-Compliance:** Companies face penalties of **twice the unspent amount or ₹1 crore (whichever is less)**. Defaulting officers are liable for **1/10th of the unspent amount or ₹2 lakh (whichever is less)**.

Structural Challenges in Environmental Restoration

1. **Skewed CSR Allocation:** CSR funds favour social sectors with **education (38%), healthcare (22%), and rural development (10%)**, while environment gets only **7-9%**. This shows a strong human-centric bias.
2. **Restoration Gap:** Under the **Bonn Challenge** (global target: **350 million hectares by 2030**), India aims to restore **26 million hectares by 2030**, but private sector contribution is only **2% of 9.8 million hectares restored so far**.
3. **Preference for Quick Wins:** Companies support awareness campaigns and basic green activities because they give quick results and easy reporting. Long-term restoration projects are avoided.
4. **Complex Nature of Restoration:** Activities like afforestation, habitat recovery, and water conservation take time and need expertise in soil, biodiversity, and ecology. Many CSR partners lack such skills.
5. **Ecological Concerns in Practices:** Rapid methods like Miyawaki plantations are preferred for visibility, but they often compromise native ecology and biodiversity.
6. **Institutional and Policy Gaps:** There is an urban bias in project selection, lack of practical policies for degraded lands, and poor coordination with forest departments and organisations.

Judicial Intervention and Constitutional Mandate

1. **Shift from Charity to Duty:** The Supreme Court reframed environmental CSR as a constitutional obligation. It linked business rights with environmental responsibility.
2. **Article 51A(g):** The Court invoked the duty to protect and improve the environment. It made ecological responsibility an integral part of corporate conduct.
3. **Trigger for Judicial Action:** Neglect of the **Great Indian Bustard habitat** by energy firms led to judicial intervention. It highlighted the consequences of ignoring ecological concerns.

4. **Impact of Judicial Push:** Environmental protection is no longer optional. It has become a mandatory aspect of corporate accountability and governance.

What should be done?

1. **Ecosystem Recovery Approach:** CSR must shift from short-term activities to long-term ecological restoration. Focus should be on restoring natural systems.
2. **New Success Indicators:** Performance should be measured through **soil carbon sequestration, water retention, and biodiversity recovery**. These reflect real ecological impact.
3. **Focus on Degraded Lands:** Priority should be given to remote and degraded forest areas that lack resources. This ensures better ecological outcomes.
4. **Institutional Collaboration:** Strong partnerships are needed between forest departments, universities, NGOs, and joint forest management committees. This brings scientific expertise.
5. **Scientific Restoration Units:** Dedicated units under expert supervision should guide restoration. They must focus on native species and ecological balance.
6. **Long-term Financing Mechanism:** Creation of a **restoration trust or escrow fund** can ensure continuous funding. It supports long-term projects and stability.
7. **Governance Transformation:** Corporate governance must move from shareholder focus to ecosystem focus. Directors should act as fiduciaries of the environment.

Conclusion

Environmental CSR must move beyond compliance and short-term visibility. The judicial push has made ecological responsibility a constitutional duty. A shift toward ecosystem-centric governance is necessary. Long-term restoration, scientific planning, and sustained financing must guide corporate action. Treating environmental protection as a non-negotiable business priority will help achieve balanced and sustainable development in India.

Question for practice:

Discuss the judicial push for environmental Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India and examine the challenges and measures needed to strengthen ecosystem-based CSR.

Source: The Hindu

Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Source: The post "Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026" has been created, based on "Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026" published in "Indian express" on 26th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: The **Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026** proposes amendments primarily to the **Companies Act, 2013** and the **Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008** with the objective of streamlining regulatory processes, reducing criminal liability for procedural lapses, and improving the ease of doing business in India.

Key Provisions

1. Changes in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- a. The Bill proposes to increase the CSR applicability threshold based on net profit from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore in order to reduce the compliance burden on smaller companies.
- b. It retains the existing eligibility criteria relating to companies having a net worth of ₹500 crore or turnover of ₹1,000 crore for CSR applicability.
- c. The Bill extends the time period for transferring unspent CSR funds related to ongoing projects from 30 days to 90 days to provide greater operational flexibility to companies.
- d. It also provides exemptions from certain CSR provisions for small companies to support their growth and reduce compliance pressure.

2. Decriminalisation of Offences

- a. The Bill proposes to shift 21 offences under corporate law from criminal liability to monetary penalties in order to promote a trust-based regulatory regime.
- b. It replaces imprisonment provisions for several procedural violations with financial penalties to reduce unnecessary litigation.
- c. It introduces an electronic adjudication mechanism to ensure transparency and reduce discretion in enforcement actions.

3. Hybrid Corporate Governance Meetings

- a. The Bill enables companies to conduct Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) through video conferencing and other audio-visual means.
- b. It mandates that companies must hold at least one physical AGM once every three years to maintain shareholder engagement in physical mode as well.

4. Relief Measures for Small Companies

- a. The Bill provides exemptions to small companies from certain CSR obligations in order to reduce compliance costs.
- b. It relaxes requirements relating to auditor appointments for small companies to simplify governance procedures.
- c. It also reduces additional fees payable for delayed filings by small companies to encourage compliance.

5. Replacement of Affidavits with Self-Declarations

- a. The Bill allows certain affidavits required under the Companies Act to be replaced with self-declarations in order to simplify documentation requirements.
- b. This change is expected to reduce procedural delays and administrative burdens for companies.

6. Conversion of Trusts into Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)

- a. The Bill introduces a framework for the conversion of specified trusts registered under regulatory authorities such as SEBI and IFSC authorities into LLPs.
- b. This provision aims to improve flexibility in organisational restructuring within the financial sector.

7. Expansion of Regulatory Powers

- a. The Bill allows the Central Government to classify different categories of companies for regulatory purposes across various provisions of corporate law.
- b. It also expands the regulatory role of bodies such as the **National Financial Reporting Authority** in ensuring compliance and oversight.

Challenges

1. Excessive Delegation of Legislative Powers

- a. Critics argue that the Bill delegates several essential legislative functions to subordinate legislation without providing adequate guidance from Parliament.
- b. Important matters such as CSR thresholds, compliance classifications, audit obligations, and penalty frameworks may be determined through executive rules instead of primary legislation.
- c. This may raise concerns regarding violation of constitutional principles relating to delegated legislation.

2. Increased Executive Control Over Regulators

- a. The Bill allows the Central Government to issue directions to regulatory authorities and classify companies differently across regulatory provisions.
- b. Critics argue that such provisions may weaken the autonomy of statutory regulators like the National Financial Reporting Authority.

3. Dilution of CSR Framework

- a. The increase in CSR applicability thresholds may reduce the number of companies covered under CSR obligations.
- b. This may potentially weaken corporate participation in social development initiatives.

4. Weakening of Corporate Accountability

- a. The replacement of criminal penalties with monetary penalties for certain offences may reduce deterrence against corporate non-compliance.
- b. Critics argue that such changes may weaken the accountability framework under corporate governance laws.

5. Concerns Regarding Shareholder Participation: Although hybrid meetings improve accessibility, there are concerns that excessive reliance on virtual meetings may reduce meaningful shareholder engagement in corporate decision-making processes.

Significance

1. Promotion of Ease of Doing Business

- a. The Bill simplifies compliance procedures and reduces criminal liability for procedural lapses, which may encourage entrepreneurship and business expansion.
- b. It supports the formalisation of MSMEs by reducing regulatory burdens on smaller companies.

2. Strengthening Digital Corporate Governance

- a. The institutionalisation of hybrid meetings promotes the use of digital governance mechanisms in corporate administration.
- b. It enhances accessibility for shareholders located across different geographical regions.

3. Rationalisation of CSR Framework

- a. The revision of CSR thresholds reflects changes in India's economic conditions since the enactment of the Companies Act, 2013.
- b. It helps emerging companies allocate more resources towards growth during their expansion phase.

4. Encouragement of Corporate Restructuring Flexibility: The introduction of provisions allowing conversion of specified trusts into LLPs promotes flexibility in organisational structures within regulated financial sectors.

5. Alignment with Modern Regulatory Practices

- a. The shift from criminal enforcement to civil penalties for minor procedural violations aligns India's corporate governance framework with global regulatory practices.
- b. It improves transparency through the adoption of electronic adjudication mechanisms.

Conclusion: The Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 represents an important step towards simplifying corporate compliance and promoting business growth; however, concerns relating to delegated legislation, regulatory autonomy, and CSR dilution require careful examination to ensure that corporate governance standards remain strong and balanced.

Question: The Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to promote ease of doing business while ensuring corporate accountability. Discuss its key provisions, associated concerns, and overall significance.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

PSUs and insolvency

Source: The post "PSUs and insolvency" has been created, based on "PSUs and insolvency" published in "BusinessLine" on 26th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC)** was enacted to provide a time-bound framework for insolvency resolution of corporate entities in India. The Code applies uniformly to companies irrespective of whether they are privately owned or government owned. However, the recent insolvency proceedings involving **Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Limited (CNNL)** have revived the debate regarding whether Public Sector Enterprises performing sovereign or essential public functions should be exempt from insolvency proceedings.

Issues over applicability of IBC to Public Sector Enterprises performing sovereign functions

1. Some Public Sector Enterprises argue that insolvency proceedings against them may disrupt essential public services that are necessary for public welfare.
2. They contend that certain enterprises function as implementing agencies of government policies rather than as commercial profit-oriented entities.
3. They further argue that subjecting such enterprises to insolvency proceedings may interfere with the constitutional responsibilities of the State.
4. This issue gained prominence in **Hindustan Construction Company Limited v. Union of India**, where the Supreme Court observed that statutory bodies such as the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** perform important public functions and therefore cannot be subjected to liquidation under the IBC framework.

Significance of the issue

1. The issue is significant because a large number of Public Sector Enterprises in India are currently facing financial stress and operational inefficiencies.
2. The 16th Finance Commission Report (2026–31) highlights concerns about the financial condition of both State and Central Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs).
3. Out of 1,107 State Public Sector Enterprises (SPSEs), around 541 are either incurring losses or reporting zero net profits.
4. A considerable number of these enterprises are also non-operational, indicating inefficiency and underutilisation.
5. Nearly half of the State Public Sector Enterprises are either loss-making or non-operational according to recent fiscal assessments.
6. The aggregate losses of State Public Sector Enterprises are estimated to be approximately ₹1.14 lakh crore.
7. Loss-making Central Public Sector Enterprises have recorded annual losses exceeding ₹51,000 crore.
8. The electricity distribution sector alone has accumulated outstanding debt of more than ₹7 lakh crore.
9. These figures highlight the urgent need for financial restructuring and improved accountability mechanisms in Public Sector Enterprises.

Arguments in favour of exempting PSEs from IBC proceedings

1. Public Sector Enterprises operating in sectors such as irrigation, electricity distribution, and transport infrastructure provide essential services that directly affect citizens and economic stability.
2. Subjecting such enterprises to insolvency proceedings may disrupt the delivery of essential public services.
3. Certain Public Sector Enterprises function primarily as instruments of government policy implementation rather than as independent commercial entities.
4. Applying insolvency proceedings to such enterprises may interfere with the discharge of sovereign responsibilities of the State.
5. Liquidation or restructuring of such enterprises under the IBC framework may adversely affect long-term infrastructure development objectives of the government.

Arguments against granting exemption to PSEs from IBC

1. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code does not distinguish between private companies and government companies at the stage of admission of insolvency proceedings.
2. Allowing exemptions to Public Sector Enterprises may weaken the principle of ownership neutrality embedded in the Code.
3. Such exemptions may create moral hazard by encouraging fiscal indiscipline and delayed payments to contractors and lenders.
4. Exemptions may also reduce investor and creditor confidence while dealing with government enterprises.
5. The IBC framework is primarily a resolution mechanism and therefore it can support restructuring and revival of distressed Public Sector Enterprises rather than merely leading to liquidation.

Institutional concerns emerging from the controversy

1. Questions have emerged regarding whether the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** has the institutional capacity to determine whether a particular Public Sector Enterprise performs sovereign functions.
2. Frequent intervention by High Courts in such disputes leads to fragmentation of the insolvency resolution timeline envisaged under the IBC framework.
3. The absence of a clear statutory definition of sovereign function under the IBC creates ambiguity and results in inconsistent judicial interpretations across cases.

Way Forward

1. There is a need to clearly define the scope of sovereign functions under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to avoid ambiguity in its implementation.
2. A sector-specific insolvency resolution framework should be developed for Public Sector Enterprises engaged in essential public services.
3. Governments should strengthen financial discipline in Public Sector Enterprises through performance audits and accountability mechanisms.
4. Persistently loss-making and non-operational Public Sector Enterprises should be considered for closure, privatisation, or asset monetisation wherever appropriate through structured use of the IBC mechanism.

Conclusion: A balanced approach is required to ensure that essential sovereign functions remain protected while Public Sector Enterprises continue to remain accountable to creditors and financial discipline. Clear legislative guidance regarding the applicability of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to Public Sector Enterprises will help maintain the balance between public purpose and commercial responsibility.

Question: Can Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) invoke sovereign functions to avoid insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC)? Examine the constitutional, economic, and institutional implications.

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

The Transgender Persons Amendment Bill is a flawed fix

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

Introduction

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 is presented as a corrective step to the 2019 law. However, it narrows identity, removes self-determination, and increases state control. It ignores key distinctions between sex and gender, and between intersex and transgender persons. Instead of solving existing problems, it creates new legal, social, and ethical concerns, making it a flawed reform.

Background of The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

- (a) **Origin in the 2019 Act and NALSA judgment:** The 2019 Act followed the Supreme Court's NALSA judgment which recognised **self-perceived gender identity as a fundamental right** and rejected medical conditions for legal recognition.
- (b) **Purpose of the 2026 Amendment:** The amendment claims to fix vagueness and implementation issues in the 2019 Act, but it changes core principles and shifts focus from rights to control.

Key Changes Introduced by the 2026 Amendment

- (a) **Narrow definition of transgender identity:** The Bill limits transgender identity to specific socio-cultural groups like **hijra, kinner, aravani, jogta, eunuch**, and intersex variations, excluding **gender-fluid and non-heteronormative identities**.
- (b) **Removal of self-perceived gender identity:** The right to self-identify gender under Section 4(2) is deleted, weakening a core constitutional principle of personal autonomy.
- (c) **Introduction of medical board certification:** A **medical authority led by a Chief Medical Officer** replaces the District Magistrate process, making identity recognition dependent on medical approval.
- (d) **Mandatory reporting of surgeries:** Hospitals must report all transgender surgeries to authorities, raising serious concerns about **privacy and surveillance**.
- (e) **Retrospective exclusion clause:** The Bill declares that persons with different sexual orientations were never included, creating uncertainty for **over 32,000 issued certificates**.

Major Concerns related to The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

1. Conceptual and Classification Issues

- (a) **Confusion between sex and gender identity:** The Bill wrongly treats **male and female as gender identities**, while they are sex categories, leading to flawed policy design.
- (b) **Conflation of intersex and transgender identities:** The Bill includes intersex persons under "transgender," even though **intersex is a biological variation (1-2% globally) and**

transgender is a social and psychological identity. This erases intersex-specific needs and protections and goes against **global standards (UN, WHO)** that recognise them as distinct categories.

- (c) **Lack of reliable data:** There is no proper data on transgender and intersex persons, making policy design weak and ineffective.

2. Violation of Rights and Constitutional Principles

- (a) **Attack on self-determination:** Removing self-identification violates principles laid down under **Article 21** and the NALSA judgment.
- (b) **Privacy concerns due to medical reporting:** Mandatory sharing of surgery details lacks purpose and safeguards, violating **informational privacy standards**.
- (c) **Retrospective denial of identity:** The clause stating identities “shall never have been included” attempts to **invalidate previously granted transgender certificates (over 32,000)**, creating legal uncertainty and undermining already recognised rights.
- (d) **No ban on non-consensual surgeries:** Thousands of intersex infants face **forced, unethical surgeries**, yet the Bill provides no prohibition.

3. Medicalisation and Administrative Barriers

- (a) **Two-stage medical certification process:** The requirement of a medical board and further review creates delays, uncertainty, and no clear criteria.
- (b) **No scientific basis for gender determination:** There is **no medical test to prove gender**, yet individuals must undergo evaluation.
- (c) **Insurance and access trap:** Recognition is required for healthcare access, but medical procedures are needed for recognition, creating a **circular barrier**.

4. Institutional and Policy Gaps

- (a) **Outdated institutional framework:** The Bill retains bodies like the National Council for Transgender Persons and ignores proposals for **Gender Identity, Expression, and Sex Characteristics (GIESC)-based reform**.
- (b) **Promotion of a single identity framework:** It continues a **heteronormative approach**, ignoring diverse identities and sexual orientations.
- (c) **Lack of consultation:** Key bodies like the **National Council for Transgender Persons were not consulted**, which is meant to advise on such laws. This weakens participatory and inclusive policymaking.

5. Legalisation of Exploitative Structures

- (a) **Ignoring hijra jamath-gharana system:** The Bill penalises external coercion but does not regulate internal systems where **bonded labour and exploitation exist**.
- (b) **Vulnerability of gender non-conforming children:** Many children are forced into begging and prostitution, yet there is **no rehabilitation or protection framework**.
- (c) **Weak law enforcement response:** Police often fail to register missing complaints, increasing risks of trafficking and abuse.

6. Criminalisation and Misplaced Penal Provisions

- (a) **Harsh penalties based on flawed assumptions:** The Bill assumes transgender identity is forced and introduces punishments up to **life imprisonment**.
- (b) **Imbalance in legal protection:** Punishment for crimes against transgender persons remains low (6 months–2 years), while alleged coercion into transgender identity attracts **5 years to life imprisonment**, creating a clear internal imbalance in legal protection.
- (c) **Risk to support systems:** Vague definitions of “forcing or inducing transgender identity” may criminalise **social workers, NGOs, and chosen families** who support individuals, as their assistance can be misinterpreted as coercion.

7. Exclusion from Civil and Family Rights

- (a) **No recognition in family law:** There are no provisions for **marriage, adoption, inheritance, or divorce**.
- (b) **Denial of full citizenship:** Without these rights, transgender persons remain excluded from core social institutions.

Conclusion

The Amendment strengthens penalties but ignores structural flaws. It removes self-identity, confuses key concepts, and neglects intersex and civil rights. It also legitimises exploitative systems and increases state control. A better approach requires separating sex and gender, banning non-consensual surgeries, ensuring full rights, and building an inclusive, evidence-based framework that protects dignity and equality.

Question for practice:

Evaluate whether the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 effectively addresses the gaps of the 2019 Act or creates new legal and social challenges for transgender and intersex persons.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

What is at stake at the WTO's MC14?

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

Introduction

The WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) is taking place at a time when **trade multilateralism is under serious strain and unilateral actions are rising sharply**. As the WTO's highest decision-making body, MC14 will decide the **future direction of global trade rules, dispute settlement system, and core principles like Most Favoured Nation (MFN) and Special and Differential Treatment (SDT)**, especially when major powers are openly questioning and challenging the existing multilateral framework.

Changing Global Trade Context

1. **Rising geopolitical tensions:** Global trade is influenced by **U.S.–China rivalry, global conflicts, and securitisation**, which has reduced cooperation among countries.
2. **Decline of multilateralism:** There is a clear shift from **rules-based multilateralism to unilateral actions**, weakening collective decision-making.
3. **Tariff weaponisation by the U.S.:** The U.S. has imposed **arbitrary tariffs violating MFN and bound tariff rules**, undermining WTO's core principles.
4. **Rise of coercive trade deals:** The U.S. is using **tariff pressure to sign one-sided agreements**, replacing fair and equal trade norms.

Structural Crisis of the WTO

1. **Loss of U.S. trust in WTO:** The U.S. believes WTO has **not served its interests**, especially after China's rapid rise.
2. **China's economic rise:** China's growth has **narrowed the gap with the U.S.**, and its state-led policies remain a concern.
3. **Paralysis of dispute settlement:** The U.S. has **blocked Appellate Body appointments**, making the WTO's dispute system ineffective.
4. **Weak rule-making record:** In nearly **30 years, only two agreements (Trade Facilitation and Fisheries Subsidies)** have been concluded, showing limited progress.
5. **Consensus-based decision-making issue:** The need for full consensus has made **decision-making slow and difficult**, delaying reforms.
6. **Shift towards alternative platforms:** Due to WTO inefficiency, countries are increasingly relying on **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** for faster rule-making.

Key Issues Before MC14

1. **Plurilateral agreements debate:** Agreements like **Investment Facilitation for Development (supported by 120+ countries)** and **E-commerce Agreement** may be added to WTO rules.
2. **Risk of system fragmentation:** Countries like India argue plurilateral deals may **divide the WTO system and weaken multilateralism**.
3. **E-commerce moratorium challenge:** The **1998 moratorium on digital tariffs** may lead to **revenue loss for developing countries** if continued.

4. **Special and Differential Treatment (SDT):** SDT ensures **special rights for developing and least developed countries**, but the U.S. wants to deny these benefits to large developing economies.
5. **Need for dispute settlement reform:** Restoring the **Appellate Body is essential to revive trust and ensure enforcement of WTO rules**.
6. **Threat to core principles:** There is a risk to **MFN and non-discrimination principles**, which ensure fairness in global trade.

What is Fundamentally at Stake?

1. **Future of WTO as an institution:** MC14 will determine whether the WTO remains a **functional rule-making and dispute-settlement body or becomes irrelevant**.
2. **Shift towards power-based trade order:** There is a growing risk of moving from **rule-based trade to coercion-based trade**, where stronger countries dominate outcomes.
3. **Risk of fragmentation:** Growth of plurilateral agreements may create a **divided and less unified trade system**.
4. **Impact on developing countries:** Weakening rules may reduce **policy space, revenue, and bargaining power** of developing economies.
5. **Erosion of key principles:** Core principles like **MFN and SDT are under threat**, affecting fairness and inclusiveness.

India's Role and Strategic Choices

1. **Leadership of Global South:** India should act as a **normative leader for developing countries**, defending multilateralism and collective interests.
2. **Alliance building:** India must **work with developing and least developed countries** to create a strong negotiating bloc at MC14.
3. **Revisiting policy positions:** India should reconsider its **strong opposition to plurilateral agreements** for practical outcomes.
4. **Support dispute reform:** India should strongly push for **restoring the Appellate Body**, including exploring alternative methods like voting.
5. **Defence of core principles:** India must protect **SDT and MFN**, which are crucial for developing countries.

Conclusion

MC14 is a decisive moment for global trade. It will determine whether **multilateralism survives or unilateralism dominates**. Failure to act will strengthen coercive trade practices and weaken developing countries. A balanced approach is needed to restore trust, protect fairness, and ensure the WTO remains relevant in global trade governance.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key issues and challenges before the WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) and explain what is fundamentally at stake for global trade governance.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Beyond reservation for women in legislative bodies

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Issues related to women

Introduction

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (106th Constitutional Amendment, 2023) provides one-third reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. However, since its implementation depends on a future delimitation exercise and may be delayed until 2034, the focus should not only be on the extent of reservation but also on the quality of representation it ensures.

What is the historical background of women's reservation in India?

Women's political participation in India has evolved through decades of struggle:

- The discourse on women's reservation began in the **1920s–30s**, during the confluence of the national liberation movement and educational reforms.
- Paradoxically, leaders such as **Sarojini Naidu** and **Muthulakshmi Reddy** initially opposed reservation, fearing it would reinforce perceptions of women's inferiority.
- The **73rd Constitutional Amendment (1993)** was a watershed moment, reserving 33% of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- After multiple introductions and lapses over three decades, the **106th Amendment (2023)** finally extended reservation to Parliament and State Assemblies.

What are the gains of women's reservation at the grassroots?

- **People-centric governance:** Women Pradhans have often prioritised basic needs like sanitation, housing, education, and electricity-issues that directly affect everyday life.
- **Leadership in crises:** During COVID-19, women representatives in rural Bihar stepped up as first responders, underlining the importance of grassroots leadership.
- **Improved social outcomes:** In West Bengal, their leadership has been linked to better literacy, lower BPL levels, and a higher average age of marriage.
- **Breaking barriers:** In Maharashtra, growing confidence has encouraged many women to contest and win even from unreserved seats, showing real political inclusion.
- **Stronger communities:** Initiatives like **Kudumbashree in Kerala** have further strengthened these gains through self-help group-led community mobilisation.

What are the challenges and limits of Reservation?

Despite clear gains, the reality on the ground shows that reservation alone cannot solve deeper structural issues:

- **Proxy representation:** In many cases, the ‘Sarpanch-Pati’ syndrome turns women representatives into mere figureheads for male relatives. The Nagaur (Rajasthan) incident-where a woman sarpanch was suspended because her husband conducted official meetings-highlights this concern.
- **Political violence and intimidation:** Women, especially from marginalised communities, often face harassment, threats, and even humiliation. The case of Kiran Kumari, a Dalit woman made to touch a councillor’s feet during campaigning, reflects how caste and gender hierarchies still persist.
- **Rotation of seats:** Frequent rotation of reserved constituencies disrupts continuity, making it difficult for women to build political careers. Even capable leaders are often denied a second chance -something rarely seen with male politicians.
- **Awareness and literacy gaps:** Limited awareness about roles and responsibilities, along with rural illiteracy, leads to a situation of “inclusion without real participation.”
- **Elite capture:** There is also a risk that reserved seats may end up being controlled by politically influential families, rather than empowering genuine grassroots voices.

What should be the Way Forward?

To make reservation truly meaningful, a broader and more supportive approach is needed:

- **Increase reservation to 50%:** Since women make up nearly half of India’s population, political representation should reflect this reality.
- **Address political violence:** Strong legal safeguards and effective enforcement are needed to ensure women can participate in politics without fear, including protection from online abuse.
- **Invest in capacity-building:** Regular training programmes can help women representatives better understand governance, finances, and digital tools, enabling more independent decision-making.
- **Expand women’s role in elections:** Greater participation as presiding officers, booth-level officers, and voter registration officials can make the electoral process more inclusive and trustworthy.
- **Reform rotation policy:** A more balanced approach is needed to allow continuity while still preventing the concentration of power.

Conclusion

Reservation is an important step, but it is only the beginning. The real goal is to ensure that women not only enter politics but also exercise real power and influence. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam should act as a foundation-on which genuine participation, voice, and leadership can be built.

Question for Practice- Despite one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions since 1993, proxy representation and political violence continue to limit real participation. Examine the structural challenges to women’s political empowerment in India and suggest measures to address them.

Source- [TH](#)

India’s new climate targets are modest but significant

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure And Environment

Introduction

India has announced its 2035 climate targets under its nationally determined contributions, focusing on reducing emissions intensity, expanding non-fossil energy, and increasing carbon sinks. These targets show only a small rise over the 2030 goals, which India is already close to achieving ahead of time. However, in a global situation where climate efforts are weakening and energy security concerns are rising, these targets carry strong strategic importance.

Key Features of India's 2035 Climate Targets

1. **Higher share of non-fossil electricity capacity:** India aims to achieve **at least 60% non-fossil fuel-based installed electricity capacity by 2035**, increasing from the **50% target set for 2030**.
2. **Improved emissions intensity reduction:** India has set a target of **at least 47% reduction in emissions intensity from 2005 levels**, compared to the **45% target for 2030**.
3. **Expansion of carbon sinks:** India plans to create an additional **3.5 to 4 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent carbon sink** over the levels that existed in **2005**.
4. **Progression under Paris Agreement obligations:** These targets are part of the required update under the **2015 Paris Agreement**, where countries periodically revise their **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)**.
5. **Existing progress on 2030 commitments:** India is already on course to achieve its **2030 targets ahead of time**, with the **renewable energy target already met**, while the other two indicators are likely close to achievement.

Strategic Significance in a Changing Global Energy Landscape

1. **Reaffirmation of clean energy commitment:** India has reinforced its commitment to a clean energy pathway at a time when countries are reconsidering their energy, economic, and security policies.
2. **Global climate setback due to policy shifts:** The re-election of Donald Trump has led the United States to move away from renewable energy and reinvest in oil and gas resources.
3. **Impact of actions by a major energy player:** As the **world's second largest producer and consumer of energy**, the United States' shift has slowed global climate progress and risks reversing earlier momentum.
4. **Geopolitical tensions and energy insecurity:** Actions related to control over oil and gas resources, including in **Venezuela**, and the **war in West Asia**, have pushed countries to secure fossil fuel supply chains.
5. **India's contrasting position:** As the **world's third biggest emitter and third largest energy consumer**, India has chosen to continue with clean energy and enhanced climate action.
6. **Recognition by international leadership:** The **UN Climate Change Executive Secretary** stated that India's targets are crucial as rising fossil fuel dependence is increasing costs, weakening national security, and affecting access to food and fuel.

7. **Strategic advantage of renewables:** Renewable energy avoids dependence on vulnerable supply routes such as the **Strait of Hormuz**, which faced disruption during the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Major Constraints to India's Climate Ambition

1. **Gap between potential and committed targets:** The Central Electricity Authority projected **52% to 70% by 2035**, but India committed only **60%**, showing cautious ambition.
2. **Inadequate climate finance commitments:** At **Baku 2024**, only **\$300 billion/year from 2035** was agreed, far below the **\$1.3 trillion demand**.
3. **Direct impact of finance gap on ambition:** Limited funding has forced India to **moderate its targets despite higher capacity**.
4. **Dissatisfaction with global finance outcomes:** India's targets reflect disappointment with **COP29 Baku outcomes**, especially on finance.
5. **Constraint of binding international commitments:** India avoids higher targets to prevent **future policy restrictions**.

What should be done

1. **Ensure adequate climate finance availability:** There is a need to increase financial commitments to match the **\$1.3 trillion demand** of developing countries.
2. **Mobilise low-cost and long-term finance:** India has identified securing **affordable, long-term funding** from both domestic and international sources as a core objective.
3. **Continue global engagement on finance issues:** The **two-year work programme on climate finance** should be used to address structural gaps in funding.
4. **Strengthen global climate finance discussions:** At the **United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil**, India pushed for a **two-year work programme** to address climate finance issues.
5. **Maintain balance between ambition and feasibility:** Climate targets should reflect both environmental goals and financial realities to ensure effective implementation.
6. **Strengthen focus on adaptation:** India's 2035 plan is expected to include a **strong emphasis on adaptation actions**, along with mitigation efforts.

Conclusion

India's 2035 climate targets are modest in numerical increase but significant in strategic intent. They reflect a balance between ambition and constraints such as limited climate finance and global uncertainty. By continuing its clean energy pathway while avoiding rigid commitments, India signals stability and responsibility. These targets reinforce its role in global climate action despite weakening international cooperation.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's 2035 climate targets reflect a balance between modest ambition and strategic commitment in the context of global energy and climate challenges.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Corporate Law Reforms

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

India's corporate regulatory framework is undergoing a shift to match the scale, speed, and complexity of modern business. The **Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026** seeks to align company law with evolving needs by simplifying compliance, promoting digital governance, and reducing criminal penalties. It also reflects a structured attempt to improve ease of doing business while maintaining accountability and strengthening corporate governance systems.

Context and Legislative Background

- 1. Introduction and JPC referral:** The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha and referred to a **31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (21 Lok Sabha + 10 Rajya Sabha members)** for detailed scrutiny and recommendations.
- 2. Timeline for review:** The JPC will submit its report by the **last day of the first week of the Monsoon Session**.
- 3. Legal framework under amendment:** The Bill proposes changes to the **Companies Act, 2013** and the **Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008**.
- 4. Basis of reforms:** The amendments address gaps identified by the **Company Law Committee (2022 report)** and aim to streamline regulatory processes.
- 5. Objective of reforms:** The focus is on **ease of doing business and ease of living for corporates**, along with rationalisation of penalties and decriminalisation of minor offences.

Key Provisions of the Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026

- 1. Expansion of light-touch compliance regime:** The definition of **small companies is broadened**, bringing more growth-stage entities under simplified compliance.
- 2. Reduction in compliance penalties:** Caps on additional fees for delayed filings are **lowered and rationalised**, reducing punitive impact and encouraging voluntary compliance.
- 3. Relaxation for smaller entities:** Board meeting and disclosure requirements are **eased for small, one-person, and dormant companies**, reducing governance burden.
- 4. New financial instruments:** Companies can issue **instruments linked to share capital value**, moving beyond traditional ESOP structures.

5. **Modernisation of buy-back provisions:** Buy-back rules now include **shares from equity incentive schemes**, remove affidavit-based solvency requirements, clarify computation limits, and allow **more than one buy-back in a financial year with safeguards**.
6. **Digital-first corporate framework:** General meetings can be held in **physical, virtual, or hybrid mode**, with at least **one compulsory physical AGM every three years**.
7. **Shareholder participation safeguards:** Shareholders can **requisition hybrid meetings**, ensuring wider participation.
8. **Electronic communication system:** Electronic service of documents and digital communication become the **default for prescribed companies**, reducing logistical burden.
9. **Strengthening director accountability:** Independent directors face **continuous eligibility testing and expanded cooling-off periods across group entities**.
10. **Limiting board authority:** Boards cannot appoint directors who are **rejected by shareholders**, strengthening shareholder control.
11. **Decriminalisation of offences:** Technical and procedural defaults are shifted from **criminal liability to civil monetary penalties**, ensuring predictability.
12. **Additional structural provisions:** The Bill introduces a framework for **conversion of specified trusts (registered under SEBI/IFSC authority) into Limited Liability Partnership (LLPs)**.

Significance of the Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026

1. **Improvement in ease of doing business:** Simplified compliance and streamlined regulation reduce operational burden for companies.
2. **Encouragement of compliance culture:** Lower penalties and rationalised fees promote **voluntary regularisation** and reduce fear of punitive action.
3. **Enhanced financial flexibility:** New instruments and revised buy-back rules improve **capital structuring and executive compensation flexibility**.
4. **Digital governance transformation:** Hybrid meetings and electronic communication increase **efficiency, accessibility, and participation**.
5. **Strengthened corporate governance:** Stricter norms for independent directors improve **accountability and board independence**.
6. **Shift towards risk-based regulation:** Replacing criminal penalties with civil fines ensures **proportionate and predictable enforcement**.

Concerns and Gaps

1. **Incomplete lifecycle reform:** The Bill focuses more on operations and compliance, but gaps remain in **entry and exit processes for businesses**.

2. **Complex incorporation process:** Incorporation still involves **procedural complexity**, especially for low-risk, resident-owned companies.
3. **Dependence on NCLT processes:** Corporate actions like **capital reduction and intra-group reorganisations** still rely on NCLT, causing delays.
4. **Lack of fast-track mechanisms:** There is limited availability of **threshold-based safe harbours and administrative routes** for low-risk transactions.
5. **Digital compliance challenges:** Digital systems require strong safeguards for **data integrity, proof of delivery, and member choice**, which need careful implementation.
6. **Debate on CSR provisions:** Opposition raised concerns about dilution of the **mandatory 2% CSR contribution**, but the government clarified that only the **profitability threshold** is being changed, not the CSR requirement.
7. **Institutional debate on scrutiny mechanism:** Some members questioned the need for a JPC instead of using the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Corporate Affairs**, indicating procedural concerns.

Way Forward

1. **Simplifying incorporation:** Adoption of **straight-through processing, Aadhaar-based DIN/DSC issuance, and reduced documentation** can ease entry barriers.
2. **Reducing reliance on NCLT:** Fast-track administrative mechanisms should replace **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) processes for low-risk and consent-based cases**.
3. **Introducing safe harbour provisions:** Threshold-based frameworks can simplify **capital reduction and intra-group restructuring**.
4. **Strengthening digital safeguards:** Digital systems must ensure **secure communication, transparency, and inclusive participation**.

Conclusion

The Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 reflects a clear move towards **simplified compliance, digital processes, and decriminalisation of minor offences**. It improves flexibility and governance standards. However, further reforms are needed in incorporation and exit processes. A balanced, risk-based framework can ensure efficient business operations while maintaining strong regulatory oversight and accountability.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the key provisions, significance, and limitations of the Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in reforming India's corporate regulatory framework.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Menstrual leave policy must be nuanced, inclusive

Source: The post “Menstrual leave policy must be nuanced, inclusive” has been created, based on “Menstrual leave policy must be nuanced, inclusive” published in “Indian express” on 28th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: Menstruation is not merely a routine biological process but a significant physiological event that often causes severe pain, fatigue, heavy bleeding, gastrointestinal distress, and hormonal mood disturbances. Many women experience dysmenorrhea and menorrhagia, which can severely affect their physical comfort and workplace productivity. The Supreme Court in the case of Dr Jaya Thakur v. Government of India & Ors. recognised that lack of menstrual dignity violates **Article 21 (Right to Life and Dignity)** and **Article 21A (Right to Education)**. Therefore, India requires a nuanced and inclusive menstrual leave policy that recognises menstrual health as part of constitutional equality and dignity.

Need for a Menstrual Leave Policy in India

1. Physiological realities demand accommodation

- a. Menstruation involves uterine contractions powered by prostaglandins, which are the same biochemical agents that induce labour during childbirth.
- b. Many women experience dysmenorrhea that has been compared to the early stages of a heart attack in intensity.
- c. Conditions such as menorrhagia often lead to anaemia and severe fatigue among menstruating individuals.
- d. Hormonal fluctuations during menstruation also cause gastrointestinal distress and mood disturbances that affect daily functioning.
- e. Therefore, workplace accommodation becomes necessary to support menstrual health and productivity.

2. Addressing stigma and silence

- a. In India, menstruation continues to be treated as polluting and impure in many social contexts.
- b. Many adolescent girls drop out of school due to lack of dignified sanitation infrastructure during menstruation.
- c. Workplace environments often remain silent about menstrual distress, forcing women to depend on sick leave instead of structured menstrual leave.
- d. A formal menstrual leave policy would help normalise menstruation as a legitimate health concern rather than a private inconvenience.

3. Constitutional backing for menstrual dignity

- a. The Supreme Court held that forcing girls to remain without access to sanitary pads, clean toilets, and safe environments during menstruation violates their right to dignity under Article 21.
- b. The Court also observed that lack of menstrual facilities forces girls to stay at home and violates their right to education under Article 21A.
- c. The judgment clarified that treating everyone the same without recognising biological differences does not amount to true equality.

- d. The Court emphasised that human dignity cannot be fragmented and must be protected in all circumstances.

Concerns Raised Against Menstrual Leave Policy

1. Fear of reduced employability

- a. Opponents of menstrual leave policies argue that such provisions may discourage employers from hiring women.
- b. Similar arguments were historically made against the introduction of paid sick leave and maternity leave policies.
- c. However, experience shows that institutionalising care through such policies strengthens workforce participation rather than weakening it.

2. Risk of reinforcing gender bias

- a. Some policymakers argue that menstrual leave policies may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes about women's biological limitations.
- b. A bench headed by the Chief Justice of India expressed concern that demanding menstrual leave may lead employers to avoid hiring women.
- c. Therefore, menstrual leave policies must be carefully designed to balance protection with equality in employment opportunities.

Why Policy Must Be Nuanced and Inclusive

1. Infrastructure support

- a. A menstrual leave policy should include access to hygienic toilets in schools and workplaces.
- b. It should also ensure the availability of free sanitary pads, especially for vulnerable groups.
- c. Proper disposal mechanisms must be provided to maintain dignity and hygiene during menstruation.

2. Awareness and destigmatisation

- a. Awareness campaigns must be conducted to remove social stigma associated with menstruation.
- b. Public discussion and institutional recognition can help normalise menstrual health concerns.
- c. Such awareness initiatives will encourage workplaces and educational institutions to become more supportive environments.

3. Coverage of marginalised groups

- a. The Maharashtra State Commission for Women convened consultations involving activists, medical professionals, and labour representatives to discuss menstrual leave policy.
- b. The consultations emphasised the need to extend protections to unorganised-sector workers who currently lack formal workplace benefits.
- c. The panel also highlighted the importance of including trans and non-binary individuals who menstruate within the policy framework.
- d. Such inclusion would ensure that menstrual leave policy reflects substantive equality rather than limited workplace privilege.

Evidence Supporting Gender-Sensitive Policies

- a. A study conducted by Verma, Bhal, and Vrat in 2013 among call-centre employees in Delhi found that gender-sensitive workplace policies improve job satisfaction.
- b. The study also found that such policies reduce stress among employees.
- c. Gender-sensitive policies strengthen employee loyalty and contribute to long-term workforce stability.
- d. Therefore, menstrual leave policies can strengthen workforce participation instead of weakening it.

Way Forward

1. India should introduce a menstrual leave policy that goes beyond leave provisions and addresses the broader menstrual health ecosystem.
2. The policy should include access to sanitation infrastructure and free menstrual hygiene products.
3. Workplace flexibility arrangements should be encouraged to accommodate menstrual health needs.
4. The policy framework should include workers in the unorganised sector to ensure equitable coverage.
5. Awareness campaigns must be integrated into policy implementation to dismantle stigma surrounding menstruation.
6. Inclusive policy language should recognise the needs of all menstruating individuals, including trans and non-binary persons.

Conclusion: A menstrual leave policy should be recognised as a constitutional necessity linked to dignity, equality, and health rights rather than merely a welfare measure. Similar to maternity leave provisions, menstrual leave can help normalise the reality that women are long-term contributors to the workforce who sometimes require temporary biological accommodation. Therefore, a nuanced and inclusive menstrual leave policy can strengthen both social justice and workforce participation in India.

Question: Menstrual leave policy in India must move beyond leave entitlement to a broader menstrual health ecosystem grounded in dignity, equality and inclusivity." Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

India's foreign policy is being shaped by financial constraints

Source: The post "India's foreign policy is being shaped by financial constraints" has been created, based on "India's foreign policy is being shaped by financial constraints" published in "Indian express" on 28th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-International Relations

Context: India's foreign policy has traditionally been guided by the principles of strategic autonomy and neutrality in global conflicts. However, recent tensions between U. S. A, Israel, and Iran exposed the economic and security constraints shaping India's diplomatic choices. Although India maintained a formal position of neutrality by calling for de-escalation and emphasising maritime security and diaspora protection, underlying economic indicators suggest a temporary tilt toward the US-Israel axis. This shift reflects structural vulnerabilities arising from India's dependence on external trade, energy imports, financial markets, and defence partnerships.

India's Foreign Policy Response During the Crisis

1. India officially called for de-escalation of tensions and emphasised the importance of maritime security in the region.
2. India also prioritised the safety of its large diaspora population living in Gulf countries.
3. However, high-frequency indicators such as oil import patterns and shipping costs suggested a temporary strategic adjustment toward the US-Israel axis.
4. This adjustment reflected economic necessity rather than a permanent shift in strategic preference.

Structural Economic Constraints Shaping India's Foreign Policy

1. Dependence on crude oil imports

- a. Since 2022, Russia had emerged as India's dominant crude oil supplier, accounting for nearly 35–40 per cent of imports due to discounted prices.
- b. By January 2026, Russian crude imports declined to around 21 per cent as India diversified imports toward the U.S.A and Saudi Arabia.
- c. Indian refiners accepted higher import costs from alternative suppliers, indicating geopolitical signalling rather than price optimisation.
- d. However, after a temporary US waiver permitting Russian cargo already in transit, India quickly increased Russian crude purchases again.
- e. This pattern shows that India's choices were shaped by structural compulsions rather than strategic preference.

2. Trade exposure to the U.S.A

- a. Nearly one-fifth of India's exports are directed toward the U.S.A market.
- b. Several key export sectors in India remain deeply dependent on American demand.
- c. Therefore, the threat of tariffs or trade restrictions from the U.S.A carries serious macroeconomic implications for India.
- d. This trade exposure limits India's ability to diverge significantly from US policy positions.

3. Dependence on the dollar-centric global financial system

- a. India's macroeconomic stability remains closely linked to the dollar-dominated international financial system.
- b. Oil price shocks widen the current account deficit and increase pressure on the rupee.
- c. Divergence from US geopolitical positions may trigger capital outflows as investors reassess risks in emerging markets.
- d. During the crisis period, portfolio outflows of approximately \$6–8 billion intensified pressure on India's external balance.

4. Defence and technology dependencies

- a. Although Russia continues to remain an important defence supplier, India's dependence on advanced military technologies has increasingly shifted toward the US-Israel axis.
- b. Critical defence capabilities such as drones and jet engine technologies are increasingly sourced from Western partners.
- c. This growing technological dependence limits India's strategic flexibility in geopolitical conflicts.

5. Dependence on Gulf diaspora and remittances

- a. Millions of Indian workers reside in Gulf countries and contribute significantly through remittances.
- b. These remittance flows amount to tens of billions of dollars annually and support India's macroeconomic stability.
- c. Since regional security architecture in the Gulf remains anchored to the U.S.A, India cannot sustain a confrontational posture toward that system.

Domestic Economic Impact of External Geopolitical Shocks

1. Rising energy vulnerability

- a. India depends on imports for nearly 85–87 per cent of its crude oil requirements and around 50 per cent of its LNG needs.
- b. India also depends on imports for nearly 60 per cent of its LPG consumption.
- c. Disruptions in supply chains therefore quickly transmit global shocks into the domestic economy.

2. Inflationary pressures and currency depreciation

- a. The Indian crude oil basket rose to ₹156.29 per barrel in mid-March 2026.
- b. During the same period, the rupee depreciated to ₹92.63 per dollar.
- c. The Reserve Bank of India deployed nearly \$20 billion from foreign exchange reserves to stabilise the currency.
- d. Rising energy import costs contributed to inflationary pressures and widening external imbalances.

3. Transmission through financial markets

- a. Higher oil prices widened the current account deficit and weakened investor confidence.
- b. Capital outflows further intensified currency depreciation pressures.
- c. This created a reinforcing cycle of inflation, fiscal stress, and financial instability.

Strategic Costs of the Temporary Policy Tilt

1. India's temporary alignment toward the US-Israel axis exposed its shipping and energy supply chains to risks from disruptions linked to Iran-related tensions in the Strait of Hormuz.
2. External shocks quickly translated into domestic price increases, particularly in LPG and natural gas.
3. LPG prices increased by ₹60 per cylinder in March 2026, reflecting global volatility.
4. Therefore, the short-term stabilising tilt reduced India's diplomatic flexibility while increasing energy vulnerability.

Way Forward

1. India should diversify its crude oil import basket further to reduce geopolitical exposure to any single supplier.
2. India should accelerate renewable energy expansion to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
3. India should strengthen alternative financial arrangements to reduce vulnerability to dollar-centric shocks.
4. India should deepen defence indigenisation under strategic autonomy frameworks.
5. India should continue balancing relations with major powers while protecting diaspora interests in West Asia.

Conclusion: India's response to recent West Asian tensions demonstrates that foreign policy autonomy is increasingly shaped by structural economic, financial, and energy dependencies. Although India maintained formal neutrality, its operational choices reflected constraints arising from trade exposure, defence partnerships, financial markets, and diaspora security concerns. Therefore, strengthening economic resilience and reducing external vulnerabilities remains essential for preserving India's strategic autonomy in the evolving global order.

Question: India's foreign policy autonomy is increasingly shaped by structural economic and financial constraints in a dollar-centric global order." Discuss in the context of recent geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) – Significance and Challenges

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are **duty-free enclaves treated as outside the customs territory** for authorised operations. They support manufacturing, services, and warehousing through Free Trade Warehousing Zones. Their core aim is to **boost exports, attract investment, create jobs, and build infrastructure**. In India, SEZs have expanded economic activity and improved competitiveness, but policy and structural challenges still affect their full performance.

Evolution and Policy Framework of SEZs in India

1. **EPZ phase and early limitations:** India established Asia's first **Export Processing Zone (EPZ)** at **Kandla in 1965**, but it faced issues like procedural delays, weak infrastructure, and unstable fiscal regime.
2. **Introduction of SEZ Policy (April 2000):** The policy aimed to create **world-class infrastructure, better fiscal incentives, and simplified regulation** to attract investment.
3. **Operation under Foreign Trade Policy:** SEZs operated under the **Foreign Trade Policy from November 2000 to February 2006**, with incentives given through statutory provisions.
4. **Legal framework through SEZ Act and Rules:** The **SEZ Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006 (effective 10 February 2006)** introduced single-window clearance and a stable policy framework.
5. **Core objectives under the Act:** The Act focuses on **economic activity, employment, and infrastructure development**, along with environmental compliance.
6. **Monitoring mechanism:** Performance is tracked through **monthly reports submitted by Development Commissioners**.
7. **Recent amendments in June 2025:** Rules were modified to allow **SEZs for semiconductor and electronic component manufacturing**, including relaxed land norms and NFE calculation changes.

8. **New SEZs for high-tech manufacturing:** Two SEZs were notified in **June 2025 at Sanand (Gujarat) and Dharwad (Karnataka)** for semiconductors and electronics.

Performance and Significance of SEZs in India's Economy

1. **Scale of SEZ network:** India has **368 notified SEZs as of 28 February 2026**, showing wide expansion.
2. **Export performance and growth:** Exports reached **₹11.70 lakh crore (2025-26 till December 2025)** with **32.02% growth** over the previous year.
3. **Employment generation:** SEZs employed over **31.73 lakh people (December 2025)**, showing strong job creation.
4. **Investment inflows:** Total investment stood at **₹7.86 lakh crore (December 2025)**, indicating investor confidence.
5. **Industrial and ecosystem development:** SEZs created **specialised industrial clusters**, new business ecosystems, and supported innovation.
6. **Local economic impact:** They improved **socio-economic outcomes** through infrastructure and employment.
7. **Global integration and competitiveness:** SEZs strengthened India's participation in **global value chains** and improved its global investment position.

India's Policy Support and Incentives

1. **Duty-free and tax incentives:** Units get **duty-free import and domestic procurement**, and supplies to SEZs are **zero-rated under IGST Act, 2017**.
2. **Exemptions and state support:** Exemptions from **Central Sales Tax, Service Tax, and State sales tax**, along with additional state-level benefits.
3. **Single-window clearance system:** Approvals are provided through a **single-window mechanism for Central and State levels**.
4. **Union Budget 2026-27 focus:** The Budget emphasised exports as drivers of **employment, foreign exchange, and global integration**.
5. **Definition and treatment of DTA: Domestic Tariff Area (DTA)** includes the whole of India except SEZs, and **SEZ-to-DTA supply is treated as imports under Section 30 of SEZ Act, 2005**, while **DTA-to-SEZ supply is treated as exports under Section 2(m)**.
6. **One-time concessional DTA sales:** SEZ units can sell a **prescribed proportion of output in DTA at concessional duty**, limited to their export share.
7. **Purpose of DTA reform:** This aims to improve **capacity utilisation, economies of scale, reduce export costs, and enhance resilience**.

8. **Support for technology sectors:** Extension of incentives for **cloud and data-centre operations** to attract global firms.

Key Challenges in SEZ Policy

1. **Uneven fiscal incentives across states:** Stamp duty and other benefits are **not uniformly implemented**, reducing their impact.
2. **Land-related issues and infrastructure gaps:** There is **no earmarking of land and lack of initial infrastructure**, creating barriers.
3. **Long gestation and delays:** The approval process is slow, making land unusable for long periods.
4. **Weak single-window system:** The single-window clearance is often ineffective in practice.
5. **Absence of exit policy:** There is **no clear exit mechanism for SEZ developers**, which increases financial risk and uncertainty.
6. **Over-emphasis on export orientation:** Policy limits flexibility by focusing mainly on exports.
7. **Complex approval structure:** The **two-stage approval process** is seen as unnecessary.
8. **Excess number of SEZs:** There are **too many SEZs**, reducing efficiency and effectiveness.
9. **Issues in land acquisition:** Poor land records in many states create major acquisition challenges.
10. **Policy design limitations:** The SEZ policy was introduced without addressing key problems in **factor markets like land, labour, and capital**, which reduced its effectiveness.

Way forward

1. **Government-led land identification:** The Government should **earmark specific sites and invite applications only for them** to reduce rejections.
2. **Focus on larger multi-product SEZs:** Increasing SEZ size will support **multi-product zones**, requiring contiguous land.
3. **Improvement in land records:** Better land records will reduce acquisition disputes and delays.
4. **Strengthening Centre–State coordination:** States should take greater responsibility in **infrastructure development**, similar to VAT implementation success.
5. **Addressing connectivity issues:** Better connectivity can improve performance of **hinterland SEZs**, not just coastal ones.
6. **Reducing unnecessary approvals:** Simplifying the approval process will improve efficiency.
7. **Maintaining state interest post-GST:** With tax incentives reducing after GST, states should be engaged through **infrastructure roles**.

Conclusion

SEZs play a major role in exports, investment, and employment. Their strong data shows their economic importance. However, issues like land constraints, policy gaps, and excessive numbers reduce their efficiency. With better land planning, stronger coordination, and focused reforms, SEZs can become more effective drivers of industrial growth and global trade integration in India.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance, performance, policy framework, and key challenges of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in India.

Source: [PIB](#)

PN3, amidst fragile capital flows

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

The Union government has eased rules under Press Note 3 (PN3) to improve FDI inflows from land-border countries. This shift comes at a time when **net FDI inflows have sharply declined** despite strong gross inflows. The move also reflects improving India–China relations and aims to attract long-term investment, technology, and integration into global supply chains amid growing concerns over fragile capital flows.

PN3 and Its Strategic Background

1. **Origin and regulatory change:** Press Note 3 (PN3) was issued on April 17, 2020 by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to regulate investments from land-border countries.
2. **Earlier investment rules:** Before PN3, only citizens of Bangladesh and Pakistan required government approval, while others could invest under existing routes.
3. **Expansion of restrictions:** PN3 extended government route approval to all land-border countries and also to cases where the beneficial owner belonged to such countries.
4. **Target and intent:** The restriction mainly targeted China, which had strong investment capacity, to prevent strategic risks.
5. **Geopolitical trigger:** The move followed tensions in Ladakh and the Galwan Valley clash, which led to a freeze in India–China relations.

Recent Policy Changes and Their Nature

1. **Relaxation in beneficial ownership:** Investors from land-border countries can now invest under the automatic route if **non-controlling beneficial ownership is up to 10 percent**.

2. **Faster approval mechanism:** Investment proposals in key manufacturing sectors will be cleared within **60 days**, ensuring quicker processing.
3. **Sectoral focus:** The policy targets sectors like **capital goods, electronic components, polysilicon, and ingot-wafer**, indicating priority areas.
4. **Signal towards China:** The selected sectors and easing of rules suggest a **calibrated opening towards Chinese investors**.
5. **Ease of doing business:** The changes aim to provide **clarity, faster approvals, and better investment conditions** for foreign investors.

Drivers Behind the Policy Shift

1. **Declining net FDI inflows:** Net FDI has fallen sharply from **above 40 billion dollars before the pandemic to below 1 billion dollars in 2024–25**.
2. **Recent improvement but continued concern:** Net FDI increased to about **4 billion dollars in the current fiscal**, but remains low.
3. **Stable gross inflows but high outflows:** Gross inflows remain strong at **70 to 80 billion dollars annually**, but high outflows reduce net gains.
4. **Geopolitical improvement:** India–China relations have improved, especially after the Prime Minister’s visit to Tianjin in 2025.
5. **Strategic economic goals:** The policy aims to increase **technology access, domestic value addition, and integration with global supply chains**.

Core Challenge

1. **High disinvestment levels:** Foreign investors withdrew **51.5 billion dollars in 2024–25**, compared to 27 billion in 2020–21 and 11 billion in 2015–16.
2. **Rising share of disinvestment:** Disinvestment reached **64 percent of gross FDI inflows**, much higher than the pre-pandemic level of 25 percent.
3. **FDI becoming unstable:** FDI is expected to be long-term, but rising exits show it is becoming **footloose capital**.
4. **Surge in outward FDI:** Outward FDI increased from **11 billion dollars in 2020–21 to over 28 billion dollars in 2024–25**.
5. **Continued rise in current year:** In the first nine months of 2025–26, outward FDI reached **about 26 billion dollars**, higher than the previous year.
6. **Contradictory investment pattern:** Despite strong economic growth, Indian firms are investing more abroad than at home.

7. **Strong corporate performance:** Profits of India Inc grew **three times faster than GDP between 2020 and 2025**, indicating strong financial capacity.
8. **Weak private investment:** Private sector share in investment fell from **37 percent to 31 percent in 2024-25**.
9. **Government-led investment:** Public capital spending has remained above **4 percent of GDP**, compensating for weak private investment.
10. **Emerging paradox:** Domestic firms are moving capital out, while the government is attracting foreign investors through policy changes and trade agreements.

Conclusion

The easing of PN3 reflects a response to weakening net FDI and improving geopolitical ties. However, **rising disinvestment, increasing outward FDI, and weak private investment highlight fragile capital flows**. The situation shows a clear imbalance where domestic capital is moving out while foreign investment is being encouraged, pointing to deeper concerns in the investment environment.

Question for practice:

Discuss the recent changes in India's FDI policy under PN3 and analyse the challenges posed by fragile capital flows, including declining net FDI, rising disinvestment, and increasing outward FDI.

Source: [Businessline](#)

How to secure India's supply chains

Source: The post "**How to secure India's supply chains**" has been created, based on "**How to secure India's supply chains**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India's manufacturing ecosystem is deeply integrated into global supply chains, particularly in sectors such as energy, fertilizers, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals. While global integration enhances competitiveness and export opportunities, recent geopolitical disruptions have exposed India's structural vulnerabilities due to high dependence on imported raw materials and intermediates. Therefore, strengthening supply-chain resilience has become essential for ensuring economic stability, inflation control, and long-term strategic autonomy.

Major Supply Chain Vulnerabilities in India

1. Energy Dependence

- a. India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil requirements and more than 50% of its natural gas consumption, making it highly vulnerable to global geopolitical disruptions.
- b. A \$10 per barrel increase in crude oil prices increases India's import bill by approximately \$13-14 billion.

- c. Rising crude prices also increase inflation by nearly 30–40 basis points through higher transport and fertilizer costs.
- d. Energy price shocks reduce India's GDP growth by nearly 0.2–0.3 percentage points due to rising production and logistics costs across sectors.

2. Food and Fertilizer Dependence

- a. India remains heavily dependent on imports of edible oils despite being a major agricultural producer.
- b. India also imports significant quantities of pulses to meet domestic demand, which increases vulnerability to global supply disruptions.
- c. The country depends heavily on imports of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers, which directly affect agricultural productivity and rural incomes during global shocks.
- d. Supply disruptions in these sectors can lead to food inflation and threaten overall macroeconomic stability.

3. Manufacturing Input Vulnerability

- a. India's total imports account for nearly 19% of GDP, indicating significant dependence on external supply chains.
- b. Raw materials constitute nearly 34% of imports, intermediates account for 31%, and capital goods account for about 24% of imports.
- c. India imports nearly 65–70% of its pharmaceutical intermediates from China despite being a global leader in generic drug exports.
- d. The country also depends heavily on imports of semiconductors, display panels, and high-end industrial machinery from East Asia.
- e. Disruptions in these critical intermediate inputs can halt manufacturing production across several strategic sectors.

4. Critical Minerals Exposure

- a. India depends heavily on imports of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, copper, and rare earth elements.
- b. These minerals are essential for emerging sectors such as electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and advanced electronics manufacturing.
- c. Global supply of these minerals remains concentrated in a few countries, which increases India's strategic vulnerability during geopolitical conflicts.

Strategies to Strengthen Supply Chain Resilience

1. Energy Security Measures

- a. India must accelerate renewable energy deployment to achieve its target of 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.
- b. Investments in battery storage infrastructure are essential to address intermittency challenges associated with renewable energy sources.
- c. The **National Green Hydrogen Mission** provides an opportunity to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels in hard-to-abate industrial sectors.
- d. India must also expand domestic oil and gas exploration activities to strengthen long-term energy security.

- e. Expansion of strategic petroleum reserves will help India manage temporary global supply disruptions more effectively.

2. Strengthening Agricultural Self-Reliance

- a. The government must expand oilseed production through targeted missions and region-specific crop diversification strategies.
- b. Assured procurement and price support mechanisms must be strengthened to increase domestic pulses production.
- c. Strategic reserves of edible oils and pulses must be created to address supply shocks during emergencies.
- d. Domestic production of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers must be increased to reduce import dependence.
- e. Promotion of bio-fertilizers can provide sustainable alternatives to imported chemical fertilizers.

3. Deepening Domestic Manufacturing Ecosystems

- a. India must shift its manufacturing strategy from assembly-led growth toward ecosystem-based domestic value addition.
- b. Policy incentives should prioritize domestic production of APIs, semiconductors, and electronic components.
- c. Strengthening domestic industrial machinery manufacturing will improve India's technological competitiveness.
- d. Adoption of input-efficient technologies and alternative materials can gradually reduce import dependence in manufacturing.

4. Strategic Diversification of Imports

- a. India must diversify its sources of imports through long-term supply agreements with resource-rich countries.
- b. Strategic partnerships with regions such as Africa and Latin America can reduce dependence on limited supplier countries.
- c. Diversification of import sources enhances resilience against geopolitical disruptions in global supply chains.

5. Building Strategic Reserves

- a. India must expand strategic reserves of petroleum to protect the economy from short-term supply disruptions.
- b. Strategic reserves of edible oils and pulses can help stabilize domestic prices during global shortages.
- c. Creating buffer stocks of fertilizers will support agricultural stability during external supply shocks.

6. Industry-Government Coordination

- a. Supply-chain resilience requires coordinated action between government institutions, industry stakeholders, and global partners.
- b. Industry bodies such as **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry** play an important role in policy consultation and implementation support.

- c. A collaborative institutional framework will help India build long-term resilience against future supply-chain disruptions.

Conclusion: India's aspiration to become a global manufacturing hub requires reducing structural dependence on imports in critical sectors such as energy, fertilizers, intermediates, and strategic minerals. A comprehensive strategy based on domestic capacity building, diversification of supply sources, technological innovation, and creation of strategic reserves will strengthen India's economic resilience and ensure sustainable long-term growth.

Question: India's integration with global supply chains has increased both opportunities and vulnerabilities. Discuss the major supply-chain risks faced by India and suggest an integrated strategy to strengthen supply-chain resilience.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Neighbours first: On India-Nepal ties

Source: The post "Neighbours first: On India-Nepal ties" has been created, based on "Neighbours first: On India-Nepal ties" published in "The Hindu" on 30th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: India and Nepal share a unique civilisational relationship based on open borders, deep cultural ties, economic interdependence, and strong people-to-people connections. The appointment of Nepal's new Prime Minister **Balendra Shah** provides an opportunity for both countries to reset relations and strengthen cooperation under India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. However, evolving domestic political dynamics in Nepal and past bilateral tensions require a cautious and forward-looking diplomatic engagement strategy.

Significance of India-Nepal Relations

1. Civilisational and Cultural Linkages

- a. India and Nepal share centuries-old cultural, religious, and linguistic ties reinforced through shared traditions such as pilgrimage circuits and intermarriage across borders.
- b. The open-border arrangement between the two countries allows unrestricted movement of people, strengthening familial and economic linkages.

2. Economic Interdependence

- a. Nepal is a landlocked country and depends heavily on India for trade transit routes and access to global markets.
- b. India remains Nepal's largest trading partner and a major source of investment and development assistance.
- c. Regional energy cooperation through cross-border electricity trade provides Nepal with opportunities to export hydropower and earn revenue.

3. Strategic Importance

- a. Nepal occupies a critical geopolitical position between India and China, making it strategically significant for India's regional security interests.
- b. Stable India–Nepal relations are essential for maintaining security along India's northern borders.

Emerging Political Changes in Nepal and Their Implication

1. Rise of New Political Leadership

- a. The election of **Balendra Shah**, Nepal's first Madhesi Prime Minister at a relatively young age, reflects a shift away from the traditional dominance of the Pahadi political elite.
- b. This change represents the emergence of a new generation of leadership that is less influenced by historical political alignments with India.

2. Influence of Gen-Z Political Mobilisation

- a. The political transition in Nepal following the fall of the government of **K. P. Sharma Oli** reflects the rise of youth-led political mobilisation demanding governance reforms and national assertion.
- b. This evolving political landscape requires India to engage with new stakeholders rather than relying on legacy political relationships.

3. Uncertain Foreign Policy Orientation

- a. The foreign policy priorities of the new Nepali leadership regarding relations with India, China, and the United States are still evolving.
- b. Therefore, India must adopt a flexible diplomatic approach while engaging with Nepal's emerging political leadership.

Challenges in India–Nepal Relations

1. Legacy Political Distrust

- a. India–Nepal relations experienced strain in the past decade due to disagreements related to Nepal's constitution-making process and cross-border trade disruptions.
- b. Perceptions of interference in Nepal's domestic affairs have occasionally generated nationalist sentiments within Nepal.

2. Territorial Issues

- a. Differences over boundary-related matters have periodically created diplomatic tensions between the two countries.
- b. The publication of maps reflecting the idea of "Greater Nepal" by some political actors has raised concerns in India.

3. Strategic Competition in the Region

- a. Nepal's increasing engagement with China has introduced new geopolitical complexities into India–Nepal relations.
- b. Infrastructure cooperation between Nepal and external partners requires careful diplomatic management by India.

4. Pending Institutional Issues

- a. Nepal has requested revisions to the **India–Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950)**, which remains a sensitive issue in bilateral relations.
- b. Restrictions on overflight permissions and electricity trade involving third-country investments have also affected bilateral cooperation.

Opportunities for Strengthening India–Nepal Relations

1. Energy Cooperation

- a. India's regional energy grid initiatives can help Nepal export surplus hydropower and strengthen economic integration between the two countries.
- b. Facilitating electricity trade will contribute to Nepal's economic growth and regional energy security.

2. Support During External Economic Shocks

- a. Nepal remains vulnerable to disruptions in fuel and fertilizer imports due to global geopolitical conflicts.
- b. India can play a supportive role by ensuring stable supply chains for essential commodities.

3. Facilitating Aviation and Connectivity

- a. Granting overflight permissions for new Nepali international airports can strengthen regional connectivity and tourism growth.
- b. Improved connectivity will enhance trade and people-to-people exchanges.

4. Strengthening Development Partnership

- a. India's development assistance in infrastructure, health, education, and connectivity sectors can reinforce long-term trust between the two countries.
- b. Expanding cooperation in border infrastructure and digital connectivity can deepen bilateral engagement.

5. High-Level Political Engagement

- a. Early diplomatic outreach by inviting **Balendra Shah** to India would signal India's commitment to strengthening neighbourhood relations.
- b. Regular high-level visits help maintain political trust and strategic clarity between the two governments.

Way Forward

1. **Adopt a Sensitive Diplomatic Approach:** India must engage Nepal with respect for its sovereignty while acknowledging changing domestic political dynamics.

2. Update Bilateral Institutional Frameworks: Revisiting the **India–Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950)** can help address long-standing concerns and modernise bilateral cooperation.

3. Expand Economic and Energy Integration: Strengthening cross-border electricity trade and infrastructure connectivity can transform bilateral relations into a mutually beneficial economic partnership.

4. Strengthen the Neighbourhood First Policy: Prioritising Nepal within India's neighbourhood diplomacy framework will reinforce trust and stability in South Asia.

Conclusion: India and Nepal share a unique relationship shaped by geography, history, and culture, but evolving political dynamics in Nepal require renewed diplomatic engagement. A strategy based on mutual sensitivity, institutional reforms, connectivity expansion, and high-level political outreach can help both countries build a stable and future-oriented partnership under the "Neighbourhood First" approach.

Question: India–Nepal relations are rooted in geography, culture and economic interdependence, yet they face periodic political challenges. In the context of Nepal's new leadership, examine the opportunities and challenges in India–Nepal relations and suggest the way forward for strengthening bilateral ties.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Environmental Impact of the War

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environment

Introduction

Conflicts create large environmental damage through emissions, pollution, and weak governance. The **first 14 days of the US–Israel war on Iran emitted over 5 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, exceeding 84 countries combined.** Militaries are major polluters, and their activities release toxins, damage ecosystems, and weaken environmental systems. These impacts continue before, during, and after conflicts, affecting climate, resources, and human survival.

Pre Conflict Phase Militarisation and Environmental Degradation

- 1. High Resource Consumption and Emissions:** Militaries use large amounts of metals, minerals, water, and hydrocarbons. They contribute around 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and their emissions often exceed those of many countries.
- 2. Energy Intensive Military Systems:** Military vehicles, aircraft, and infrastructure depend on oil with low efficiency. Continuous training and readiness further increase emissions and resource use.
- 3. Large Land Use and Ecological Impact:** Military lands cover 1–6% of global land surface, often in sensitive ecosystems. Training and testing damage habitats and create chemical and noise pollution.
- 4. Weapon Production and Disposal Pollution:** Disposal of weapons through burning, detonation, or sea dumping causes long-term pollution. Even conventional weapons create environmental risks.

5. **Legacy Pollution and Emerging Risks:** Weak oversight has created long-term pollution, including **Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)** contamination. Overseas bases often face reduced environmental regulation.
6. **Diversion from Sustainable Development:** High military spending reduces investment in environmental protection. It also weakens global cooperation on climate issues and resource management.

Environmental Impact During Conflict Direct and Indirect Damage

1. **Massive Emissions and Fuel Use:** High intensity conflicts consume large fuel volumes and increase emissions. The Russia-Ukraine war produced 230 MtCO₂e in three years, showing the scale of impact.
2. **Destruction of Land and Urban Areas:** Explosions and heavy vehicle movement damage landscapes, while urban warfare creates debris that causes air and soil pollution, worsening environmental quality.
3. **Damage to Industrial and Energy Infrastructure:** Attacks on oil, nuclear, and industrial facilities release toxic pollutants and cause long-term environmental damage. In the **2026 US-Israel strikes on Iran**, oil depots and refineries were hit, releasing large clouds of toxic smoke and causing “**black rain.**” This led to **breathing problems, soil and water contamination, and air pollution spreading to neighbouring regions.**
4. **Severe Pollution from Scorched Earth Tactics:** Burning crops and destroying water systems harm food security and livelihoods. These actions create long-term environmental damage.
5. **Toxic Weapons and Hazardous Materials:** Weapons like depleted uranium and white phosphorus cause toxic and radioactive pollution. Chemical defoliants have caused long-term ecological damage.
6. **Environmental Legacy of Military Waste:** Landmines and munitions pollute soil and water. Military scrap releases harmful materials and creates health risks.
7. **Biodiversity Loss and Wildlife Crime:** Weak governance increases poaching and illegal hunting. Conservation efforts weaken, and protected areas lose protection.
8. **Deforestation and Conflict Driven Resource Exploitation:** Conflict increases dependence on wood and natural resources for survival, leading to overuse and deforestation. At the same time, armed groups control oil, minerals, and timber, and use practices like mercury-based mining, which pollute water bodies and deepen environmental degradation.
9. **Human Displacement and Environmental Pressure:** Refugee camps strain water, forests, and sanitation systems. Many camps are located in Key Biodiversity Areas.
10. **Urban Pressure and Waste Mismanagement:** Migration increases pressure on infrastructure, and system breakdown leads to dumping and burning, increasing pollution.
11. **Breakdown of Environmental Governance:** Laws and monitoring systems collapse during conflict. This allows uncontrolled pollution and weakens environmental protection.

- 12. Reduced International Cooperation:** Conflicts disrupt global environmental programmes and weaken coordination, as countries struggle to meet obligations under frameworks like the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Military emissions reporting remains poor under the UNFCCC, showing that conflict situations reduce transparency and limit effective global climate action.
- 13. Conflict as Reverse Development:** Environmental damage sets back development for years. Progress in climate and biodiversity protection is lost.

Environmental Impact During Occupations and Resource Inequality

- 1. Weak Environmental Protection and Governance:** Environmental obligations remain unclear during occupations. Development slows and environmental programmes weaken.
- 2. Damage to Infrastructure and Landscapes:** Military presence damages land through construction and movement. Walls and barriers disrupt ecosystems and wildlife.
- 3. Poor Waste Management at Military Bases:** Improper waste handling harms public health and ecosystems. Pollution increases in occupied areas.
- 4. Inequitable Resource Use and Over Extraction:** Occupying powers control water and minerals. This leads to resource depletion and environmental degradation.
- 5. Limited Environmental Rights for Local Population:** People face poor services and higher pollution. They lack equal access to environmental protection.
- 6. Politically Driven Development without Oversight:** Infrastructure projects are carried out with limited environmental checks. This increases long-term damage.

Post Conflict Phase Long Term Environmental Consequences

- 1. Weak Governance and Institutional Failure:** Environmental systems remain weak after conflicts. Limited focus is given due to social and economic priorities.
- 2. Debris and Waste Management Challenges:** Large volumes of rubble create pollution risks. Poor disposal methods increase environmental harm.
- 3. Continuation of Harmful Practices:** Survival practices from conflict continue after peace. These include unsustainable resource use and pollution.
- 4. Land Rights Issues and Environmental Pressure:** Return of displaced people increases pressure on land. This leads to deforestation and resource stress.
- 5. Sharp Rise in Deforestation:** Forest clearing increases rapidly in post conflict areas. It often exceeds state control capacity.

6. **Military Pollution and Base Impacts:** Continued military presence causes pollution. Practices like burn pits harm health and environment.
7. **Landmine Clearance and Soil Damage:** Removal of explosive remnants damages soil and land use. It also causes local pollution.
8. **Long Term Impact on Environmental Governance:** Damage to governance affects climate, biodiversity, and pollution control. Recovery remains slow.
9. **High Environmental Cost of Reconstruction:** Rebuilding cities requires large resources. This increases emissions and environmental stress.

Environmental Opportunities for Sustainable Recovery and Peacebuilding

1. **Scope for Cooperation through Shared Resources:** Shared natural resources can promote dialogue between conflicting parties. Common environmental threats encourage cooperation.
2. **Shift towards Renewable Energy:** Unstable energy supply can lead to adoption of solar power. This reduces dependence on fossil fuels.
3. **Green Reconstruction Opportunities:** Post conflict rebuilding allows for sustainable development models. It creates chances to build greener systems.
4. **Strengthening Environmental Legal Frameworks:** New laws and systems can improve resource management. There is growing focus on accountability.
5. **Rising Global Awareness and Accountability:** Public attention to environmental damage is increasing. This supports calls for stronger protection and data systems.

Conclusion

Conflicts cause long lasting environmental damage across all phases by increasing emissions, destroying ecosystems, and weakening governance systems. These impacts are global and transboundary in nature. They also reduce international cooperation and delay climate action. Ensuring accountability and strengthening environmental protection during conflicts are essential. Promoting sustainable recovery is equally important to prevent irreversible damage and ensure a stable and liveable future for all.

Question for practice:

Q. Discuss the environmental impact of wars across pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict phases, with suitable examples.

Source: [Businessline](#) And [Conflict and environment Observatory](#)

How will India's new Nationally Determined Contribution accelerate climate Action?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environment

Introduction

India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), approved on March 25, 2026, raises targets on clean energy, emissions intensity, and carbon sinks. It comes when emissions growth is slowing. While it signals stronger ambition under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, its ability to accelerate real climate action remains uncertain, as such pledges may reflect trends rather than drive change.

Nature and Evolution of NDCs in the Global Climate Framework

1. **Mandatory submission but voluntary targets:** Under the Paris Agreement, countries must submit NDCs, but targets remain voluntary and self-defined.
2. **Progressive increase in ambition:** India's 2022 targets included **50% non-fossil capacity, 45% emissions intensity reduction, and 2.5–3 billion tonnes carbon sink**, which are now raised.
3. **Closing global gaps in commitments:** India and Argentina were the only G20 countries without a 2035 NDC by 2025, and this update fills that gap.
4. **Limited enforcement reduces impact:** Voluntary nature means targets depend on domestic policies and cannot ensure compliance.
5. **Early achievement builds credibility:** India already achieved around **52% non-fossil installed capacity by early 2026**, ahead of its 2030 target, showing implementation strength.

India's Enhanced Targets

1. **Higher clean energy ambition:** The new target commits to **60% installed electric capacity from non-fossil sources by 2035**, requiring only a modest increase from current levels.
2. **Energy mix still coal-dependent:** Despite capacity gains, coal still contributes **about 69% of electricity generation**, showing slow transition in actual output.
3. **Stronger emissions intensity reduction:** India aims to cut emissions intensity by **47% from 2005 levels**, building on a **36% reduction already achieved by 2020**.
4. **Expanded carbon sink goal:** The carbon sink target has increased to **3.5–4 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent**, up from **2.5–3 billion tonnes** earlier.
5. **Qualitative climate commitments:** The NDC includes goals on **climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable lifestyles, and domestic and international climate finance mobilisation**.
6. **Alignment with long-term strategy:** The targets support India's **net-zero goal for 2070**, while balancing development and energy security needs.

India's Emissions Trend

1. **Sharp slowdown in emissions growth:** India's CO₂ emissions grew only **0.7% in 2025**, the slowest rate since 2001 (excluding 2020).

2. **Power sector driving change:** Emissions from the power sector fell **3.8%**, with coal-based generation declining for the first time outside pandemic years since 1973.
3. **Rapid clean energy expansion:** In 2025, India added **47 GW solar, 6.3 GW wind, 4 GW hydro, and 0.6 GW nuclear**, enough to meet up to **5% demand growth**.
4. **Sectoral imbalance persists:** In 2025, steel emissions rose **8%** and cement **10%**, contributing to the overall emissions increase despite a decline in the power sector.
5. **Possible turning point ahead:** Clean energy additions may match demand growth by 2026, indicating a structural shift in emissions trajectory.

Mixed Global Evidence

1. **Limited impact of NDCs globally:** The UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2025 shows countries remain off track despite three NDC cycles.
2. **Insufficient progress toward 1.5°C goal:** Current NDCs close **less than 14% of the emissions gap**, according to the World Resources Institute.
3. **Weak policy depth in NDCs:** Analysis of 101 submissions found **94% had energy goals**, but none aligned fully with the COP28 “UAE Consensus”.
4. **Major omissions in commitments:** No country set targets to phase down oil and gas, and **three-fourths ignored fossil fuel subsidy reforms**.
5. **Dependence on insufficient finance:** Many developing countries rely on international climate finance, which remains inadequate.
6. **NDCs reflect progress more than drive change:** They often record ongoing trends in clean energy rather than causing structural shifts away from fossil fuels.

Structural Drivers Beyond NDCs

1. **Rapid growth of renewables globally:** Solar and wind installations reached a record **814 GW in 2025**, and renewables overtook coal in electricity generation.
2. **Economic growth shapes emissions path:** India’s GDP is projected to grow at **6.1% annually till 2035**, allowing emissions to rise even with intensity reduction.
3. **Cost-driven renewable expansion:** Declining costs and industrial competition, especially from China, are accelerating clean energy adoption.
4. **Domestic policy and investment matter more:** Real progress depends on **implementation, infrastructure, and market trends**, not just formal pledges.
5. **Energy security concerns dominate decisions:** Geopolitical shocks and fuel shortages push India to diversify energy sources rather than rapidly phase out fossil fuels.

Key Challenges and Contradictions in India’s Climate Pathway

1. **Continued reliance on coal:** India plans **100 GW of new coal capacity** and expansion in coal-based steel production.
2. **Petrochemical and industrial expansion:** Investments of **\$1 trillion in petrochemicals by 2040** indicate continued fossil fuel dependence.
3. **Grid and infrastructure bottlenecks:** Over **37 GW of renewable capacity remains stranded** due to transmission and contract issues.
4. **Gap between capacity and generation:** Non-fossil sources form over **50% of installed capacity**, but only **22.4% of actual generation**, while coal still provides **69%**.
5. **Carbon sink measurement concerns:** Forest targets rely on methods criticised for **non-transparency and masking deforestation**, with **1.3 million hectares lost (2015–2024)**.
6. **Limited land for afforestation:** Less than **0.5% of land is available for restoration**, constraining future carbon sink expansion.

Conclusion

India's updated NDC signals stronger ambition but reflects a cautious balance between climate action, growth, and energy security. Clean energy expansion and slowing emissions show progress, yet structural contradictions persist. As NDCs often document rather than drive change, real acceleration will depend on policy execution, grid reforms, and reducing fossil dependence. Bridging gaps in finance, transparency, and implementation remains essential.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reflects both progress and limitations in climate action.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The continued pursuit of the perfect election

Source: The post "The continued pursuit of the perfect election" has been created, based on "The continued pursuit of the perfect election" published in "The Hindu" on 31st March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of **Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry** are being conducted after the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls**, which removed duplicate, shifted, and deceased voters. The revision exercise has triggered political debate regarding electoral neutrality and transparency, highlighting concerns about electoral integrity. The developments have renewed attention on the role of the **Election Commission of India** in ensuring free and fair elections.

Scale and Strength of India's Election Management

1. Elections across these five regions are being conducted through approximately **2.19 lakh polling stations**, serving nearly **17.4 crore voters**.
2. Around **25 lakh election officials**, including **8.5 lakh security personnel and 49,000 micro-observers**, have been deployed to ensure smooth conduct of elections.
3. Election officials travel to remote and difficult terrains to ensure voting access even to a handful of electors, demonstrating India's commitment to inclusive democracy.
4. Under **Section 28A of the Representation of the People Act**, all election officials function under the supervision and control of the Election Commission during elections to maintain neutrality.

Measures Taken by the Election Commission to Ensure Free and Fair Elections

1. Deployment of Observers and Security Forces

- a. The Election Commission has deployed more than **1,100 central observers** to monitor the electoral process across constituencies.
- b. Security personnel have been stationed at sensitive locations to prevent violence, intimidation, and malpractice during polling.
- c. The Election Commission has transferred several administrative and police officials to ensure neutrality and maintain public confidence in the electoral process.

2. Reduction in Multi-Phase Polling

- a. The Election Commission has attempted to reduce the number of polling phases to improve election efficiency and reduce security risks.
- b. For example, polling in **West Bengal** has been reduced from **eight phases in 2021 to two phases** in the current elections.
- c. This reflects improvements in election management capacity and coordination of security forces.

The "Four-M" Challenge to Election Integrity

The Election Commission has **identified four major threats** that continue to affect free and fair elections in India.

1. Money Power

- a. Electoral inducements in the form of cash, liquor, gifts, and welfare transfers continue to influence voter behaviour during elections.
- b. Authorities seized more than **₹10,000 crore worth of inducements during the 2024 General Elections**, indicating the magnitude of the problem.
- c. Competitive populism and unrealistic campaign promises also weaken fiscal discipline and electoral ethics.

2. Muscle Power

- a. Deployment of central security forces has reduced direct intimidation of voters in many areas.
- b. However, politically sensitive regions such as **West Bengal** continue to experience risks of election-related violence, especially post-poll violence.

3. Misinformation

- a. The spread of fake news, deepfakes, and misleading political advertisements continues to influence voter perception.
- b. The Election Commission has mandated pre-certification of political advertisements before publication near polling days.
- c. Social media platforms have adopted voluntary codes of ethics, but enforcement remains only partially effective.

4. Model Code of Conduct Violations

- a. Appeals based on caste, religion, ethnicity, and sectarian identity continue to occur during election campaigns.
- b. Political manifestos sometimes include fiscally unsustainable promises that **challenge ethical campaign practices**.

Role of Technology and Monitoring Mechanisms

1. The Election Commission has introduced **round-the-clock live webcasting of polling stations** to improve transparency and monitoring.
2. Surveillance teams and flying squads have been deployed to monitor the movement of cash, liquor, and other inducement materials.
3. Authorities are also monitoring digital financial transactions to prevent electoral bribery through online channels.
4. These measures strengthen transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

Voter-Centric Electoral Reforms

1. SVEEP Programme

- a. The **Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)** programme has significantly improved voter awareness and participation across the country.
- b. The programme has encouraged ethical voting behaviour and strengthened citizen engagement in democratic processes.

2. Inclusive Voting Measures

- a. The Election Commission has introduced home voting facilities for voters aged **above 85 years** and for **persons with disabilities** to ensure inclusive participation.
- b. The introduction of larger font sizes and colour photographs of candidates on electronic voting machines has improved voter accessibility.
- c. Facilities for depositing mobile phones at polling stations have enhanced the secrecy and integrity of the voting process.

3. Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls

- a. The Special Intensive Revision exercise has removed absentee, shifted, and deceased voters from electoral rolls to improve their accuracy.
- b. The revision process is expected to enhance voter participation by ensuring cleaner electoral rolls.
- c. However, the exercise has also generated political debate regarding transparency and neutrality in implementation.

Persistent Challenges in Ensuring Electoral Integrity

1. Electoral Freebies and Inducements

- a. Electoral inducements in cash or kind continue to influence voter choices despite regulatory measures.
- b. Attempts by the judiciary and the Election Commission to regulate campaign freebies have achieved limited success so far.

2. Election-Related Violence

- a. Some states continue to witness election-related violence before and after polling, affecting voter confidence and participation.
- b. Political polarization further increases the vulnerability of certain regions during elections.

3. Digital Misinformation

- a. The rapid spread of misinformation through social media platforms continues to challenge election regulators.
- b. Deepfake technology has further complicated efforts to ensure truthful campaign communication.

4. Identity-Based Campaigning: Campaign appeals based on caste, religion, ethnicity, and regional identity continue despite legal restrictions under electoral laws.

5. Concerns About Administrative Neutrality: Transfers of administrative officials during elections sometimes become politically contentious and affect perceptions of institutional independence.

Role and Responsibility of Voters

1. Voters play a crucial role in protecting the integrity of elections by rejecting inducements offered in cash or kind.
2. Citizens should resist misinformation and divisive political narratives while exercising their franchise responsibly.
3. Ethical voting behaviour strengthens democracy and reinforces the legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

Way Forward

1. Strengthening Institutional Independence of the Election Commission: The independence and functional autonomy of the Election Commission should be strengthened through transparent appointment mechanisms and institutional safeguards.

2. Regulating Electoral Freebies and Campaign Financing: Clear legal guidelines should be developed to regulate election-time freebies and improve transparency in political funding.

3. Combating Digital Misinformation: Stronger regulatory frameworks and technological tools should be adopted to counter fake news and deepfake content during elections.

4. Ensuring Strict Enforcement of Model Code of Conduct: Violations of the Model Code of Conduct should attract stronger penalties to discourage identity-based campaigning and unethical practices.

5. Enhancing Voter Awareness Programmes: Expansion of voter education initiatives such as SVEEP can promote informed and ethical voting behaviour across regions.

6. Strengthening Security and Surveillance Mechanisms: Improved coordination between election authorities and security agencies can further reduce election-related violence and inducements.

Conclusion: India's electoral system demonstrates strong administrative capacity and institutional resilience under the supervision of the Election Commission of India. However, persistent challenges such as money power, misinformation, electoral violence, and identity-based campaigning continue to affect electoral integrity. Strengthening institutional safeguards along with responsible participation by citizens is essential for ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in India.

Question: Free and fair elections are the foundation of India's democratic legitimacy." Discuss the major challenges faced by the Election Commission of India in ensuring electoral integrity in recent years.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Prioritising Healthcare for a Viksit Bharat 2047

Source: The post "Prioritising Healthcare for a Viksit Bharat 2047" has been created, based on "Prioritising Healthcare for a Viksit Bharat 2047" published in "PIB" on 31st March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: Healthcare plays a crucial role in achieving the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** by strengthening human capital and improving productivity. The **Union Budget 2026-27** has increased allocation to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by **10% to ₹1,06,530 crore**, reflecting the government's commitment to universal health coverage, preventive care, digital integration, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure.

Key Healthcare Announcements in Budget 2026-27

1. Increase in Health Sector Allocation

- a. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been allocated **₹1,06,530 crore**, which represents a **10% increase over the revised estimates of 2025-26**.
- b. The allocation reflects a **194% increase over the last 12 years**, demonstrating sustained government commitment toward improving healthcare delivery.
- c. The Department of Health Research has been allocated **₹4,821 crore**, which will support innovation and medical research activities in the country.

2. Strengthening Major Healthcare Schemes

a. Insurance and Healthcare Access

- i. The allocation for **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** has increased to **₹9,500 crore**, ensuring continued access to health insurance coverage for vulnerable households.
- ii. The scheme provides **health insurance coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family annually** to more than **12 crore economically weaker families**, thereby improving affordability of healthcare services.

- b. **Primary Healthcare Expansion:** The allocation for the **National Health Mission (NHM)** has increased to **₹39,390 crore**, strengthening primary healthcare services across rural and urban areas.
- c. **Medical Infrastructure Strengthening**
 - i. The allocation for **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)** has increased to **₹11,307 crore**, supporting expansion of tertiary healthcare infrastructure.
 - ii. The allocation for **PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** has increased significantly to **₹4,770 crore**, strengthening disease surveillance and public health infrastructure.
- d. **Disease Control Programmes**
 - i. The allocation for the **National AIDS and STD Control Programme** has increased by over **30%**, reflecting the government's focus on communicable disease control.
 - ii. The allocation for **Blood Transfusion Services** has increased by **37%**, improving **emergency healthcare response capacity**.

3. Digital Health Ecosystem

- a. The allocation for the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** has increased, supporting the creation of a nationwide digital health ecosystem.
- b. The mission promotes **digital health IDs, interoperability of medical records, telemedicine services, and electronic health data exchange**, thereby improving accessibility and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

4. Strengthening Medical Education and Workforce

- a. The Union Budget 2026–27 proposes training **one lakh allied health professionals** over the next five years.
- b. It also proposes training **1.5 lakh caregivers**, which will help address shortages in the healthcare workforce.
- c. Increased allocation for **Human Resources for Health and Medical Education** will strengthen the availability of trained medical professionals across the country.

5. Customs Duty Exemption on Cancer Drugs

- a. The government has announced **100% customs duty exemption on 17 new cancer drugs**, which will significantly reduce treatment costs for cancer patients.
- b. This initiative will improve access to affordable cancer treatment across the country.

6. Expansion of AYUSH and Traditional Medicine

- a. The Union Budget proposes establishing **three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda** to strengthen education and research in traditional medicine.
- b. The budget also proposes upgrading the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre at Jamnagar**, positioning India as a global leader in traditional healthcare systems.
- c. The integration of AYUSH systems into regional medical hubs will strengthen **medical value tourism and global outreach of traditional medicine**.

7. Focus on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

- a. The Economic Survey 2025–26 highlights that **non-communicable diseases account for 57% of total deaths in India during 2021–23**.
- b. The government is strengthening the **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases** to identify high-risk individuals and provide timely treatment.

8. Support to Medical Research Institutions

- a. The allocation for the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has increased significantly, supporting research in vaccines, diagnostics, and biomedical innovation.
- b. Increased funding for research institutions will strengthen India's preparedness for emerging public health challenges.

Importance for Viksit Bharat 2047

1. Increased health sector investment will support progress toward **universal health coverage**.
2. Strengthening digital health infrastructure will improve efficiency and accessibility of healthcare services.
3. Expansion of medical workforce capacity will address shortages of trained professionals.
4. Increased focus on non-communicable diseases will improve long-term health outcomes.
5. Promotion of AYUSH systems will enhance India's global health leadership and soft power.

Challenges in India's Healthcare Sector

1. Infrastructure Gaps: India continues to face shortages of hospitals, beds, diagnostic facilities, and medical equipment, particularly in rural areas. The availability of hospital beds per thousand population remains inadequate in several states.

2. Rural-Urban Healthcare Divide: A large proportion of India's population lives in rural areas where access to specialists and quality healthcare facilities remains limited. Urban hospitals are often overburdened due to increased patient inflow from surrounding regions.

3. Shortage of Medical Professionals: India continues to face shortages of doctors, nurses, and specialists relative to population requirements. This shortage leads to long waiting times and delays in treatment for patients.

4. Skill Deficit in Healthcare Workforce: Many healthcare professionals lack training in advanced diagnostic tools and modern treatment technologies. Limited skill development opportunities affect quality of service delivery in public healthcare institutions.

5. Low Public Health Expenditure: Public expenditure on healthcare remains lower compared to global standards. High out-of-pocket expenditure continues to impose financial burdens on households.

6. Inter-State Healthcare Disparities: Significant disparities exist among states in terms of infrastructure availability and per-capita healthcare expenditure. These disparities affect equitable healthcare access across regions.

7. Accessibility and Affordability Constraints: The number of community health centres remains insufficient relative to population requirements. Several states lack adequate drug testing laboratories and diagnostic facilities. Health insurance coverage remains limited in many parts of the country.

Way Forward

- 1. Increasing Public Health Expenditure:** The government should increase public health expenditure to achieve the target of **2.5% of GDP on healthcare spending**.
- 2. Strengthening Rural Healthcare Infrastructure:** Expansion of primary health centres and community health centres should be prioritised to improve rural healthcare accessibility.
- 3. Expanding Healthcare Workforce Capacity:** Increasing medical education seats and strengthening training programmes for healthcare professionals will improve service delivery.
- 4. Promoting Digital Health Technologies:** Wider adoption of telemedicine, artificial intelligence-based diagnostics, and electronic health records will improve efficiency of healthcare services.
- 5. Strengthening Preventive Healthcare Strategy:** Greater emphasis should be placed on early screening, lifestyle disease prevention, and nutrition interventions.
- 6. Expanding Insurance Coverage:** Expanding coverage under public health insurance schemes such as PM-JAY will reduce out-of-pocket expenditure.
- 7. Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships can support infrastructure development, diagnostics expansion, and pharmaceutical innovation.

Conclusion: The Union Budget 2026–27 strengthens healthcare as a central pillar of **Viksit Bharat 2047** by expanding infrastructure, workforce capacity, digital health systems, disease prevention strategies, and traditional medicine integration. Addressing persistent gaps in accessibility, affordability, and regional disparities will be essential for achieving equitable and resilient healthcare outcomes across the country.

Question: The Union Budget 2026–27 reflects India’s commitment towards strengthening healthcare as a pillar of Viksit Bharat 2047.” Discuss key initiatives, challenges, and the way forward.

Source: [PIB](#)

Ensuring federalism within delimitation

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Introduction

Delimitation is one of the most politically significant constitutional exercises. With the 2026 Census approaching, India will soon need to redraw parliamentary constituencies and reallocate seats among states. The key challenge is to ensure fair representation without disadvantaging states that have successfully controlled their population growth.

Constitutional and Legal Framework: Governing Delimitation in India

- **Article 81** requires that the seat-to-population ratio be “as far as practicable, the same for all States” - a reasonable standard in 1951 and 1971, when State populations had not yet diverged significantly.
- **The 84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002** extended the freeze on Lok Sabha and State Legislature seats until after the 2026 Census, explicitly linking it to the progress of family planning in States-indicating that demographic performance was always intended to matter.
- **Timeline:** The Census 2026 results are expected by October 2028, after which the Delimitation Commission (DC) will be constituted, with the 2029 Lok Sabha elections to follow.

The Demographic divergence problem

- **Early achievers:** National Family Health Surveys-5 (2019-21) data shows that nine states - Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Goa, and Telangana - had already reached the replacement-level **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1 or below before 2005**, often through sustained public health investment.
- **Lagging states:** Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Manipur continue to exceed the national TFR mean - with states above the average running 45% higher than early achievers.
- **The inequity trap:** A purely population-based delimitation would hand more seats to states that grew faster, effectively penalising good governance - and in doing so, contradict the very spirit behind the 84th Amendment

The Demographic Performance (DemPer) Principle - A Proposed Solution

- **Finance Commission precedent:** The FC already blends demographic performance with population size (50% weight) while deciding devolution - offering a well-worn constitutional path for introducing non-population criteria into allocation exercises.
- **Protection of existing seats:** The existing 543 Lok Sabha seats stay untouched; DemPer would apply only to additional seats beyond 543, keeping the population principle firmly in the driver's seat.
- **Two-part DemPer index:** Early achievement of $TFR \leq 2.1$ before 2005 carries 10% weight; the rate of TFR decline between 2005 and 2021 carries 90% — rewarding sustained effort rather than historical head-starts.
- **Net outcome:** All states gain seats; more populous states still gain more in absolute terms; but demographic achievers no longer lose their proportional ground - striking a workable balance between federal fairness and electoral arithmetic

Key Challenges in the Delimitation Exercise

- **North-South political tension:** A numbers-only approach risks shrinking the parliamentary footprint of southern states, stoking regional grievances and straining the cooperative federalism that India's governance depends on.
- **Optimal Lok Sabha size:** India's population has nearly tripled since 1971 (541 million to 1.4 billion). Expanding seats proportionally risks turning Parliament into an unwieldy body where serious debate becomes impossible; a cap of around 700 seats seems prudent.
- **Misframing as a binary conflict:** Casting this as a north-south contest misses the bigger picture - Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Goa also met stabilisation goals early, making federal equity a genuinely pan-India concern.

- **Implementation complexity:** Building a defensible DemPer index demands consistent data across NFHS rounds and political consensus on weightage — no small ask for a body as consequential as the Delimitation Commission

Way Forward

- **Dual-criterion delimitation:** The DC must formally combine population size with a Demographic Performance index - structured so that population remains dominant, but responsible governance is genuinely rewarded.
- **Cap Lok Sabha at 700 seats:** Parliament should set a legislative ceiling to prevent runaway expansion from hollowing out the quality of debate and making the House ungovernable.
- **Periodic constitutional review:** The 2001–2026 freeze shows the danger of kicking the can too far down the road. Institutionalising incremental seat additions after each Census would prevent imbalances from silently building up.
- **Transparent DemPer methodology:** The DC should open its demographic criteria to public consultation before finalising allocations — giving the process cross-party and cross-regional legitimacy it will badly need.
- **Learn from the Finance Commission:** The FC's tried-and-tested formula -weaving together population, area, income distance, and demographic performance - offers a practical institutional blueprint the DC can adapt without major constitutional friction

Conclusion

Delimitation is not just a technical exercise but a test of India's federal balance. Integrating demographic performance with population can ensure fair representation while preserving federal harmony.

Question for Practice- Delimitation in India raises a critical tension between democratic equality and federal fairness." Discuss in the context of the upcoming post-2026 delimitation exercise.

Source- [TH](#)