ForumIAS

Mains Marathon

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HISTORY
ECONOMICS
POLITY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

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Examine critically the recent changes proposed in the rule governing foreign funding of NGOs under the FCRA Amendment Bill 2026.

Introduction

Around 16,000 organisations are currently registered under FCRA receiving approximately ₹22,000 crore annually. Building on the restrictive 2020 amendments, this bill focuses on bridging legal gaps regarding the management of assets and personal accountability of NGO leadership.

Key Proposed Changes in the 2026 Bill

The 2026 Bill introduces several drastic mechanisms aimed at ensuring that foreign funds are utilized strictly for their declared purposes.

1. **Creation of a Designated Authority:** The government can now appoint an official with the powers of a civil court to seize, manage, or dispose of assets created using foreign funds if an NGO's registration is cancelled, suspended, or voluntarily surrendered. **For Example-** Designated Authority supervision

2. **Automatic Cessation:** Registration now automatically ceases upon expiry if a renewal is not granted in time, barring the NGO from even utilizing existing funds during the interim. **For Example-** Non-renewal clause.

3. **Permanent Vesting of Assets:** If an NGO fails to restore its registration within a specified period, its assets (including those partially funded by foreign contributions) will permanently vest in the "Designated Authority." Proceeds from any sales go to the Consolidated Fund of India. **For Example-** Public-purpose asset transfer.

4. **Expansion of Restrictions on Foreign Funding:** The Bill expands the category of persons prohibited from receiving foreign contributions to include any person involved in news production or current affairs broadcasting. **For Example-** Media funding restriction.

5. **Expanded Definition of Key Functionary:** The net has been widened to include directors, partners, trustees, and even any person with management control. These individuals can now be held personally liable for the organization's FCRA violations.

6. **Penalty and Investigation Changes:** The Bill reduces imprisonment for violations from five years to one year, while requiring prior government approval for initiating investigations. **For Example-** Reduced imprisonment clause.

7. **Political and Federal Concerns:** Political leaders in Kerala have argued that the Bill could disproportionately impact Christian minority institutions, which often run schools and hospitals funded by foreign donations. **For Example-** Church-run educational institutions.

The Impact on Civil Society

The proposed changes have sparked a heated debate between the need for National Security and the Right to Association.

1. **The Asset Trap and Operational Uncertainty:** The threat of government seizure creates an environment of regulatory fear, potentially deterring international donors who worry their contributions may eventually be liquidated by the state.

2. **Centralization and Executive Overreach:** Excessive delegation, by leaving the manner of disposal and appellate structures to be defined later by rules rather than the statute itself. This raises serious concerns under Article 300A (Right to Property) and Article 14 (Equality before Law).

3. **Personal Liability as an Intimidation Tool:** This guilty until proven innocent approach (where the functionary must prove they had no knowledge of the violation) could lead to a leadership vacuum in the development sector, as individuals may be unwilling to take on the personal legal risk associated with NGO management.

4. **The Selective Enforcement Red Flag:** The requirement for Prior Approval for investigations is a double-edged sword. While it might protect some NGOs from local police harassment, it effectively centralizes the on/off switch for investigations in the Ministry of Home Affairs. This creates a risk that compliant NGOs are shielded while critical voices are targeted.

The Government's Justification

The Ministry of Home Affairs argues the Bill is dangerous only for those misusing funds.

1. **Transparency:** It aims to prevent the shadow management of assets after an NGO's license is revoked.
2. **National Interest:** It seeks to curb the use of foreign funds for activities deemed detrimental to national interest, such as forced religious conversions or personal enrichment of functionaries.
3. **Rationalized Penalties:** Interestingly, the Bill proposes reducing the maximum imprisonment from 5 to 1 year for certain offenses, focusing more on financial and asset-based penalties.

Conclusion

Strong nations rely on vibrant civil society; regulating foreign funding must ensure transparency while safeguarding democratic freedoms and developmental partnerships.

Analyze the effectiveness of the 'Security-Development' nexus in ending the Maoist insurgency. Evaluate how logistical dominance and infrastructure-led governance dismantled the Red Corridor.

Introduction

The Maoist insurgency, originating from the 1967 Naxalbari uprising, once affected over 180 districts. By 2026, security operations combined with development initiatives reduced this to 11 districts, demonstrating the impact of the security-development nexus.

The Security-Development Nexus: A Two-Pronged Strategy

1. **Security Component:** Decapitation of maoist leadership and targeted counter-insurgency**,** dismantle the Maoist leadership hierarchy through intelligence-driven operations. Targeted elimination of top leadership

(General Secretary Nambala Keshav Rao and 12 Central Committee members in 2025), record surrenders (1,573 in Chhattisgarh in 2025), and operations. **For Example-** Operation Black Forest (2025) and Kagaar.

2. **Development Component:** Focused on last-mile delivery of welfare schemes in former no-go areas, breaking the insurgency's support base.

Logistical Dominance and Infrastructure-Led Governance

1. **Integrated Security Architecture:** The deployment of specialised, units and state police improved operational effectiveness in dense forest regions. **For Example-** CoBRA battalions and District Reserve Guard deployment.

2. **Tactical Superiority:** The saturation of the "grey zones" with forward operating bases (COB - Company Operating Bases) in core areas like Abujhmad allowed security forces (CRPF, COBRA, and Greyhounds) to dominate the terrain 24/7.

3. **Technology Integration:** Use of drones, satellite surveillance, and modern communication systems enhanced situational awareness and reduced insurgent mobility.

4. **Digital Reach:** Installation of 9,000 mobile towers enabled real-time intelligence and governance.

5. **Connectivity Expansion:** The government constructed 17,500 km of roads **acted as arteries of governance,** in Maoist-affected areas since 2014. **For Example-** Road connectivity programme.

6. **Economic Inclusion and Service Delivery:** Establishment of 1,804 bank branches, 6,025 post offices, 1,321 ATMs, and 179 Eklavya Model Schools severed Maoist recruitment pipelines and reducing dependence on insurgent parallel governance structures.

7. **Welfare Integration:** Government schemes like PM Awas Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and Aspirational District Programme reached tribal populations in remote regions. **For Example-** PM Awas housing scheme.

This logistical dominance converted liberated zones into integrated governance spaces, reducing Maoist-affected districts from 86 (2004) to just 11 (2026).

Rehabilitation and Surrender Policies with Social and Democratic Consolidation

1. **Reintegration Strategy:** The government offered financial assistance and livelihood opportunities for surrendered cadres. **For Example-** ₹5-lakh surrender rehabilitation package

2. Outcome: In 2025 alone, 1,573 Maoists surrendered in Chhattisgarh, reflecting declining morale and organisational collapse.

3. **Political Participation:** Improved security increased electoral participation in conflict zones. **For Example-** Bastar voter turnout rise

4. **Community Outreach:** Initiatives like Bastar Olympics-2025, involving thousands of tribal youth including former Maoists, helped reintegrate communities into democratic processes.

Critical Evaluation: Challenges and Sustainability

While the insurgency has ended on paper by the March 2026 deadline, critical challenges remain:

1. **The Sleeper Risk:** Residual splinter groups may attempt to transition into urban Maoism or criminal syndicates. Continuous surveillance is necessary to prevent a resurgence.
2. **Tribal Rights and PESA:** The long-term stability of the region depends on the robust implementation of the PESA Act and the Forest Rights Act (FRA) to ensure that the development doesn't lead to further tribal displacement.
3. **Institutional Gap:** The vacuum left by the Maoists must be immediately filled by a permanent, local civil administration (schools, clinics, courts) to prevent the locals from feeling abandoned by the state once the paramilitary forces withdraw.

Conclusion

The dismantling of the Red Corridor is a victory for the Indian Model of Counter-Insurgency, which proves that the state can win against domestic rebels by out-governing them, not just out-gunning them.

Evaluate the evolving judicial discourse on live-in relationships in India. Critically examine the conflict between traditional morality and individual autonomy within the constitutional framework.

Introduction

Recent divergent rulings by the Allahabad High Court one prioritizing the sanctity of marriage and the other emphasizing individual autonomy, highlight a significant grey area in Indian personal law. As of 2026, the judiciary is increasingly tasked with reconciling social morality with the constitutional Right to Choice under Article 21.

Evolution From Concubinage to Relationship in the Nature of Marriage

1. **Judicial Legitimisation:** Live-in relationships gained legal recognition through Badri Prasad (1978), which presumed long cohabitation as marriage.

2. **Protection against Exploitation (The 2005 Pivot):** The landmark Indra Sarma v. V.K.V. Sarma (2013) brought such relationships under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, as relationship in the nature of marriage.

3. **Consenting Adults Are Not Illegal:** S. Khushboo (2010) and Joseph Shine (2018) decriminalised adultery, expanding personal liberty. In the same case Supreme Court have held that long-term cohabitation can lead to a presumption of marriage, ensuring the legitimacy of children and inheritance rights.

4. **Right to Choice (Modern Phase):** In S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal (2010), the Supreme Court explicitly stated that living together is not an offence. By 2026, the Puttaswamy (Privacy) judgment has further solidified the idea that whom one lives with is a core part of the Right to Privacy.

5. However, recent Allahabad High Court rulings (March 2026) reveal inconsistency one bench denied protection to married persons in live-in ties, while a division bench upheld consensual adult relationships.

The Conflict of Traditional Morality vs. Individual Autonomy

The core of the current judicial grey area lies in the clash between two competing philosophies:

1. The Paternalistic View (Traditional Morality): A single-bench order from the Allahabad High Court in early 2026, have refused to grant protection to live-in couples where one partner is already married. Such relationships are seen as a social menace that weakens the sacred bond of marriage. The court argued that the law cannot be used to sanctify what society deems immoral or what constitutes lustful behavior outside a valid marriage.

2. The Libertarian View (Constitutional Morality): A division bench of the same court and several Supreme Court observations emphasize Constitutional Morality over Social Morality. After the decriminalization of adultery (Joseph Shine v. Union of India), the state has no business policing the private consensual acts of adults. Morality and Law are distinct, if two adults choose to live together, the state's role is limited to ensuring no crime is committed, not enforcing Victorian-era moral standards.

Critical Examination within the Constitutional Framework

The conflict is tested against three primary constitutional pillars:

1. **Article 21 (Right to Life and Liberty):** The Right to Choose a Partner is now recognized as a fundamental right. Any state or judicial interference that forces an individual to abandon a partner based on morality is a violation of this liberty.
2. **The Test of Proportionality:** In 2026, the mandatory registration of live-in relationships (as seen in the Uttarakhand UCC) is being challenged. Critics argue that while the objective (protecting women) is legitimate, the means (mandatory disclosure to the state) is disproportionate and infringes on privacy.
3. **Protection vs. Promotion:** The judiciary remains wary of promoting live-in relationships as an equivalent to marriage. While it grants functional rights (maintenance, legitimacy of children, inheritance), it maintains a status distinction, marriage remains a sacramental/legal status, whereas a live-in relationship remains a contractual/voluntary arrangement.

Conclusion

As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar emphasised, constitutional morality must guide governance; reconciling personal autonomy with social stability will shape India's evolving legal approach to intimate relationships.

Compare the contributions of Ashoka and Samprati in patronizing Buddhism and Jainism. Evaluate the role of Mauryan kings in fostering India's pluralistic religious identity.

Introduction

The Mauryan Empire was a period of profound ideological expansion. While Ashoka is celebrated for his Dhamma-led global spread of Buddhism, his grandson, Samrat Samprati, often referred to as the Jain Ashoka, played a parallel role in institutionalizing Jainism across the subcontinent and beyond. He issued 33 major rock and pillar edicts promoting Dhamma (Buddhist ethical principles like non-violence, tolerance, and welfare).

Ashoka's Patronage of Buddhism

Ashoka transformed Buddhism from a regional sect into a pan-Indian and international faith after his conversion following the Kalinga War.

1. **Dhamma Missions:** Sending Dhamma Mahamattas and his children (Mahinda and Sanghamitta) to Sri Lanka, South East Asia, and Hellenistic kingdoms.
2. **Inscriptional Authority:** Using Rock Edicts to encode ethical governance, making Buddhism synonymous with state policy.
3. **Architectural Legacy:** Building 84,000 stupas and the Sanchi complex, providing a physical anchor for the faith.

Samprati's Patronage of Jainism

According to Jain texts like the Parishishtaparvan, Samprati was converted by Suhastin Suri and mirrored his grandfather's zeal:

1. **Temple Building:** He is credited with building thousands of Jain temples (Basadis) in regions like Rajasthan, Gujarat (Girnar), and even reaching as far as Afghanistan and Iran.
2. **Missionary Zeal:** He sent Jain monks to non-Aryan lands (like Andhra and Coorg) to spread the tenets of Ahimsa and Anekantavada, ensuring Jainism took root in Southern India.
3. **Social Patronage:** Similar to Ashoka's distribution of alms, Samprati established centers for distributing food and clothes, aligning Jain ethics with Mauryan welfare. Providing royal patronage to Jain acharyas and monks, enabling systematic spread of the faith. Supporting the Digambara and Svetambara traditions during a period of consolidation.

Comparative Analysis

1. **Similarities**: Both used royal authority, infrastructure, and missionary activity for propagation. Both emphasized ethical values (Dhamma for Ashoka, ahimsa for Samprati) and built monumental religious structures.
2. **Differences**: Ashoka's efforts are richly documented through inscriptions and archaeological evidence, giving Buddhism wider geographical reach. Samprati's contributions are primarily recorded in later Jain literature, with stronger regional focus in the north and west. Ashoka's patronage was more public and state-centric; Samprati's was deeply institutional within the Jain sangha.
3. **Scale and Impact**: Ashoka internationalised Buddhism; Samprati strengthened Jainism's foothold in the Gangetic heartland during a phase of political consolidation.

Role of Mauryan Kings in Fostering Pluralistic Religious Identity

The succession from Chandragupta (Jainism) to Ashoka (Buddhism) and Samprati (Jainism) illustrates a unique Mauryan model of Religious Pluralism:

1. **State Neutrality vs. Personal Faith:** While kings patronized specific faiths, the Mauryan state maintained a broad "Dhamma" that transcended sectarian boundaries.
2. **Synthesis of Ethics:** The focus on non-violence (Ahimsa), truth, and social responsibility across both reigns created a foundational Indian Ethos that persists today.
3. **Institutionalization:** Both rulers moved beyond mere belief to building Museums, Viharas, and Libraries, ensuring the survival of Shramanic traditions through centuries of political upheaval.

Way Forward

1. Recognise Mauryan pluralism as a historical model for modern secular policy.
2. Integrate lessons of religious tolerance in school curricula and public discourse.
3. Promote archaeological preservation of Mauryan-era sites to highlight India's plural heritage.
4. Encourage inter-faith dialogues inspired by Ashoka's Dhamma and Samprati's Jain patronage.

Conclusion

As President Droupadi Murmu observed in her 2026 Republic Day address on India's civilisational ethos and per Romila Thapar's Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, Mauryan kings institutionalised pluralism, making religious tolerance a cornerstone of Indian identity.

Artemis program has been much in the news. What are its unique features which make it superior to its predecessor Space Telescopes? What are the key goals of this mission? What potential benefits does it hold for the human race?

Introduction

Renewed global interest in lunar exploration is reflected in the Artemis Program, which aims to return humans to the Moon for the first time since 1972 (Apollo Program) and develop sustainable deep-space exploration capabilities.

Unique Features of the Artemis Program Compared to Earlier Space Missions

1. **Heavy-lift capability:** The mission uses the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, one of the most powerful launch vehicles ever built, capable of carrying astronauts and large cargo beyond Earth orbit. **Example:** SLS rocket system

2. **Next-generation spacecraft:** The Orion spacecraft is designed for longer missions and improved crew safety compared with earlier systems. **Example:** Orion capsule design.

3. **Digital flight systems:** Unlike the Apollo spacecraft, Orion uses modern computing systems with redundant flight computers and advanced navigation software. These systems allow real-time trajectory corrections and automated spacecraft operations, reducing astronaut workload and increasing mission reliability. **Example:** autonomous navigation.

4. **Lunar Gateway Orbital Station:** A permanent crewed outpost in lunar orbit (unlike Apollo, which had no orbital base). It serves as a staging point for landings and long-duration science.

5. **Advanced Technology**: Orion spacecraft (deeper-space capable than Apollo's Command Module), SLS rocket (most powerful ever built), and advanced life-support systems for longer missions.

6. **Sustainable Presence**: Artemis aims for weeks-to-months surface stays and reusable landers, not Apollo's maximum 75-hour stays.

7. **Focus on Lunar South Pole**: Targets water ice in permanently shadowed craters for oxygen, fuel (hydrogen), and life support — resources Apollo never utilized.

8. **International and Commercial Partnership Model**: Artemis Accords (61 nations as of early 2026) and major roles for private companies (SpaceX Starship HLS lander) create a collaborative ecosystem Apollo lacked.

9. **Inclusivity**: Artemis III (targeted ~2027) will land the first woman and the first person of color, unlike Apollo's all-male crews.

Key Goals of the Artemis Program

1. **Short-term (Artemis II–III)**: Safely return humans to the Moon, demonstrate Orion and SLS performance, and achieve the first crewed landing near the south pole.
2. **Medium-term (Artemis IV onward)**: Establish a sustainable lunar presence with the Gateway station and recurring landings.
3. **Long-term**: Use the Moon as a proving ground for technologies needed for human missions to Mars, including in-situ resource utilization (ISRU) and long-duration habitation.

Potential Benefits for the Human Race

1. **Scientific Advancement**: Detailed study of lunar geology, water ice, and solar system origins; unprecedented astronomy from the far side of the Moon (shielded from Earth's radio noise).
2. **Resource Utilization & Space Economy**: Water ice can be converted into rocket fuel and oxygen, drastically reducing the cost of deep-space travel and enabling a cislunar economy.
3. **Technological Spin-offs**: Advances in life support, robotics, radiation shielding, and energy systems will benefit Earth applications (medicine, clean energy, disaster response).
4. **Inspiration and Diversity**: Broadens participation in space (first woman, first person of color, international crews), inspiring global STEM education and the next generation.
5. **Geopolitical Stability**: Artemis Accords establish peaceful norms for space resource use and exploration, reducing the risk of future space race conflicts.

Conclusion

The Artemis Program represents a transformative shift from short-term lunar visits to sustained exploration, potentially enabling scientific breakthroughs, economic opportunities, and humanity's eventual expansion deeper into the solar system.

Discuss the rationale of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme. What are its achievements? In what way can the functioning and outcomes of the scheme be improved?

Introduction

With manufacturing contributing about 17% to GDP, the Government launched the Production Linked Incentive scheme with ₹1.97 lakh crore outlay to boost domestic manufacturing, as highlighted in Economic Survey 2025–26 and policy discussions of NITI Aayog.

Rationale of the PLI Scheme

1. **Cost Disability Offset:** Indian manufacturers often face higher costs due to logistics, power, and high cost of capital. PLI provides a **4% to 6% incentive** on incremental sales to level the playing field against global competitors. **Example:** Make in India initiative.

2. **Scale and Global Champions:** By linking incentives to production (output) rather than just investment (input), it encourages firms to achieve economies of scale and become global export hubs. **Example:** smartphone exports growth.

3. **Import Substitution & Self-Reliance:** It targets sectors with high import dependency, such as Bulk Drugs (APIs) and Semiconductors, to ensure national security and supply chain resilience. **Example:** bulk drug imports.

4. **Investment catalyst:** The scheme attracts both domestic and foreign investors by linking incentives to performance. **Example:** FDI inflows in electronics. This also promotes **technology transfer and advanced manufacturing capabilities**.

5. **Labour-intensive growth:** Manufacturing expansion generates large-scale employment. **Example:** Foxconn Chennai plant. PLI-led industrial clusters are emerging in states such as Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh.

Achievements of the PLI Scheme

According to the **Economic Survey 2025-26** and recent Ministry of Commerce data, the scheme has hit several key milestones:

Metric	Achievement Status (as of Q1 2026)
Realized Investment	Over ₹2.16 lakh crore (exceeding initial targets).
Incremental Production/Sales	Surpassed ₹20.41 lakh crore.
Employment Generation	Created approximately 14.39 lakh jobs (Direct & Indirect).
Export Growth	Exports exceeded ₹8.2 lakh crore, driven by Electronics and Pharma.
Flagship Success	India is now the 2nd largest mobile phone manufacturer globally.
Pharmaceuticals	India shifted from a net importer to a net exporter of bulk drugs in FY 2024-25, with an 83% domestic value addition.
Electronics	Mobile phone production surged tenfold over the last decade, reaching ₹5.5 lakh crore in FY25.

Areas for Improvement

Despite its successes, the scheme faces implementation hurdles that require recalibration:

1. **Enhancing Domestic Value Addition:** While assembly (e.g., smartphones) has scaled, the core components (semiconductors, displays) are still largely imported. The proposed PLI 2.0 should offer higher incentive slabs for component manufacturing rather than just final assembly.

2. **Supporting MSMEs:** The high investment thresholds of the original scheme often excluded Small and Medium Enterprises. Creating Mini-PLI sub-schemes with lower entry barriers or Cluster-based incentives to integrate MSMEs into the global value chain.

3. **Administrative and Disbursement Ease:** Bureaucratic delays in verifying incremental sales have led to slow incentive payouts in some sectors. Moving to a Digital Claims Settlement system with "Deemed Approval" for verified green-channel companies to improve cash flow.

4. **Shift to Result-Based Skill Development:** The tech-heavy nature of PLI sectors (Advanced Chemistry Cells, Solar PV) requires specialized labor. Aligning PLI incentives with mandatory In-house Training & Skill Certification to ensure the workforce evolves with Industry 4.0.

Conclusion

As emphasised by former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in India 2020, technological strength and manufacturing capability are essential for national prosperity; the PLI scheme represents a decisive step toward that vision.

Analyze the impact of 'Oil Shocks' and 'El Nino' on India's inflation targeting. Evaluate the challenges they pose to RBI's monetary policy.

Introduction

In 2026, India's inflation trajectory remains highly sensitive to Supply-side Shocks. The convergence of geopolitical volatility (Oil) and climate variability (El Nino) creates a Twin-Headwind/Double Whammy scenario, testing the resilience of the Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) framework.

Oil Shocks and Imported Inflation Transmission

1. **Energy Price Channel:** India imports 85% of crude, making domestic inflation highly sensitive to global energy volatility. A spike in crude prices quickly raises petrol, diesel and LPG prices, creating cost-push inflation across the economy. **Example:** a $10/barrel rise adds $13-14 billion to the import bill.

2. **Production Cost Escalation:** Oil is a universal intermediate input affecting transport, fertilizers, and manufacturing. Brent crude near $110–140/barrel raises transport, fertiliser, and power costs, transmitting into WPI and CPI. **Example:** transport inflation, fertilizer costs.

3. **External Sector Pressure:** Widens Current Account Deficit (potentially to 2% of GDP) and pressures the rupee. Studies by NITI Aayog energy outlook suggest oil price spikes significantly weaken macroeconomic stability. **Example:** import bill rise, CAD widening.

Impact of El Nino

1. **Monsoon Deficiency:** El Nino typically weaken the Indian summer monsoon, affecting Kharif crops such as rice, pulses, and oilseeds. Reduced agricultural output leads to supply shortages and rising food prices. **Example:** disrupts monsoon rainfall, directly hitting agriculture (46% weight in CPI).

2. **Food CPI Weightage:** Food items contribute nearly 46% weight in India's CPI basket. Extreme El Nino could push inflation to 6.0–9.8% even at moderate oil prices (HSBC Forecast). **Example:** vegetable inflation, pulse shortages

3. **Rural Income Impact:** Poor harvests reduce rural incomes and agricultural productivity, weakening rural consumption while prices remain elevated, creating stagflationary pressure. **Example:** farm income fall, rural demand slowdown.

Combined Shock the Double Inflation Trap

1. **Cost-Push + Food Inflation:** Simultaneous oil shocks and El Nino create a double inflationary shock, higher energy costs raise production expenses while food shortages push retail inflation. **Example:** oil-food spiral, supply disruptions

2. **Supply-Side Inflation:** Unlike demand-driven inflation, these shocks originate from external and climatic factors, making them harder to control through traditional monetary tools. **Example:** supply shocks, global volatility

Challenges to RBI's Monetary Policy

The twin shocks severely test the Flexible Inflation Targeting framework:

1. **Supply vs Demand Mismatch**: Rate hikes cannot resolve supply disruptions but raise borrowing costs, risking slower growth and higher EMIs.
2. **Credibility Risk**: Persistent supply-driven inflation above 6% erodes anchoring of expectations.
3. **Policy Trade-off**: Tightening may hurt investment; accommodation risks de-anchoring.
4. **Fiscal-Monetary Coordination Gap**: High fuel subsidies strain fiscal space, limiting RBI manoeuvrability.
5. **Exchange Rate Depreciation:** Higher oil import demand increases dollar outflows, weakening the Indian rupee, which further raises import costs and inflation. **Example:** rupee depreciation, forex intervention.
6. **Fiscal Stress:** The government may increase fuel subsidies or fertilizer support, putting pressure on fiscal deficit targets outlined in the Union Budget 2026–27.

Way Forward

1. Build larger Strategic Petroleum Reserves and diversify import sources aggressively.

2. Accelerate National Green Hydrogen Mission and solar storage to reduce oil dependence.

3. Promote climate-resilient agriculture through micro-irrigation and crop diversification.

4. Use targeted fiscal interventions like buffer stock releases and excise duty cuts.

5. Establish a formal Supply Shock Response Committee for better coordination.

Conclusion

Managing inflation in India is no longer just a mathematical exercise for the RBI; it is a battle against external and climatic variables. For India to reach its 4% ± 2% target in 2026, the strategy must evolve from purely monetary interventions to building a Climate-Resilient and "Energy-Secure" economy.

Analyze the Jan Vishwas Act's impact on decriminalizing minor offenses. Evaluate its role in reconciling state oversight with constitutional morality and individual liberty.

Introduction

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 decriminalizes over 180 offences across 40+ laws, reflecting a reformist governance approach highlighted in the Economic Survey 2025–26 to promote ease of living, business trust, and constitutional liberty.

Conceptual Foundation:

1. **Citizen–State Trust Framework:** The Jan Vishwas initiative reflects a shift from a control-based regulatory system to a trust-based governance model, aligning with the principle that the state should not criminalize minor procedural lapses. **Example:** minor compliance defaults, procedural violations.

2. **Replacing Danda with Data:** Policy emphasis has moved toward technology-based compliance monitoring instead of coercive criminal sanctions. **Example:** digital compliance systems, data governance tools.

3. **Constitutional Morality Perspective:** Excessive criminalisation contradicts individual liberty under Article 21, where imprisonment should be reserved for serious offences affecting public order or safety. **Example:** procedural liberty, proportional punishment.

Structural Reform in Regulatory Laws

1. **Largest Global Compliance Reform:** The Jan Vishwas initiative reviewed **950+ laws** and removed or converted over 12,500 compliance-related criminal provisions into civil penalties. **Example:** administrative penalties, monetary fines.

2. **Correction of Regulatory Overreach:** Several outdated provisions criminalised routine administrative defaults such as failing to maintain registers or procedural compliance errors. **Example: factory compliance**, **labour reporting**

3. Examples of Decriminalised Offences: Include decriminalising gamcha production on power looms and minor canteen violations under labour laws. This reduces the 5-crore case backlog, particularly cheque bounce cases (43 lakh), freeing judicial resources.

Economic and Governance Impact

1. **Ease of Doing Business:** By replacing criminal liability with financial penalties, the Act improves regulatory certainty for enterprises and startups. **Example: corporate compliance**, **business filings.**

2. **Reduction of Informality:** Excessive criminal provisions historically encouraged businesses to operate informally. Decriminalisation promotes formal economic participation. **Example:** formal enterprises, social security coverage.

3. **Anti-Corruption Impact:** Ambiguous criminal provisions create opportunities for discretionary enforcement and corruption. Rationalisation reduces regulatory harassment. **Example:** inspector discretion, rent seeking.

Reconciling State Oversight with Constitutional Morality

1. **Protection of Personal Liberty:** The Constitution emphasises that deprivation of liberty must be just, fair, and reasonable, a doctrine reinforced by judicial interpretation of Article 21. **Example:** procedural fairness, natural justice.

2. **Proportionality Principle:** Punishment must be proportional to the offence; administrative defaults should not attract imprisonment unless they cause serious public harm. **Example:** civil penalties, graduated sanctions.

3. **Balancing State Authority:** The reform does not eliminate regulatory oversight but replaces criminal sanctions with civil enforcement mechanisms. **Example:** monetary penalties, compliance audits.

Remaining Challenges

1. **Partial Reform Coverage:** Certain ministries still retain overlapping criminal provisions for offences already covered under broader criminal laws. **Example:** false documents, official obstruction.

2. **Implementation Gap:** Effective reform requires alignment of state laws and regulatory practices with Jan Vishwas principles. **Example:** state regulations, local compliance.

3. **Institutional Capacity:** Civil penalty frameworks must be supported by strong administrative enforcement mechanisms. **Example:** digital monitoring, compliance portals.

Way Forward

1. Extend Jan Vishwas principles to all remaining statutes and rules systematically.

2. Digitise compliance through a single portal with clear, time-bound processes.

3. Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms to prevent misuse of residual provisions.

4. Conduct periodic third-party audits of regulatory burden.

5. Integrate Jan Vishwas training for bureaucrats to internalise trust-based governance.

Conclusion

Jan Vishwas is not just a legislative amendment; it is a Psychological Reform for the Indian State. Its success in 2026 hinges on whether the bureaucracy can transition from being a suspicious overseer to a facilitating partner.

Critically examine the impact of anti-conversion laws on Indian secularism. Do these regulations safeguard religious freedom or deepen existing social and communal divisions?

Introduction

Religious conversion laws across several Indian states regulate faith changes to prevent force, fraud, or inducement. Yet, anti-conversion laws in 12 states have intensified debates on secularism, highlights question whether such regulations reinforce secular governance or undermine individual liberty.

Historical Roots of Conversion Debates

1. **Colonial-Era Regulatory Concerns:** Anti-conversion laws originated in colonial-era princely states (Raigarh 1936, Patna 1942) and continued post-independence with Orissa (1967) and Madhya Pradesh (1968) Acts.

1. **Social Justice Motivations:** Conversions often emerged as acts of social emancipation rather than religious coercion. Marginalised groups historically used conversion to escape caste discrimination. **Example:** Meenakshipuram conversions, Dalit emancipation.

2. **State-Level Legislation:** Several states enacted Freedom of Religion Acts to regulate conversion and prevent coercion or inducement. **Example:** Odisha 1967, Madhya Pradesh 1968.

3. **Expansion in Recent Decades:** Recent amendments in states such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand expanded provisions to include conversions linked to marriage and alleged love jihad. **Example:** marriage conversions, criminal penalties.

4. **Growing Legal Controversy:** These laws have increasingly triggered constitutional litigation regarding their compatibility with fundamental rights. **Example**: judicial review, constitutional challenges.

Constitutional Framework

1. **Freedom of Religion Guarantee:** Article 25 ensures the right to profess, practise and propagate religion, forming the cornerstone of India's secular constitutional framework.

2. **Judicial Interpretation:** The Supreme Court in Rev. Stanislaus (1977) upheld regulation of forced conversions but protected voluntary ones.

3. However, provisions requiring prior notice, police inquiry, and reverse burden of proof often fail the proportionality test laid down in Puttaswamy (2017). They risk violating individual liberty by subjecting personal faith and partner choice to state scrutiny.

Arguments Supporting Anti-Conversion Regulations

1. **Protection of Vulnerable Communities:** Supporters argue that the laws safeguard SC/ST communities and economically weaker groups from exploitative proselytisation.

2. **Maintenance of Public Order:** Governments claim regulation prevents social conflict and communal tensions arising from organised conversion campaigns. **Example:** communal stability and social harmony.

3. **Transparency in Conversion:** Mandatory declarations and administrative oversight aim to ensure that conversions occur voluntarily and with informed consent. **Example:** official declaration, district oversight.

Concerns About Secularism and Liberty

1. **State as Moral Gatekeeper:** Mandatory permissions or prior notices risk transforming the state into a regulator of personal faith choices rather than a neutral arbiter.

2. **Reverse Burden of Proof:** Many laws place the burden on the accused to prove the conversion was voluntary, potentially enabling misuse.

3. **Impact on Interfaith Relationships:** Notification provisions often allow vigilante interference in interfaith marriages, deepening communal tensions.

Socio-Political Implications

1. **Communal Polarisation:** The politicisation of conversion issues may intensify religious divisions rather than resolve them.

2. **Minority Anxiety:** Strict conversion regulations can create a chilling effect on minority religious activities and missionary work. **Example:** missionary restrictions, community suspicion.

3. **Secular Governance Challenge:** Balancing religious freedom with public order remains a central test of India's model of positive secularism. Example: equal respect, religious neutrality.

Way Forward

1. Amend laws to require strict judicial oversight and proof of coercion beyond reasonable doubt.
2. Introduce uniform central guidelines with narrow definitions of allurement and force.
3. Strengthen awareness programmes on constitutional rights under Articles 21 and 25.
4. Establish fast-track family courts for inter-faith marriage protection.
5. Integrate religious freedom metrics into NITI Aayog's Social Cohesion Index for state accountability.

Conclusion

As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan observed in The Hindu View of Life, true secularism respects freedom of conscience. India's challenge lies in preventing coercion while preserving the individual's sovereign right to faith.

Analyze the regulatory and structural shifts required to realize India's 100 GW nuclear goal. Evaluate the SHANTI Act's role in this transformation.

Introduction

India's Nuclear Renaissance is centered on a massive scale-up from the current ~8 GW to a 100 GW target by 2047. This requires moving beyond the strategic enclave model toward a commercially viable, transparent, and multi-player ecosystem.

India's Nuclear Energy Imperative

1. **Rising Electricity Demand:** India's development trajectory demands a massive rise in electricity consumption to reach developed-economy standards. **Example:** 1,418 kWh per capita, Viksit Bharat target.

2. **Net-Zero Commitments:** India's commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 requires shifting away from fossil fuels toward low-carbon energy sources. **Example:** clean baseload power, low-carbon transition.

3. **Limitations of Renewables:** Solar and wind generation remain intermittent and require large storage investments to provide reliable power. Nuclear power offers stable baseload electricity. **Example:** baseload stability, energy storage gaps.

Emerging Nuclear Strategies

1. **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** India is investing in indigenous SMR technologies that can power industries and remote areas. **Example:** 55 MW reactors, modular designs.

2. **Indigenous PHWR Expansion:** India's 220 MW and 700 MW Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors provide cost-effective and proven designs for rapid expansion. **Example:** fleet construction, standardised reactors.

3. **Thorium-Based Research:** India possesses large thorium reserves and aims to develop advanced reactors to utilise them efficiently. **Example:** thorium cycle, HALEU fuel.

The SHANTI Act

1. **Opening the Sector to Private Participation:** The SHANTI Act allows private companies to build, own and operate nuclear power plants, ending the state monopoly. **Example:** private reactors, PPP participation.

2. **Reforming Liability Framework:** The Act revises the nuclear liability regime to attract international investors and technology providers. **Example:** risk sharing, investment protection.

3. **Strengthening Regulatory Oversight:** The Act grants statutory autonomy to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), enhancing regulatory credibility and safety oversight. **Example:** independent regulator.

Structural Shifts Required for 100 GW Expansion

1. **Massive Capital Investment:** Expanding nuclear capacity to 100 GW could require investment exceeding $200 billion, making private participation essential. **Example:** long-term financing, infrastructure funding.

2. **Technology Diversification:** India must adopt multiple reactor technologies to accelerate capacity expansion. **Example:** PHWR reactors, SMR technology.

3. **Domestic Manufacturing Ecosystem:** Building reactors at scale requires developing domestic manufacturing capabilities for nuclear components. **Example:** fleet mode construction, supply chain localization.

Critical Bottlenecks in the Nuclear Landscape

To transform the sector, India must resolve several legacy and emerging "Friction Points":

1. **Tariff Competitiveness:** Nuclear power currently faces high capital costs compared to Solar and Wind. Establishing a Transparent Tariff Mechanism is essential to make nuclear energy attractive to Discoms.
2. **The Insurance/Liability Deadlock:** Despite the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act, international suppliers remain wary. A functional Nuclear Insurance Pool and clear indemnity clauses are needed to encourage global technology transfers.
3. **Fuel Ownership & Waste:** As India moves toward the Three-Stage Program, managing the transition from imported Uranium to domestic Thorium—while ensuring safe Deep Geological Repositories for waste—remains a technical and regulatory challenge.

Way Forward

1. Notify comprehensive rules within six months on tariffs, liability, and waste.
2. Fast-track SMR indigenisation through private consortia.
3. Establish a Nuclear Investment Promotion Agency.
4. Integrate nuclear with renewable-hybrid projects.
5. Ensure AERB functional autonomy with international benchmarking.

Conclusion

As Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam emphasised in Ignited Minds, energy independence underpins national progress. Achieving the 100 GW nuclear goal demands regulatory clarity, technological innovation, and strategic public-private collaboration.

Despite its ecological toll, sand mining persists as a livelihood necessity. Examine the impact of illegal sand mining on India's biodiversity.

Introduction

India's construction boom has made sand the second-most extracted resource after water, notes the United Nations Environment Programme. Yet rampant illegal mining across river ecosystems increasingly threatens biodiversity, hydrological stability, and ecological security.

Why Sand Mining Persists?

1. Illegal mining has roots in post-independence resource extraction pressures, exacerbated by weak enforcement of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR) and EIA Notifications.

2. The Supreme Court and NGT have repeatedly intervened (Aravalli ban, Chambal cases), yet socio-economic drivers (illegal mining offers higher daily wages than agriculture) sustain the practice.

3. Regions with erratic monsoons or poor soil fertility (like parts of the Chambal or Palar basins), sand mining provides a high-liquidity, low-skill income source.

4. Construction appetite, urbanisation and rapid infrastructure expansion under Housing for All, connectivity programmes has sharply increased demand for sand and minor minerals. Construction is among the fastest-growing sectors in India (Economic Survey 2025–26).

5. Sand, classified as a minor mineral, falls under state jurisdiction, leading to coordination failures and mafia control.

Impact on India's Biodiversity the Silent Extinction

1. **Destruction of Nesting Habitats:** Excessive extraction lowers riverbeds, causes bank erosion, and destroys sandbars essential for thermoregulation and nesting of endangered species. Example: gharials, turtles, and river dolphins in the Chambal Sanctuary.

2. **Benthic and Lotic Food Webs Disruption:** Dredging riverbeds removes spawning grounds for fish and disrupts aquatic food chains. Example: starves apex predators like the Ganges River Dolphin.

3. **Turbidity and Photosynthesis:** Increase suspended solids in the water; cloudiness blocks sunlight, killing off aquatic plants (macrophytes) and phytoplankton, the foundation of the river's food chain.

4. Hydrological Alterations and Hungry Water Phenomenon: When sand is removed, the river loses its natural sediment load. To compensate, the water gains energy and begins to aggressively erode its own bed and banks downstream (incising). This lowers the water table, drying up nearby riparian vegetation and sacred groves that host terrestrial biodiversity.

Environmental Degradation Beyond Rivers

1. **Deforestation and Land Degradation:** Illegal stone and granite mining frequently leads to large-scale vegetation loss. Example: Aravalli quarrying.

2. **Biodiversity Loss in Mountain Ecosystems:** Mining in fragile landscapes disrupts wildlife corridors and endemic species habitats. Example: Western Ghats quarries.

3. **Soil and Water Pollution:** Mining operations generate sediment runoff and pollutants that degrade nearby ecosystems.

The Organized Crime Factor

The Supreme Court has frequently lamented the State Paralysis where environmental regulations exist on paper, but the Sand Mafia operates with impunity.

1. **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms:** Despite legal frameworks like the MMDR Act, 1957, enforcement remains inconsistent across states. Example: delayed inspections, illegal leases.

2. **Jurisdictional Complexity:** As mining regulation largely falls under state jurisdiction, coordination challenges often emerge, leaving behind a no-man's-land of ecological degradation. Example: decades old inter-state rivers disputes.

3. **Violence and Criminal Nexus:** Illegal mining networks frequently intimidate activists and officials attempting enforcement. Example: officer killings, whistleblower threats.

4. **Technological Asymmetry:** While miners use heavy earth-movers and high-speed logistics, forest guards and environmental agencies are often under-equipped and outnumbered.

Technological and Institutional Measures

1. **Satellite Monitoring Systems:** The government uses the Mining Surveillance System (MSS) to detect mining beyond lease boundaries.

2. **Citizen Reporting Platforms:** Digital tools enable public participation in monitoring illegal activities. Example: Khanan Prahari, public complaints.

3. **Judicial Oversight:** Courts have repeatedly intervened to regulate destructive mining practices. Example: Aravalli ban.

Way Forward

1. Deploy satellite, drone, and IoT-based real-time monitoring with mandatory alerts to states.

2. Promote manufactured sand (M-sand) and treated desert sand as viable alternatives.

3. Enforce strict replenishment studies and inter-state coordination for riverbed mining.

4. Provide alternative livelihoods through skill development in mining-affected areas.

5. Integrate mandatory biodiversity impact assessments into all minor mineral approvals.

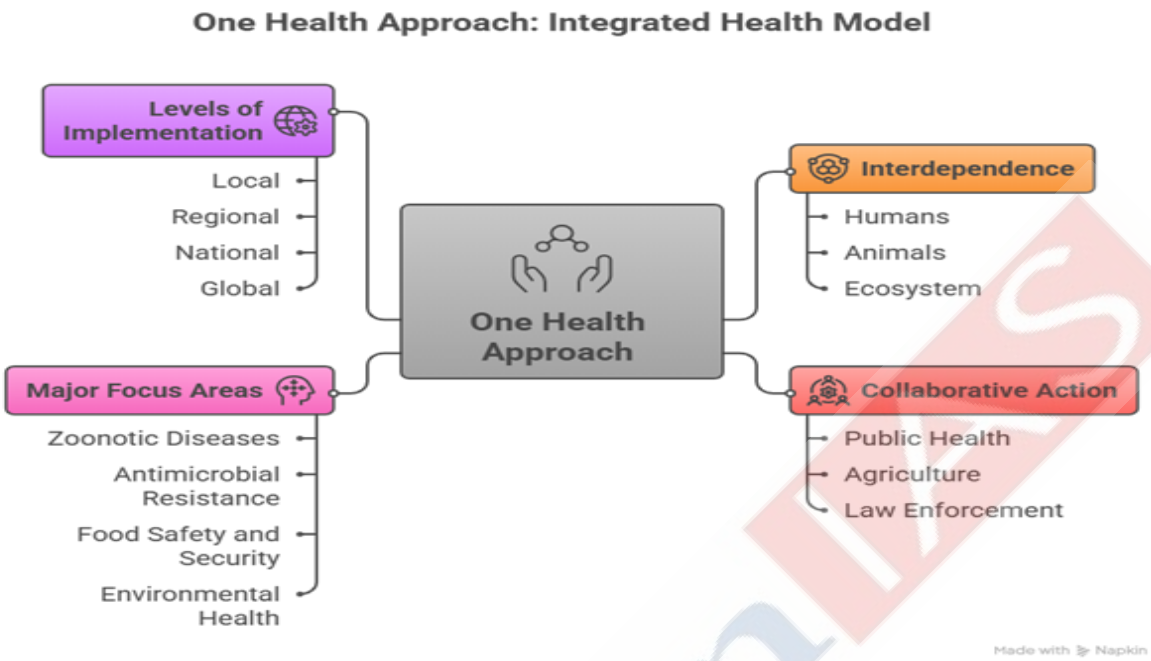
Conclusion

As former President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam emphasised in Ignited Minds, sustainable development must balance growth with ecological stewardship. Protecting India's biodiversity demands stricter enforcement, community participation, and responsible resource management.

Examine significance of the 'One Health' approach in the context of India's Public Health System. Evaluate how inter-sectoral coordination and scientific collaboration can mitigate global health risks.

Introduction

Nearly 60–75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, notes the World Health Organization. Post-COVID reforms and India's National One Health Mission (2024) highlight the need for integrated human–animal–environment health systems to strengthen pandemic preparedness.



Significance for India's Public Health System

One Health is critical for India due to its dense human-animal interface, biodiversity hotspots, and climate vulnerabilities:

1. **Addressing Zoonotic Disease Risks:** Addresses spillover risks from wildlife (Nipah, SARS-CoV-2) and livestock (Lumpy Skin Disease, Avian Flu). Integrated monitoring of wildlife, livestock, and human populations enables early detection of emerging pathogens.

2. **Predictive Disease Surveillance:** The One Health framework enables anticipatory responses by identifying spillover risks from wildlife or livestock.

3. **Combating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):** Tackles misuse of antibiotics across human medicine, veterinary practice, and aquaculture. Example: National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR) 2.0.

4. **Climate Change and Environmental Linkage:** Extreme weather events expand vector ranges (dengue, malaria) and disrupt ecosystems.

5. **Constitutional and Legal Aspects:** It aligns with Article 21 (right to health) and Article 48A (environmental protection). Legally, it bridges gaps between the Epidemic Diseases Act and animal husbandry laws. Economically, it reduces the massive cost of outbreaks COVID-19 alone caused trillions in losses and supports sustainable development goals.

Inter-Sectoral Coordination and Scientific Collaboration

1. **National One Health Mission (NOHM)**: Approved on the recommendation of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council, the mission integrates **16 ministries** for coordinated

health governance. The National Institute for One Health, Nagpur acts as the anchor institution for research and coordination. Example: BSL-3 labs, data integration.

2. **Federal Public Health System:** Public health is largely a state subject under the Constitution, requiring coordination between central agencies and state governments.

3. **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** Effective collaboration across ministries of health, agriculture, environment, and fisheries. Example: inter-ministerial scientific study to address zoonotic spillover.

4. **Technological and Scientific Capabilities:** Leverages genomic surveillance, AI-driven early warning systems, and the National Digital Health Mission for real-time data integration.

5. **Digital Disease Monitoring:** Artificial intelligence and digital platforms can track unusual disease patterns in wildlife and livestock.

6. **Research and Diagnostic Capacity:** India has established a network of high-containment laboratories to study infectious diseases. Academic institutions and research agencies collaborate to develop vaccines and diagnostics. Example: BSL-3 labs, vaccine R&D.

7. **International Cooperation:** One Health strengthens India's role in global health governance through the Quadripartite (WHO, FAO, WOAH, UNEP). The WHO Pandemic Agreement (2025) promotes pathogen data sharing and equitable access to vaccines.

Challenges in Implementing One Health

1. Fragmented governance across 13+ ministries.
2. Shortage of veterinarians and environmental health experts.
3. Weak data-sharing mechanisms between sectors.
4. Limited community-level awareness and participation.

Way Forward

1. Institutionalise a dedicated One Health unit with budgetary autonomy under the Ministry of Health.
2. Expand surveillance pilots in bird sanctuaries, slaughterhouses, and high-risk zones using BSL-3 labs.
3. Integrate One Health into medical, veterinary, and environmental curricula.
4. Leverage digital tools like the One Health Dashboard for real-time inter-sectoral coordination.
5. Strengthen international collaboration through the WHO Pandemic Agreement and Quadripartite framework.

Conclusion

National progress depends on scientific foresight. One Health offers a holistic pathway to safeguard India's health security against future pandemics.