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HISTORY
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INDEX

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, remains only a legal document without intense sensitization of government functionaries and citizens regarding transgenders. Comment..... 2

Industrial disaster is an emerging disaster. Discuss the causes of this disaster. Mention the features of two such major industrial disaster in the last two decades in India. Describe the policies and frameworks in India that aim at tackling industrial disaster. 4

Evaluate crop insurance in mitigating agricultural vulnerability. Contrast the yield versus weather-index triggers of PMFBY and RWBCIS, assessing their efficacy for farmers. 5

Analyze the ‘Trojan Horse’ of delimitation in India’s democratic design. Evaluate if mid-20th-century representation models suit contemporary federal and demographic disparities. 7

Examine the drivers behind the decline of the Maoist insurgency. Evaluate whether the movement is truly terminal or retains potential for revival. 9

Welfare and development often overlap in political discourse. Distinguish between the two and evaluate how this blurring impacts India’s long-term fiscal sustainability..... 11

Examine the policy challenges of India's LPG-dependent energy model. Evaluate the shift to electric cooking as a strategic imperative for energy sovereignty..... 12

Examine if increasing parliamentary seats ensures better representation. Evaluate the role of the third tier in fostering a more responsive democracy..... 14

Examine the intersectionality of caste and class in India. Evaluate whether economic parity effectively neutralizes caste-based disparities in accessing social opportunities. 16

Analyze the systemic precariousness of India’s urban informal workforce. Evaluate the adequacy of legislative frameworks in ensuring their socio-economic security and rights. 18

Evaluate the impact of modernization on Indian Railways safety and speed. Analyze how these infrastructure upgrades are driving India’s logistical and economic transformation. 20

Analyze India’s shift from managing major powers to building ‘partnerships with equals’. Evaluate its role in creating a new global strategic architecture. 22

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, remains only a legal document without intense sensitization of government functionaries and citizens regarding transgenders. Comment.

In the landscape of Indian social legislation, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, represents a pivotal yet controversial shift. Concerns on social exclusion, underscores that legal reform without sensitisation risks remaining ineffective in ensuring dignity and rights.

Historical and Legal Context

1. The Supreme Court’s NALSA v. Union of India (2014) recognised transgender persons as a third gender with rights under Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21, affirming self-identification and dignity.
2. The 2019 Act was a legislative response, and the 2026 Amendment seeks to refine certification, welfare delivery, and anti-discrimination measures.
3. However, legal frameworks alone cannot dismantle entrenched prejudice without societal and administrative transformation.

The Amendment Bill Key Provisions and Controversies

Provision	2019 Act	2026 Amendment
Gender Identity Recognition	Self-perceived identity recognized	Removed; requires medical board certification
Definition	Includes trans men, trans women, genderqueer	Limited to hijra, kinner, aravani, jogta, intersex persons
Certification Authority	District Magistrate based on self-declaration	Medical Board (CMO/Dy. CMO) + DM
Exclusions	None for self-identifying persons	Expressly excludes self-perceived gender identities and different sexual orientations

Significance of Sensitisation

The Bill’s success hinges on changing mindsets among government functionaries and citizens:

1. **Street-Level State Failure:** Frontline actors police, District Magistrates, healthcare providers—often lack gender sensitivity like delays and harassment in issuing TGID cards, misgendering and denial of welfare benefits and poor utilisation of schemes like SMILE (low fund absorption). Without behavioural change, laws translate into procedural barriers rather than protections.
2. **Persistence of Structural Stigma:** Historical marginalisation continues as: family rejection and homelessness, occupational exclusion (begging, sex work dominance) and violence and social

invisibility. Legal prohibition of discrimination cannot override deep cultural prejudices without mass sensitisation.

3. **Exclusion from Growth:** NITI Aayog and Economic Survey highlight, low labour force participation of transgender persons, barriers in skilling and formal employment and loss of productivity and increased welfare burden. Sensitisation is essential to convert legal inclusion into economic participation.
4. **Gap Between Rights and Reality:** The Amendment creates a two-tier gatekeeping mechanism, medical Boards determine eligibility, followed by District Magistrate issuance. The Amendment raises concerns vis-à-vis, Article 14 (Equality), unequal burden of identity proof. Article 21 (Dignity & Privacy), invasive certification processes. Transformative constitutionalism, rollback from self-identification. Without sensitised institutions, constitutional guarantees remain aspirational rather than enforceable.
5. **Digital Exclusion:** Limited TGID coverage due to low awareness and bureaucratic hurdles along with lack of inclusive digital platforms and grievance systems. Under-reporting in Census leading to policy blind spots. Technology without sensitisation reproduces systemic invisibility.
6. **Tokenism vs Participation:** National Council for Transgender Persons inadequately consulted. Weak community representation in decision-making. This violates the principle: Nothing about us without us.
7. **Law as a Paper Tiger:** Without sensitization, identity becomes policed rather than protected, welfare remains underutilised and rights become symbolic, not substantive. Thus, the Amendment risks being a legal artefact disconnected from lived realities.

Way Forward

1. **Institutional Sensitisation:** Mandate comprehensive sensitisation modules for all government departments, police, judiciary, and healthcare providers.
2. **Educational Reforms:** Integrate transgender issues into school curricula and professional training academies.
3. **Community Participation:** Establish monitoring mechanisms with transgender community participation to track implementation.
4. **Legal Strengthening:** Clear anti-discrimination enforcement mechanisms and penalties. Strengthening the National Council for Transgender Persons.
5. **Economic Inclusion:** Skill development, reservations (as suggested post-NALSA), and corporate diversity mandates.

Conclusion

The 2026 Amendment can only move beyond symbolism when law is complemented by social transformation and administrative accountability. Without sensitisation, rights remain formal; with it, they become lived realities.

Industrial disaster is an emerging disaster. Discuss the causes of this disaster. Mention the features of two such major industrial disaster in the last two decades in India. Describe the policies and frameworks in India that aim at tackling industrial disaster.

Introduction

Economic Survey 2025–26 flags rising industrial risks amid rapid manufacturing expansion; with hazardous chemical use increasing, India faces an emerging disaster profile where safety gaps, as noted by NITI Aayog, demand urgent reforms.

Industrial Disaster as an Emerging Risk

1. Industrial disasters are no longer isolated accidents but systemic failures arising from cumulative risk (creeping risk).
2. Rapid industrialisation + ageing infrastructure.
3. Expansion of hazardous industries (chemicals, power, refineries).
4. Greater exposure of workers and nearby populations. Thus, disasters are increasingly predictable yet preventable failures.

Causes of Industrial Disasters

1. **Equipment Fatigue:** Many plants operate beyond safe limits with inadequate upkeep, leading to boiler explosions and gas leaks.
2. **Inadequate Safety Protocols:** Self-certification and weak third-party audits under ease of doing business reduce oversight during restarts or capacity changes.
3. **Contract Labour Vulnerabilities:** Migrants and contract workers often lack training, safety signage in native languages, and proper protective equipment.
4. **Regulatory Gaps:** Penalties exist but enforcement is weak; the new OSH Code 2020 does not clearly hold principal employers fully liable for contractor lapses.
5. **Poor Zoning:** Locating hazardous industries in close proximity to dense residential clusters. Example: Non-conforming industrial zones.
6. **Inadequate Audits:** A checklist-based compliance approach rather than deep-dive safety audits.

Features of Two Major Industrial Disasters (Last Two Decades)

1. **Bhopal Gas Tragedy Aftermath and Lessons (Ongoing Legacy)** Though the 1984 disaster predates the period, its long-term impact continues. The 2020 Visakhapatnam LG Polymers gas leak echoed Bhopal: styrene vapour leaked due to inactive safety systems post-lockdown restart, killing 11 and hospitalising hundreds. It exposed poor maintenance, inadequate emergency planning, and regulatory failure in monitoring hazardous chemical storage.
2. **Sakti Boiler Explosion, Chhattisgarh (2026)** A boiler explosion at a recently acquired and commissioned plant killed 20 workers. Similar to the 2020 Neyveli thermal power station blast, it occurred during unstable

operating regimes (under-capacity, recent restart). Root causes included overpressure, scaling, and mismanaged water levels, highlighting weak continuous monitoring and the focus on fabrication standards over ongoing risk assessment.

Policies and Frameworks for Tackling Industrial Disasters

India has a robust but poorly implemented legal architecture:

1. **Factories Act, 1948:** Mandates safety officers, committees, and protocols for hazardous operations.
2. **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the umbrella framework for regulating hazardous substances post-Bhopal.
3. **Chemical Accidents (Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Response) Rules, 1996:** Established under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, mandate a three-tier crisis management structure—Central, State, and District—to prepare for and respond to chemical disasters in India.
4. **MSIHC Rules, 1989 (amended):** The Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules mandate that industries prepare On-site and Off-site Emergency Plans.
5. **Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991:** Provides immediate relief to persons affected by accidents occurring while handling hazardous substances on a "no-fault" basis.
6. **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Established the NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) at the center and SDMAs/DDMAs at state and district levels to coordinate responses to man-made disasters.
7. **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020:** Consolidates 13 laws, introduces inspector-cum-facilitators, and promotes decriminalisation with focus on compliance.
8. **Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO):** The nodal agency for regulating the safety of hazardous substances like compressed gases and explosives.
9. **Mining Surveillance System (MSS) and Khanan Prahari App:** Use satellite and citizen reporting for illegal mining risks.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen continuous instrumentation and real-time auditing instead of annual certification.
2. Make principal employers criminally liable for contractor safety lapses.
3. Mandate safety training and signage in workers native languages.
4. Integrate Boiler Accident Inquiry Rules 2025 with stricter penalties for unsafe restarts.
5. Promote a culture of rewarding maintenance shutdowns over penalising downtime.

Conclusion

Vision of safe development, industrial growth must embed safety culture; otherwise, as NDMA warns, disasters will remain recurring outcomes of neglected systemic risks.

Evaluate crop insurance in mitigating agricultural vulnerability. Contrast the yield versus weather-index triggers of PMFBY and RWBCIS, assessing their efficacy for farmers.

Introduction

Economic Survey 2025-26 confirms over 4.19 crore farmers insured under PMFBY, yet India's crop yields

remain below global averages, highlighting insurance's critical but incomplete role in mitigating agricultural vulnerability.

Role of Crop Insurance in Mitigating Vulnerability

Indian agriculture faces structural vulnerabilities, monsoon dependence, fragmented landholdings, climate variability, and market volatility. Crop insurance mitigates these through:

1. **Income Stabilisation:** Reduces distress sales and supports income security for smallholders (who constitute over 85% of farmers).
2. **Credit Access:** Acts as risk cover, enabling institutional lending and reducing reliance on moneylenders.
3. **Risk Transfer Mechanism:** Shifts climate and production risks from farmers to insurers and the state.
4. **Macro Stability:** Prevents agrarian distress from spilling into inflation and rural demand contraction.

Reports by NITI Aayog emphasise insurance as a pillar of climate-resilient agriculture, complementing irrigation and diversification.

PMFBY vs RWBCIS

Feature	PMFBY (Yield-Index)	RWBCIS (Weather-Index)
Primary Trigger	Based on actual yield loss compared to the historical average (Threshold Yield).	Based on weather parameters (rainfall, temperature, humidity, wind speed).
Assessment Method	Traditionally relies on Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs), now increasingly using YES-TECH (satellite/AI).	Relies on data from Automated Weather Stations (AWS) or the WINDS network.
Payout Speed	Often slower due to the time taken for physical harvest assessment and data auditing.	Potentially faster; once the weather station records a breach of a trigger level, the claim is processed.
Basis of Risk	Covers holistic loss (pests, disease, local calamities, and yield drop).	Covers specific perils (Excess Rainfall or Deficit Temperature) regardless of yield.

Salient Features & Technological Infusion

1. **Uniform Low Premiums:** 2% for Kharif, 1.5% for Rabi, and 5% for commercial/horticultural crops.
2. **YES-TECH (Yield Estimation System):** By 2026, the reliance on manual CCEs has been reduced by 40% in many states, replaced by satellite-based yield modeling to reduce disputes and delays.
3. **WINDS (Weather Information Network):** A national grid of weather stations provides hyper-local data, making RWBCIS triggers more accurate for individual micro-climates.

4. **AIDE (App for Intermediary Enrolment):** Ensuring last-mile connectivity and transparency in the enrollment process for non-loanee farmers.

Efficacy Assessment for Farmers

1. PMFBY offers broader protection but suffers from assessment delays and implementation gaps. RWBCIS provides speed but carries basis risk, especially for small, heterogeneous plots.
2. Both maintain low farmer premiums (2% Kharif, 1.5% Rabi, 5% commercial/horticultural), with government subsidising the balance.
3. In 2026, technology integration (YES-TECH for yield estimation and WINDS for weather data) has improved both schemes, yet smallholders often face awareness and claim settlement challenges.

Limitations

1. **The Basis Risk Problem:** In RWBCIS, a farmer might lose their crop to a local pest, but if the weather triggers aren't breached, they get nothing. Conversely, in PMFBY, the "average yield" of an insurance unit might not reflect a specific farmer's individual loss.
2. **Implementation Gaps:** While technology (2026) has reduced claim settlement times, challenges remain regarding the timely release of the State's share of premium subsidy, which often holds up payouts.
3. **Trust Deficit:** Despite the Revamped PMFBY 2.0, many smallholders still perceive insurance as a loan requirement rather than a loss protection tool.

Way Forward: Towards a Hybrid Risk Model

1. Adopt a hybrid model combining yield and weather triggers for comprehensive, timely coverage.
2. Expand YES-TECH and WINDS nationwide with ground-truthing for accuracy.
3. Strengthen grievance redressal through district-level committees and digital portals.
4. Promote awareness via FPOs and integrate insurance with crop advisories.
5. Ensure timely state premium contributions and faster claim disbursement.

Conclusion

As highlighted by M.S. Swaminathan's vision of resilient agriculture, crop insurance must evolve into a proactive risk ecosystem; integrating technology and trust can transform vulnerability into stability for India's farmers.

Analyze the 'Trojan Horse' of delimitation in India's democratic design. Evaluate if mid-20th-century representation models suit contemporary federal and demographic disparities.

Introduction

The April 2026 rejection of the Delimitation and Women's Reservation Bills exposed a Trojan Horse, linking gender justice to a population-based redrawing that penalises developed southern states. Delimitation revives debate on equity between population-based democracy and balanced Union of States.

Understanding the Trojan Horse Argument

Delimitation, constitutionally mandated under Articles 81, 82, and 170, aims to ensure one person, one vote, one value. However, linking it with reforms like women's reservation has been criticised as a Trojan Horse:

1. **Bundling of Issues:** Social justice (women's reservation) tied to a politically sensitive redrawing of constituencies.
2. **Deferred Implementation:** Reservation contingent upon Census and delimitation delays immediate empowerment.
3. **Federal Anxiety:** Perception that demographic reallocation may advantage populous states, altering political balance. Thus, delimitation is not merely technical, it becomes a political restructuring of power.

A Mid-20th Century Model

India's representation model was designed for ~36 crore population (1950s):

1. Lok Sabha frozen at 543 seats since the 42nd Amendment (1976), extended by the 84th Amendment (2001) till post-2026 Census.
2. MP-to-population ratio has worsened from ~1:7 lakh (1951) to ~1:25-30 lakh today.
3. While the freeze incentivised population control, it created representation asymmetry, questioning the continued relevance of the model.

Federal Fault Lines: Population vs Performance

1. **Demographic Divergence:** Southern and western states achieved replacement-level fertility (TFR ≈ 2.1 or below) while Northern states continue higher population growth.
2. **The Penalty for Success Debate:** States excelling in health, education, and population control risk losing proportional representation. Raises concerns of fiscal and political inequity, as high-performing states contribute more to GDP and tax revenues.
3. **Constitutional Tension:** Balancing Article 14 (equality) with federal principles. India as a Union of States requires both citizen equality and state equity.

Structural Concerns in Contemporary Context

1. **Governance and Legislative Efficiency:** Expanding Lok Sabha to 800+ members risks deliberative dilution. Larger Houses may become procedural rather than substantive forums.
2. **Institutional Imbalance:** Rajya Sabha currently lacks true federal parity (representation is population-based, not equal). Weakens its role as a federal counterweight.

3. **Political Economy Dimension:** Delimitation may reshape resource allocation, fiscal transfers, and policy priorities. Could intensify regionalism and identity politics.
4. **Technological and Data Challenges:** Accurate delimitation depends on Census data integrity and digital mapping systems. Delays (Census 2026) compress timelines before 2029 elections.

Global Comparisons and Lessons

1. **United States:** Bicameral balance, House (population), Senate (equal states).
2. **European Union:** Degressive proportionality protects smaller states.
3. **Canada & Germany:** Multi-criteria representation models. India's purely population-driven system appears increasingly inadequate for its diversity.

Way Forward

1. **Weighted Representation Model:** Adopt digressive proportionality or a Demographic Performance (DemPer) index that rewards both population and development metrics (literacy, health, fertility control) as used by Finance Commission.
2. **Strengthen Federalism:** Reform Rajya Sabha into a true House of States with near-equal representation.
3. **Cap and Rationalise Lok Sabha Size:** Limit expansion (~700 seats) to maintain deliberative quality.
4. **Institutional Safeguards:** Ensure independent Delimitation Commission with transparent criteria. Pre-consultation via All-Party Committee.
5. **Decentralisation:** Empower Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies to offset representational dilution.
6. **Unbundle Reforms:** Implement women's reservation independently, preserving democratic legitimacy.

Conclusion

As B.R. Ambedkar warned in Constituent Assembly debates, democracy requires continuous recalibration; delimitation must balance population justice with federal equity to sustain India's unity amid diversity and demographic transformation.

Examine the drivers behind the decline of the Maoist insurgency. Evaluate whether the movement is truly terminal or retains potential for revival.

Introduction

By 2026, India's Left-Wing Extremism has sharply declined—from 180 districts to under 10—per the Economic Survey 2025–26, reflecting intensified security operations, development outreach, and governance reforms, though concerns of residual insurgent potential persist.

Drivers Behind the Sharp Decline

- 1. Security and Operational Superiority:** Elimination of General Secretary Nambala Keshava Rao (2025) and several Central Committee members created a severe vacuum and dismantled strategic command. Operations like Black Forest and Kagaar cleared strongholds in Abujmarh and Karregutta Hills using inter-agency coordination CoBRA, DRG, and advanced surveillance. Result: Over 3,800 surrenders, 2,200 arrests, and significant cadre neutralisation.
- 2. Technological Transformation:** Use of drones, satellite intelligence, AI-based mapping, and real-time surveillance eroded Maoists' traditional jungle advantage. Digital policing reduced ambush vulnerabilities and disrupted logistics.
- 3. Developmental Penetration:** Schemes like DBT, PMGSY, and Aspirational Districts Programme bridged the governance vacuum. NITI Aayog highlights that **state presence replaced insurgent parallel governance**. Example: Construction of 17,500 km of roads and 9,000 mobile towers ended forest isolation, enabling governance reach.
- 4. Alienation of tribal base:** Leadership remained largely non-tribal, creating distrust. Welfare schemes (PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala, DBT) and Eklavya schools eroded the "class enemy" narrative of state neglect.
- 5. Ideological and Organisational Weakness:** Internal splits between militarisation vs. mass mobilisation approaches. Outdated Maoist ideology lost resonance amid democratic participation and welfare expansion. Declining intellectual and urban support base.
- 6. Legal and Institutional Measures:** Strengthened surrender and rehabilitation policies with skill development. Tightened financial surveillance disrupted extortion networks (levy system). Constitutional governance mechanisms replaced insurgent authority structures.

Is the Movement Terminal or Latent?

Arguments for Terminal Decline

- 1. Recruitment Crisis:** Modern tribal youth in 2026 are increasingly aspirational, preferring digital connectivity and jobs over the People's War ideology.
- 2. Resource Depletion:** Stricter monitoring of mining levies and "levy-chains" has choked the funding that sustained the movement's guerrilla army.
- 3. Constitutional:** Democratic institutions have expanded legitimacy in affected regions.
- 4. Governance:** Transition from "security-centric" to rights-based approach is crucial.

Arguments for Residual/Latent Threat

- 1. Residual Grievances:** Unresolved land alienation and mining displacement in areas like Hasdeo Arand could reignite local support. Development has reduced insurgency incentives, but inequality persists.
- 2. Urban/Overground Pivot:** Intelligence suggests a shift toward radicalising students and workers through front organisations rather than jungle militias.

3. **Ideological Core:** A few fugitive leaders and symbolic figures like Ganapathi remain, potentially sustaining underground networks.

Way Forward

The transition to a Naxal-free India in 2026 requires moving from Counter-Insurgency (COIN) to Constitutional Consolidation:

1. **Restorative Justice:** Settlement of pending Forest Rights Act claims to prevent future alienation.
2. **Psychological Reintegration:** Ensuring that the thousands of surrendered cadres are successfully absorbed into the formal economy.
3. **Local Policing:** Gradually withdrawing Central Forces (CRPF/COBRA) and empowering local police who possess the cultural and linguistic nuances of the tribal belt.

Conclusion

As former President Ram Nath Kovind observed, development is the best antidote to extremism; sustaining peace requires bridging governance gaps so that insurgency's root causes never regain legitimacy in India's peripheries.

Welfare and development often overlap in political discourse. Distinguish between the two and evaluate how this blurring impacts India's long-term fiscal sustainability.

Introduction

In the 2026 governance landscape, the line between welfare (immediate relief) and development (long-term capacity building) has become increasingly porous. While both aim to improve the Ease of Living, their economic logic and fiscal outcomes differ significantly. The challenge for India is ensuring that populist welfare doesn't cannibalize the investment in development.

Distinguishing the Core Concepts

Feature	Welfare (The Safety Net)	Development (The Ladder)
Objective	Immediate consumption support and poverty alleviation.	Enhancing productive capacity and economic autonomy.
Focus	Targeted at vulnerable groups (Direct Benefit Transfers, free grain, subsidies).	Focused on systems (Infrastructure, Skill India, R&D, digital public goods).
Economic Role	Stimulates demand in the short term.	Drives supply-side efficiency and long-term GDP growth.

Duration	Often recurring and perpetual.	Generally time-bound capital investment with a multiplier effect.
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The Political Overlap and Why the Blurring Occurs

1. **The Guarantee Culture of 2026:** Political parties increasingly frame welfare measures (like monthly cash transfers or free electricity) as developmental rights to gain broader electoral legitimacy.
2. **Signaling Strategy:** By using the language of development to describe welfare, political actors signal a commitment to progress while actually focusing on palliatives that yield quicker electoral returns than long-gestation infrastructure projects.

Impact on Fiscal Priorities and Sustainable Growth

1. **Capex vs. Opex Imbalance:** Excessive spending on revenue-heavy welfare (Opex) reduces the fiscal space for capital expenditure (Capex). In 2026, as India aims for a 7 trillion economy, every rupee diverted from infrastructure to untargeted subsidies slows the multiplier effect.
2. **The Dependency Trap:** Continuous welfare without concurrent skill development can create a cycle of dependency, where the workforce remains under-qualified for the high-tech jobs generated by the Viksit Bharat vision.
3. **Fiscal Deficit Pressures:** Aggressive welfare competition between States often leads to fiscal profligacy, potentially affecting India's sovereign credit ratings and the cost of borrowing for development projects.

The Middle Path

The 2026 policy shift focuses on Productive Welfare where social security is linked to developmental outcomes.

1. **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Using Aadhaar-enabled stacks to ensure welfare is leak-proof, thereby saving funds for development.
2. **Asset Creation:** Programs like MGNREGA 2.0 focusing on creating durable water conservation assets rather than just providing manual labor.
3. **Human Capital:** Treating health and education not as expenditure (welfare) but as investment (development).

Conclusion

In 2026, the blurring of these concepts is a double-edged sword: it makes social justice a political priority, but risks compromising the structural integrity of the economy. A sustainable model requires a transition from Revdi (freebies) to Rozgar (employment), where welfare serves as a temporary bridge to developmental participation.

Examine the policy challenges of India's LPG-dependent energy model. Evaluate the shift to electric cooking as a strategic imperative for energy sovereignty.

Introduction

India consumes over 33 MMT LPG annually with nearly 60% imports, Economic Survey 2025–26 notes it as a persistent macroeconomic risk and rising energy vulnerability. Budget 2026–27 stresses diversification, exposing structural risks in household-centric LPG dependence and supply-chain fragility.

Nature of India's LPG-Dependent Energy Model

India's LPG transition—accelerated by the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has achieved near-universal clean cooking access (10+ crore households). However, this success has structurally transformed LPG into a household-essential fuel, unlike global patterns where LPG is largely industrial.

1. **Demand–supply mismatch:** Domestic production meets only ~40% of demand.
2. **Household concentration:** Over 90% of LPG is used for cooking, limiting flexibility.
3. **Import intensity:** Imports equal ~150% of domestic production. Thus, India's LPG model is not merely import-dependent it is socially locked-in.

Key Policy Challenges

1. **The Import Chokepoint:** 90% of imports pass through Hormuz; 2026 tensions caused price spikes and supply fears, widening the Current Account Deficit. Unlike crude oil (with diversified sourcing), LPG markets are tight and pre-committed globally.
2. **Storage Deficit:** Operational stock \approx 15 days; strategic cavern storage barely \sim 1.5 days. Compared to countries like Japan (100+ days), India lacks buffer resilience.
3. **Fiscal Burden and The Subsidy Paradox:** Targeted subsidies (₹300 per cylinder for PMUY households) ensure affordability but create fiscal stress, especially during price spikes. This limits capital allocation for long-term energy transition.
4. **Infrastructure and Distribution Constraints:** Cylinder logistics are carbon-intensive, costly, and disruption-prone. Last-mile delivery in rural and remote areas remains vulnerable.
5. **Economic and Market Rigidity:** LPG demand is inelastic—households cannot easily reduce consumption. Domestic LPG, petrochemical feedstock, and blending uses compete for limited supply.
6. **Technological and Systemic Limitations:** Limited integration with smart energy systems. Lack of flexibility compared to grid-based or piped energy systems.

The Shift to Electric Cooking as Strategic Imperative

1. **Energy Sovereignty:** Shifting to electricity reduces dependence on imported hydrocarbons and enhances strategic autonomy.
2. **Economic Efficiency:** Induction cooking efficiency: 80–85% vs. 40–50% for LPG. Lower lifecycle costs reduce subsidy burden.
3. **Synergy with Renewable Transition:** India achieved 50% non-fossil installed capacity (2025). Schemes like rooftop solar can power cooking, decentralising energy consumption.

4. **Technological Integration:** Smart grids, demand management, and storage systems support scalable adoption. Aligns with digital and electrification push.

5. **Environmental and Social Gains:** Reduced emissions and indoor pollution. Enhances long-term sustainability goals (Net Zero 2070).

Barriers to Electric Cooking Transition

1. **Grid Infrastructure:** In semi-urban and rural areas, the last-mile transformers often lack the capacity to handle a sudden surge in high-wattage induction stoves during peak morning/evening hours.

2. **Behavioral and Cultural Resistance:** Many Indian culinary practices (like making rotis) are perceived as difficult on flat induction plates. There is also a lack of "induction-ready" utensils in rural markets.

3. **Upfront Costs:** While running costs are lower, the initial purchase of an induction cooktop and compatible cookware remains a barrier for the bottom of the pyramid.

Way Forward: Rebalancing the Energy Mix

1. Launch a National E-Cooking Mission with targeted subsidies/vouchers for induction kits linked to PM Surya Ghar.

2. Upgrade last-mile distribution transformers and promote smart metering for efficient load management.

3. Mandate BEE efficiency standards for electric cookware and incentivise domestic manufacturing.

4. Integrate electric cooking into Ujjwala 2.0 with awareness drives on health and cost benefits.

5. Use data from pilots in Maharashtra and Telangana to scale successful models nationally.

Conclusion

True sovereignty lies in self-reliance; transitioning from imported LPG to domestic electricity can secure India's kitchens, economy, and strategic autonomy sustainably.

Examine if increasing parliamentary seats ensures better representation. Evaluate the role of the third tier in fostering a more responsive democracy.

Introduction

True democratic representation and responsiveness cannot be achieved merely by increasing the number of MPs. A holistic solution requires shifting the focus from the top-heavy parliamentary model to the grassroots power of the Third Tier of Governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies).

Historical-Constitutional Context

1. India's parliamentary design under Articles 81 and 82 was calibrated for a population of ~36 crore. The freeze on seats (1976–2026) ensured federal balance while incentivising population control.

2. Today, despite population tripling, representation cannot be reduced to “people per MP” arithmetic alone:
3. Representation has evolved from physical proximity → digital accessibility.
4. The MP’s role has shifted from local grievance handler → national policymaker.
5. Thus, institutional expansion must be assessed against functional necessity, not demographic inertia.

Why More MPs Is Not a Panacea?

1. **Constitutional Balance, Not Arithmetic:** The freeze (1976–2026) preserved federal equity and incentivised population control. Representation cannot be reduced to a simple population-per-MP formula. Example: seat freeze logic.
2. **Changing Nature of Representation:** The MP’s role has evolved from a local grievance handler to a national lawmaker, making functional efficiency more important than numerical expansion. Example: policy over patronage.
3. **Technology Expands Access:** Mobile connectivity, social media, and e-governance have increased an MP’s reach, weakening the argument that more MPs are needed for accessibility. Example: digital outreach.
4. **Legislative Efficiency Risks:** A significantly larger House risks reduced debate quality, rushed lawmaking, and over-reliance on committees, potentially weakening parliamentary scrutiny. Example: guillotine passage.
5. **Structural, Not Numerical, Constraints:** Low women’s representation and limited responsiveness stem from party nomination practices and political will—not the number of seats. Example: ticket allocation bias.

The Third Tier: India’s Real Democratic Backbone

1. **Unmatched Scale & Proximity:** With ~3.2 million elected representatives across 250,000+ Panchayats and ~3,700 ULBs, the third tier offers dense, localised representation far beyond Parliament’s reach. Example: grassroots density.
2. **Strong Constitutional Foundation:** The 73rd & 74th Amendments institutionalised decentralisation, regular elections, and participatory governance, though devolution remains uneven. Example: decentralisation mandate.
3. **Gender & Social Transformation:** Around 45–46% women representation (~1.45 million leaders) and inclusion of SC/ST communities have reshaped priorities toward welfare-oriented governance. Example: women leadership.
4. **Subsidiarity in Practice:** Local bodies handle core functions like water, sanitation, agriculture, and housing, aligning governance with the principle of subsidiarity. Shift from **centralised representation** → **distributed governance**. Example: local governance.
5. **Everyday Accountability & Responsiveness:** Sarpanchs and councillors are directly accessible, enabling faster grievance redressal and frontline disaster response, unlike distant parliamentary systems. Example: immediate feedback.

Key Challenges The 4F Deficit

1. **Funds:** Local bodies remain dependent on state/central grants; they need greater power to generate their own tax revenue.

2. **Functions:** Clear devolution of the 29 subjects (Panchayats) and 18 subjects (ULBs) is still pending in many states.
3. **Functionaries:** A lack of dedicated technical and administrative staff at the local level leads to poor implementation.
4. **Freedom:** Excessive state government interference often turns local bodies into extensions of the state machinery rather than autonomous units.

Way Forward

1. **Calibrated Expansion:** Moderate Lok Sabha seat increase with stronger committees to protect deliberation quality. Example: committee scrutiny.
2. **Fiscal & Functional Devolution:** Transfer 29+18 subjects with ~10% tax devolution and binding State Finance Commissions. Example: fiscal autonomy.
3. **Political Deepening:** Mandatory women quotas, OBC framework, and capacity-building institutions for grassroots leaders. Example: inclusive politics.
4. **Administrative & Tech Reform:** Leadership academies, local civil services, digital transparency, and AI governance dashboards. Example: digital governance.
5. **Institutional Synergy & Accountability:** Clear role division (MP-MLA-local), empowered mayors, and Gram Sabha-based participatory planning. Example: subsidiarity model.

Conclusion

True democracy empowers citizens at grassroots; expanding Parliament without strengthening grassroots risks numerical growth without meaningful representation or participatory governance.

Examine the intersectionality of caste and class in India. Evaluate whether economic parity effectively neutralizes caste-based disparities in accessing social opportunities.

Introduction

India's Economic Survey 2025–26 projects 7.4% GDP growth, yet Telangana's Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) built on 35 million people, proves wealth cannot dissolve caste: equally poor General Caste children access private schooling eight times more than SC/ST peers.

Caste-Class Overlap, Not Substitution

1. The claim that poverty is the only caste reduces inequality to income, ignoring India's layered social structure.
2. Class (income/wealth) determines material capacity whereas caste shapes social capital, networks, dignity, and access

3. Intersectionality implies caste and class reinforce—not replace—each other, producing a double disadvantage for marginalised groups.

Empirical Evidence from Telangana's Composite Backwardness Index (CBI)

1. **Scientific Measurement of Backwardness:** Covers 242 caste groups, ~3.5 crore population. Uses 42 indicators (education, occupation, assets, discrimination). More comprehensive than the Mandal Commission (11 indicators)

2. **Key Findings:** SC/ST communities are ~3 times more backward than General castes. BCs are 2.7 times more backward. Within-caste inequalities exist, but population share shows: 99% STs, 97% SCs, 71% BCs below state average. Backwardness is structural and cumulative, not merely economic.

Debunking the Poverty is the Only Caste Myth

1. **Education Access Gap:** Poor General caste children access private education 8× more than equally poor SC/ST children. Indicates social capital advantage independent of income.

2. **Persistent Inequality Across Income Levels:** CBI gaps between castes remain similar among: poor households and rich households. Economic mobility does not erase caste hierarchy.

3. **Urbanisation Does Not Dissolve Caste:** Similar caste gaps in urban and rural Telangana. Migration improves amenities, not social acceptance or networks.

Why Economic Parity Does Not Mean Social Parity

Caste functions as a Hidden Tax or a Hidden Subsidy:

1. **Access to Information and Networks:** Higher-caste households, even when poor, often reside in social networks that provide information about quality education, healthcare, and job opportunities networks often inaccessible to SC/ST families.
2. **Institutional Bias:** Research consistently shows that in the private sector and non-state institutions, surnames often act as a filter, regardless of the applicant's economic background.
3. **Psychological and Cultural Capital:** Bourdieu's concept of Cultural Capital explains how certain groups possess the right accents, manners, or social confidence that elite institutions reward, which are historically linked to caste rather than just current bank balances.

Limits of Economic Parity as a Solution

1. **EWS Debate:** Pure income-based criteria overlook: historical discrimination and social exclusion.

2. **Double Burden Phenomenon:** Marginalised groups face **economic poverty** and **caste stigma & exclusion**. Addressing only income leaves structural barriers intact.

Way Forward

1. **National Caste Census + CBI framework:** Adopt 40+ parameter backwardness measurement nationally for precision targeting over blunt categorical allocations.

2. **Private sector equal opportunity law:** Reservations cover ~3% (public sector) of India's workforce the private sector gap demands legislative intervention.
3. **Ring-fence SCSP/STSP:** legally protect SC/ST sub-plan funds; Example: Karnataka 2026–27 diverted ₹14,198 crore of such funds to general guarantee schemes.
4. **Raise social spending:** Budget 2026–27 social sector allocation stands at 2.5% of GDP lower than 2014–15; international benchmarks demand 4–6%.
5. **AI audit mandate:** Require caste-neutral algorithmic audits for digital hiring platforms; collect caste-disaggregated gig economy data.
6. **Shift allocation logic:** Move from population-proportional to backwardness-proportional welfare, delivering resources as a social justice tap, not a common welfare pool.

Conclusion

In 2026, as India seeks to become a Viksit Bharat, it must acknowledge that economic growth alone will not erase social stratification. True parity requires a policy framework that recognizes the Intersectionality of Caste and Class, ensuring that social mobility is not restricted by a "glass ceiling" of identity that even money cannot break.

Analyze the systemic precariousness of India's urban informal workforce. Evaluate the adequacy of legislative frameworks in ensuring their socio-economic security and rights.

Introduction

When Noida factory workers spilled onto streets in April 2026 demanding wage parity, they made visible what India's ₹53 lakh crore Budget masks: 90% of India's workforce — roughly 450 million people — operates without contracts, social security, or legal protection, building a \$3.5 trillion economy they cannot afford to live in.

Understanding the Systemic Precariousness

Historical Roots: From Production to Survival

1. India's post-independence model privileged capital over labour. The closure of Mumbai's textile mills and Ahmedabad's weaving plants (1980s–90s) dismantled organised labour's urban base.
2. Cities ceased to be production hubs and became spaces of social reproduction, where workers spend energy managing survival: rent, food, childcare — not building assets or rights.
3. The Washington Consensus further withdrew the state from rights-based provision, converting water, housing, and healthcare into market commodities the poor now purchase at distress prices.

Nature of Informal Employment (Economic-Social)

1. PLFS: ~90% workforce informal; in urban areas, regular salaried jobs remain limited.
2. Features: no written contracts, wage volatility and lack of pension, insurance, paid leave.
3. RBI Bulletin (2025): dependence on informal credit → debt traps.

Urban Vulnerability Matrix (Spatial + Social)

1. Around 40% urban poor in slums, often: located in hazard-prone zones and paying 30–50% income as rent.
2. Intersectionality: Migrants lack domicile → exclusion from PDS, voting. Women (≈94% informal) face double vulnerability. Youth pushed into gig economy due to skill mismatch.

Governance Shift: Rights to Market

1. Influence of Washington Consensus: Shift from rights-based welfare → user-fee model
2. Outcomes: Privatisation of water, electricity, gentrification and eviction and weakening of labour protections

Evaluating Legislative Frameworks Promise vs. Reality

What Exists: The Legal Architecture

1. **Articles 21, 39(d), 43** of the Constitution guarantee dignified life, equal pay, and living wages — creating enforceable obligations long dishonoured.
2. The **four Labour Codes (2019–20)**, operationalised via draft rules (December 2025), consolidate 29 fragmented laws — mandating written appointment letters, universalising minimum wages, and formally defining gig and platform workers for the first time.
3. **e-Shram portal**: 31.2 crore registrations as of December 2025 — the largest informal worker database ever built.
4. **Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers Act (2023)** and Karnataka's similar initiative represent pioneering state-level recognition.

Where Frameworks Fall Short: Four Structural Failures

1. **Eligibility Exclusion by Design** Draft rules under Social Security Code (January 2026) require 90 continuous days with a single aggregator to qualify for benefits — precisely excluding the most precarious workers who juggle multiple platforms. The framework protects the slightly-less-poor, not the poorest.
2. **Registration ≠ Rights** 31.2 crore on e-Shram, yet no automatic benefit delivery follows registration. "Digital inclusion" has been mistaken for welfare delivery — a category error with real human cost.
3. **Fiscal Abandonment** Budget 2026–27 allocated ₹32,666 crore for Labour broadly, but **activated no dedicated Social Security Fund** for gig/informal workers — despite the Economic Survey 2025–26 explicitly calling for government co-financing. Legal modernisation without fiscal commitment is legislation as performance.
4. **Enforcement Vacuum** The shift from Inspector to Inspector-cum-Facilitator under the new Codes has weakened accountability. Multi-layered sub-contracting shields principal employers from liability making wage theft and safety violations legally untraceable.

Way Forward

1. **Universal and Portable Social Protection**: Integrate e-Shram + Aadhaar + ONORC + Ayushman Bharat to ensure inter-state portability.

- 2. Strengthening Urban Local Bodies:** 74th Amendment: empower ULBs to manage informal labour welfare. Example: Kerala model, Workers' councils.
- 3. Legal Accountability Reform:** Fix principal employer liability and mandatory social security compliance for business permits.
- 4. Inclusive Urban Planning:** Recognise informal workspaces, street vending zones and rental housing reforms. Expand Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs).
- 5. Financial Inclusion:** Expand Jan Dhan + microcredit + SHGs to reduce dependence on moneylenders.
- 6. Skill and Digital Inclusion:** Align skilling (Skill India) with urban informal sectors and bridge digital divide for welfare access.

Conclusion

As B.R. Ambedkar warned, political democracy must rest on social and economic justice; without securing informal workers' dignity, India's urban growth risks remaining exclusionary and unstable.

Evaluate the impact of modernization on Indian Railways safety and speed. Analyze how these infrastructure upgrades are driving India's logistical and economic transformation.

Introduction

With a record ₹2.78 lakh crore budget in 2026–27, six times the 2014 allocation — Indian Railways has transformed into a modernising spine of a \$3.5 trillion economy, carrying 20 million passengers and 1,670 million tonnes of freight daily across 1,37,000 km of track.

Modernisation and Safety Transformation

- 1. From Reactive to Preventive:** Transition from manual inspection to data-driven predictive maintenance: ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD), 36.2 lakh track km tested and rail/weld failures reduced by ~90%. Deployment of advanced systems, Kavach (Automatic Train Protection) prevents collisions and signal passing at danger. AI-enabled surveillance at 1,800+ stations detects intrusion and risks.
- 2. Infrastructure Strengthening:** 55,000 km track renewal since 2014; use of long welded rails (260m panels) → fewer joints, smoother rides. Introduction of: 60-kg high-strength rails, thick-web switches, CMS crossings and wider sleepers for thermal stability.
- 3. Measurable Safety Outcomes:** Consequential accidents reduced from 135 (2014–15) to 16 (2025–26) (~89% fall). Accident rate improved from 0.11 to 0.01 per million train km. Safety fencing (17,500 km) reduces trespassing risks.
- 4. Technological Shield (Kavach 2.0):** By 2026, the indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, Kavach, has been deployed across high-density corridors. This has effectively eliminated collisions caused by human error or Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD).

Safety gains reflect = systemic reform + technology + engineering + governance integration

Speed Enhancement and Operational Efficiency

- 1. Track Capacity Upgradation:** With 80% of the network now capable of speeds above 110 kmph and a 90% reduction in rail/weld failures, the transition reflects the successful convergence of Mission Raftaar and the Zero Accident goal. Example: enables semi-high-speed services like Vande Bharat Express.
- 2. Mechanisation of Maintenance:** Track machines increased from 748 to 1,785. Mechanised: ballast cleaning, tamping and rail grinding (1 lakh km+). Example: results in reduced maintenance time and increased track availability despite higher traffic.
- 3. Digital Backbone and Real-Time Systems:** IP-MPLS telecom backbone across 1,396 stations. Integrated Passenger Information System (IPIS) at 1,405 stations. Example: GPS-based Oscillation Monitoring Systems (OMS) improve ride quality.
- 4. Mission Raftaar:** Track strengthening, removal of permanent speed restrictions (PSRs), and the proliferation of Vande Bharat trainsets have pushed the average speed of premium trains toward the 130–160 kmph bracket.

Logistical Transformation of the Economy

- 1. Freight Efficiency and Industrial Growth:** Through the Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) and the Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminals, IR is aiming to reduce India's logistics cost from 14% to under 10% of GDP. DFCs reduce transit time by 30–40% and enable double-stack container movement. Example: Aligns with NITI Aayog vision of reducing logistics cost from ~14% to global benchmarks (~8%)
- 2. Multimodal Integration:** Integration with PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan: rail-port-road connectivity and industrial corridors and economic zones. Example: Creates networked infrastructure economy.
- 3. The Multiplier Effect:** Every rupee invested in Railway Capex has a multiplier effect of nearly 5x on the economy, stimulating demand in steel, cement, and high-tech manufacturing (rolling stock).

Challenges

- 1. The Operating Ratio (OR):** While capital investment is at an all-time high, the high operating ratio driven by social service obligations and pension liabilities limits internal resource generation.
- 2. Last-Mile Connectivity:** The Transformation is incomplete if the railway station remains an isolated hub. Integration with urban transport (Metro/Bus) via the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan is essential.
- 3. Mixed Traffic Bottlenecks:** Running high-speed passenger trains on the same tracks as heavy freight remains a challenge. Full segregation via DFCs is the only long-term solution.

Way Forward

1. **Monetization:** Leveraging National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) for station redevelopment to reduce the burden on the exchequer.
2. **Digital Twins:** Using AI and Digital Twin technology for predictive maintenance of tracks and rolling stock.
3. **Green Railways:** Transitioning to Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030 through 100% electrification and solar-powered stations.

Conclusion

Infrastructure is the backbone of development; modern Railways exemplify how technology-driven mobility can power inclusive growth and national transformation.

Analyze India's shift from managing major powers to building 'partnerships with equals'. Evaluate its role in creating a new global strategic architecture.

Introduction

In early 2026, India signed the India-EU FTA called the mother of all deals and a strategic trade reset with the US, yet simultaneously faced Washington's tariffs for purchasing Russian energy. This paradox defines India's moment: bilateral dependency is a vulnerability; only building partnerships with equals converts capability into durable global influence.

From Strategic Balancing to Strategic Shaping

1. India's foreign policy has evolved from Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment, and now toward strategic leadership.
2. Earlier, India balanced great powers (U.S.-USSR, later U.S.-China), preserving autonomy. However, supply-chain weaponisation (post-Galwan disruptions, U.S. tariff pressures) has exposed limits of mere relationship management.
3. Today's shift reflects a post-globalisation reality where economics is subordinated to geopolitics—technology denial regimes, export controls, and sanctions regimes dictate access to critical goods (chips, APIs, rare earths). Thus, India seeks not just space within the system, but influence over the system itself.

Why Partnerships with Equals?

1. **Limits of Bilateralism:** Bilateral deals (India-U.S., India-EU FTA 2026) remain transactional and reversible. As seen globally, even strong trade ties are vulnerable to political shifts.
2. **Risk of Asymmetric Dependencies:** India depends on China for APIs and electronics. Advanced tech ecosystems remain U.S.-centric. Overdependence reduces strategic autonomy.
3. **Sectoral Plurilateralism as Alternative:** India is adopting issue-based coalitions:
 - **Technology:** iCET (India-U.S.), semiconductor alliances
 - **Energy:** International Solar Alliance, Global Biofuels Alliance
 - **Connectivity:** IMEC corridor

These reflect functional cooperation among equals, not hierarchical alliances.

Building Blocks of a New Global Strategic Architecture

1. **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India's DPI model (UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker) is emerging as a global template. Enables open, interoperable systems and offers alternative to U.S. Big Tech dominance and China's state-surveillance model. Exported to Global South nations, creating normative influence.
2. **De-dollarisation:** INR internationalization, local currency settlements with UAE, Russia, and Saudi Arabia insulate India from dollar-denominated shock — the Economic Survey 2025–26 identifies currency diversification as a strategic macroeconomic priority.
3. **Supply Chain Sovereignty: India-EU FTA (2026):** Covers €100 billion in bilateral trade; critically, includes provisions on supply chain resilience, a structural commitment, not just a tariff schedule.
4. **Strategic Coalitions:**
 - **Quad:** Indo-Pacific security architecture.
 - **BRICS+ and G20 leadership:** multipolarity advocacy.
 - **Voice of Global South:** India as bridge between developed and developing worlds.

Domestic Foundations of External Architecture

5. The Budget 2026–27 and policy frameworks emphasize: ₹2.78 lakh crore infrastructure push, manufacturing via PLI schemes and semiconductor and AI ecosystems.
6. The Economic Survey 2025–26 highlights: Need for resilient supply chains and importance of trusted partnerships over hyper-globalisation.
7. Think tanks like NITI Aayog stress: India as a connector economy and leveraging demographics, digital capacity, and market size.

Challenges

1. **Two-front vulnerability:** Sustained global leadership requires a stable neighbourhood; ongoing China border tensions and Pakistan-sponsored instability drain strategic bandwidth.
2. **Economic credibility gap:** A partnership of equals with Japan or France requires consistent 7–8% GDP growth., the Economic Survey 2025–26 projects 7.4% but flags global headwinds.
3. **Internal Polarization:** A nation's foreign policy strength is often a reflection of its internal social cohesion. Maintaining the image of a Vishwa-Mitra (Global Friend) requires navigating complex domestic socio-political narratives.

Way Forward

1. **IMEC Physical Infrastructure:** Accelerate railway and port connectivity despite West Asia conflict.
2. **BRICS Chairship (2026):** Deliver concrete outcomes on payments systems, AI governance, and climate resilience.

Mains Marathon Compilation [Third Week] April 2026

3. **UNSC Reform:** Move from 'demand' to 'coalition-building' for permanent seat. Coordinate with G4 (Japan, Germany, Brazil) and African Union (55 votes).
4. **Economic Resilience:** Reduce API dependence on China.
5. **Labour Mobility:** Expand bilateral agreements beyond Russia/Japan to Germany, Canada, Australia.
6. **Multilateral Engagement:** Champion 'reform not abandonment' of institutions like WTO, WHO, UNSC.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy is defined by Vishwa-Bandhutva (Universal Brotherhood) but with a realistic edge. By building partnerships with equals, India is ensuring that the New World Architecture is not a bipolar G2 (US-China) world, but a democratic, multipolar one.