

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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**Features :**

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

**INDEX**

India's rural models are shaping development diplomacy .....	2
The institutionalised sluggishness of the legal system .....	4
India's Migration Governance Has a Blind Spot .....	6
Creeping risk: On industrial accidents and neglect of risks .....	8
Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer .....	12
India-Iran: A partnership of strategic necessity .....	14
The River Basin Management Scheme: Strengthening Water Governance .....	16
Strategies to enhance fertilizer security .....	19
Costs and wages: On the Noida labour unrest .....	22
On delimitation and Parliament seats .....	24
India-Turkey Relations: Challenges and Scope for Reset .....	26
Differentiating Welfare and Development.....	28
Do More MPs Ensure Better Representation? .....	31
India's AI value paradox .....	32
The strategic vulnerability in India's LPG supply model .....	34
High-Value Crop Diversification in India .....	37
Doping in Sports: Issues and Policy Measures .....	41
In a turbulent world, India needs to plan for the worst .....	43
Challenges for India's Informal Urban Workforce .....	45
India's LPG crisis is the wake-up call it cannot ignore.....	48
Beyond trade deals to building a new architecture .....	51
Outer Space Governance .....	53
India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn.....	55
Common Concerns: on India-South Korea ties .....	58

## India's rural models are shaping development diplomacy

**Source:** The post “India’s rural models are shaping development diplomacy” has been created, based on “India’s rural models are shaping development diplomacy” published in “The Hindu” on 17th April 2026.

### UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

**Context:** India’s rural development model, led by the (NRLM), has evolved into a globally recognised framework for poverty alleviation and women empowerment. It is increasingly shaping India’s development diplomacy by offering scalable and inclusive solutions to other developing countries.

### Features and Achievements of NRLM

1. The NRLM was launched in 2011 with the objective of promoting self-employment and sustainable livelihoods among rural households.
2. The mission has mobilised over 100 million households into more than 9 million Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
3. It has enabled strong financial inclusion by facilitating bank linkages worth lakhs of crores and Keyexpanding access to formal credit for rural women.
4. The programme has significantly enhanced women’s empowerment by promoting collective decision-making and income generation.
5. It has built a robust institutional architecture at the village, cluster, and block levels, supported by trained community cadres.

### India’s Rural Transformation through NRLM

1. The NRLM has led to a quiet transformation in rural India by strengthening grassroots institutions and social mobilisation.
2. It has ensured last-mile service delivery through community-driven mechanisms and participatory governance.
3. The programme has maintained a strong focus on women-led development and financial discipline.
4. Continued budgetary support reflects its importance as a flagship rural poverty alleviation programme.

### Global Appeal and Adaptability

1. The NRLM model has attracted interest from several African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Malawi.
2. These countries are studying the SHG-based framework to replicate its success in their own socio-economic contexts.
3. The model is appealing because it promotes women’s economic empowerment and builds on community participation rather than heavy capital investment.
4. It aligns well with the realities of developing countries where informal economies dominate and livelihood diversification is necessary.
5. It represents a shift towards context-specific and locally adaptable development solutions in the Global South.

### Contribution to Development Diplomacy

1. India's development cooperation is increasingly focused on capacity-building and knowledge sharing rather than traditional aid.
2. The NRLM serves as a tool for exporting institutional models rooted in India's own development experience.
3. It helps build long-term partnerships between governments, institutions, and communities across countries.
4. It opens avenues for collaboration in sectors such as agriculture, financial inclusion, and digital governance.
5. It strengthens South-South cooperation by promoting peer learning and mutual development.

### Challenges

1. The replication of the NRLM model in other countries faces challenges due to differences in political systems, administrative capacity, and social structures.
2. Limited institutional capacity in partner countries can hinder the effective implementation of such community-driven models.
3. Cultural and gender norms in some regions may restrict women's participation in SHGs.
4. Financial sustainability and long-term handholding remain concerns in resource-constrained environments.
5. Coordination among multiple stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and international agencies, can be complex.
6. There is a risk of over-standardisation, which may reduce the flexibility required for local adaptation.

### Way Forward

1. India should institutionalise knowledge sharing by creating dedicated platforms for exchanging rural livelihood best practices with partner countries.
2. Capacity-building initiatives such as training programmes, fellowships, and immersion visits should be expanded for policymakers and grassroots practitioners.
3. Greater emphasis should be placed on adapting the NRLM model to local socio-cultural contexts rather than replicating it uniformly.
4. India should promote pilot projects and joint collaborations in partner countries to test and refine the model.
5. Strengthening digital tools and data-sharing mechanisms can enhance transparency, monitoring, and scalability.
6. Multilateral cooperation involving international organisations can help mobilise financial and technical resources.

**Conclusion:** The NRLM demonstrates how India's grassroots innovations can influence global development practices. By focusing on institution-building and knowledge sharing, India is redefining development diplomacy and strengthening South-South cooperation. Addressing contextual challenges and ensuring adaptive implementation will be crucial for sustaining its global impact.

**Question:** How are India's rural development models, particularly the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), contributing to development diplomacy and South-South cooperation? Discuss with challenges and way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## The institutionalised sluggishness of the legal system

**Source:** The post “The institutionalised sluggishness of the legal system” has been created, based on “The institutionalised sluggishness of the legal system” published in “The Hindu” on 17th April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance**

**Context:** The Indian legal system is facing institutional sluggishness due to massive case pendency, procedural delays, limited accessibility, and structural inefficiencies, which have transformed justice delivery into a prolonged endurance process rather than a timely constitutional guarantee.

### Causes of Institutional Sluggishness in the Indian Legal System 🏛️

#### 1. Massive case backlog

- a. Over five crore cases are pending across Indian courts, which has created a severe bottleneck in justice delivery.
- b. The backlog has made delay the norm rather than the exception in judicial functioning.

#### 2. Frequent procedural adjournments

- a. Repeated adjournments prolong litigation unnecessarily and keep cases unresolved for decades.
- b. Such procedural delays weaken faith in the rule of law among ordinary citizens.

#### 3. Long incarceration of undertrials

- a. Many undertrials remain imprisoned for years without trial because bail is often denied despite weak prima facie evidence.
- b. Laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act make incarceration easier than securing release.

#### 4. High cost of litigation

- a. The rising expenses of hiring competent legal representation make justice inaccessible for poorer sections.
- b. Justice is increasingly perceived as a luxury available mainly to the wealthy.

#### 5. Outdated court functioning methods

- a. Courts still depend heavily on physical documentation and in-person hearings.
- b. Limited adoption of digital case management systems contributes significantly to inefficiency.

#### 6. Centralisation of higher judiciary

- a. Litigants from distant regions must travel to the national capital for final appeals in the Supreme Court.
- b. This geographical centralisation imposes financial and logistical burdens on citizens.

### Social Consequences of Judicial Delays

**1. Loss of dignity and livelihood:** Long trials often destroy the dignity, livelihood, and social standing of accused individuals even before verdicts are delivered.

**2. Weakening of constitutional morality:** Persistent delays undermine citizens' trust in constitutional guarantees of liberty and fairness.

**3. Encouragement to lawbreakers:** Delay in punishment emboldens offenders and weakens deterrence in society.

### **Required Judicial Reforms for Faster Justice Delivery**

#### **1. Fixing strict timelines for trials**

- a. Courts must establish mandatory timelines to ensure trials are completed within one to two years.
- b. Speedy trials must become a standard procedural guarantee rather than an exception.

#### **2. Adoption of digital technologies**

- a. Artificial Intelligence and data-driven case management systems should be introduced to streamline filing and scheduling processes.
- b. Technology can help judges focus more on adjudication rather than administrative work.

**3. Expansion of virtual hearings:** Virtual court hearings can reduce travel burdens on litigants and improve efficiency in case disposal.

### **Need for Inclusivity and Accessibility in the Judiciary**

#### **1. Improving representation in the judiciary**

- a. Greater inclusion of women and marginalised communities in the Bench can improve judicial sensitivity and legitimacy.
- b. A diverse judiciary better reflects the lived realities of Indian society.

#### **2. Ensuring affordable legal services**

- a. The state must ensure access to quality legal representation for economically weaker sections.
- b. Equal justice requires reducing disparities between rich and poor litigants.

### **Strengthening Judicial Independence with Accountability**

#### **1. Preserving judicial independence**

- a. Judicial independence is essential for holding powerful actors accountable in a democracy.
- b. Courts must function as fearless referees protecting constitutional values.

#### **2. Increasing transparency in appointments**

- a. Streamlining judicial appointment procedures with clearer criteria can enhance public trust.
- b. Transparency improves institutional accountability without weakening autonomy.

## Structural and Institutional Reforms Needed

### 1. Establishment of regional benches of the Supreme Court

- a. Regional benches can reduce the burden on litigants travelling long distances for appeals.
- b. This reform would improve accessibility to the highest level of justice.

### 2. Promoting a culture of dispute resolution

- a. The legal system must shift from adversarial litigation toward faster resolution-oriented mechanisms.
- b. Efficient closure of cases should become a priority within the legal profession.

### 3. Treating judicial reform as a national priority

- a. Judicial reform must be approached as an institutional emergency rather than incremental adjustment.
- b. Systemic transformation is necessary to restore faith in justice delivery mechanisms.

**Conclusion:** India's progress as a constitutional democracy depends not only on economic growth but also on the timely delivery of justice. A citizen-centric judiciary that is efficient, inclusive, technologically enabled, and accountable is essential to uphold liberty and restore public confidence in the rule of law.

**Question:** "Justice delayed is justice denied has become a structural reality in India's legal system." Discuss the causes of institutional sluggishness in the Indian judiciary and suggest reforms to make justice delivery faster, inclusive, and citizen-centric.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

## India's Migration Governance Has a Blind Spot

**UPSC Syllabus:** Gs Paper 1- population and associated issues And Gs Paper 2- mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

### Introduction

India has demonstrated strong capacity in evacuation efforts, bringing back over **4.75 lakh citizens from West Asia**. These operations reflect logistical strength and diplomatic reach. However, migration governance remains largely **crisis-driven**, becoming visible only during disruptions. It fails to address the full continuum of **mobility, work, welfare, and return**. This creates structural gaps in coordination, protection, and reintegration, leaving migrants exposed across different stages of their journey.

### Centrality of Migration and Emerging Vulnerabilities

1. **Migration as an economic pillar:** Migration supports **household income, labour supply, and remittances**, making it central to India's economy.
1. **High dependence on the Gulf region:** The Gulf hosts **99.35 lakh Indians** and contributes **37.9% of remittances**, showing strong regional dependence.
2. **Direct link to local economies:** Any disruption abroad affects **district economies, families, and welfare systems** in India.

3. **Large but unequal diaspora:** India has over **18 million migrants**, but most are not high-skilled and work in vulnerable sectors.
4. **Presence in risky regions:** Many migrants and students live in **conflict-prone or unstable countries**, increasing exposure to crises.
5. **Weak legal and work conditions:** Migrants often face **informal contracts and limited protections**, making them insecure.
6. **Rising but unnoticed vulnerabilities:** Even without crisis, **cost of living, LPG prices, and job slowdowns** reduce migrant stability.

### Major Concerns Related to India's Migration System

#### A. Structural and Institutional Gaps

1. **Fragmented governance structure:** Different ministries handle separate roles, leading to **lack of coordination and service gaps**.
2. **Disconnection from migrant journey:** Policies do not follow the **full migration cycle from source to destination and return**.
3. **Partial visibility of migrants:** Migrants are tracked in parts, but **no system captures their complete journey**.
4. **Weak institutionalisation of migration chains:** Migration systems are **thinly organised and highly sensitive to disruptions**.
5. **Uneven state capacity:** Some states like **Kerala have strong systems**, while others lack preparedness.

#### B. Data Deficit and Policy Blindness

1. **Lack of granular data:** Absence of **real-time and detailed migration data** limits planning and early response.
2. **Administrative gap becoming welfare issue:** Data gaps turn into **serious welfare failures during crises**.
3. **Slow and invisible stress:** Migrants continue working and remitting, but worsening conditions remain unnoticed by policy systems.
4. **Lessons ignored from Covid:** Around **1.8 crore returnees exposed major gaps**, but reforms remain limited.

#### C. Welfare, Protection, and Lifecycle Gaps

1. **Neglect of pre-departure stage:** Limited focus on **safe recruitment and preparation before migration**.
2. **Weak support at destination:** Migrants lack **consistent welfare systems and protections abroad**.
3. **Absence of reintegration framework:** Returnees face **job loss, debt, and lack of structured support**.
4. **Unplanned return processes:** Return is handled as an **emergency, not a planned transition**.
5. **Unregulated migration pathways:** Many migrants depend on **informal channels, increasing risks**.
6. **Policy focus on high-visibility groups:** Diaspora policy often prioritises **elite migrants, ignoring vulnerable workers and students**.

### Policy Opportunity: Towards Integrated Mobility Governance

1. **Need for lifecycle approach:** Migration should be governed across **departure, employment, and return stages**.
2. **Overseas Mobility Bill as a step:** The **Overseas Mobility Facilitation and Welfare Bill** can help build welfare into migration systems.
3. **Integration of internal and external migration:** Both forms share **similar challenges and require unified policy attention**.
4. **Creation of continuous governance systems:** Focus should shift to **ongoing coordination, welfare, and monitoring**.
5. **Building on existing strengths:** India already has **policy base, bilateral ties, and labour corridors** to support reform.
6. **Recognising migration as a system:** Migration should be treated as a **connected social and economic process**, not isolated events.
7. **Improving institutional coordination:** Better coordination is needed across **ministries, states, and local bodies**.

### Way Forward

1. **Develop real-time migrant database:** Create a **dynamic system to track migrants**, especially in vulnerable regions.
2. **Ensure structured reintegration support:** Provide **job matching, skill use, and short-term assistance** for returnees.
3. **Expand formal labour agreements:** Strengthen partnerships with destination countries for **safety, insurance, and exit options**.
4. **Enhance protection for students abroad:** Monitor **education quality, housing, and safety conditions** through embassies.
5. **Adopt inclusive diaspora approach:** Recognise the needs of **workers, students, and low-income migrants**, not just elites.
6. **Promote inter-ministerial coordination:** Establish a **joint framework involving MEA, Labour, states, and other bodies**.
7. **Utilise returnees as assets:** Recognise that returnees bring **skills and experience useful for development**.

### Conclusion

India's migration governance shows strength in evacuation but lacks a continuous and integrated system. Migration must be managed as a **connected process across mobility, work, and return**, not only during crises. Strengthening data, coordination, and reintegration systems is essential to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure migrants are protected and supported at every stage of their journey.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how India's migration governance suffers from structural, data, and welfare gaps, and why a shift from crisis-driven response to a lifecycle-based approach is needed.

**Source:** Indian Express

### Creeping risk: On industrial accidents and neglect of risks

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Disaster and disaster management.

### Introduction

Industrial accidents in India reflect a pattern of **creeping risk**, where failures build slowly due to weak monitoring, unsafe practices, and poor labour protection. The Sakti boiler explosion, which killed **20 people**,

shows how risks accumulate during unstable operations. Such incidents reveal gaps in inspection, safety systems, and accountability, where accidents are treated as routine outcomes instead of preventable failures.

### Nature of Industrial Accidents: Gradual Build-up of Risk

1. **Non-sudden technical failure:** Boiler explosions do not occur suddenly; they develop due to **overpressure, scaling, mismanaged water levels, and revival stress** that build up over time.
2. **Unstable operating phases:** Risk becomes higher during **post-restart, newly commissioned, or under-capacity operations**, where systems are not stable.
3. **Thermal and pressure imbalance:** Failures occur due to **temporary thermal and pressure imbalances** during such unstable operating conditions.
4. **Recurring pattern across incidents:** Similar conditions were seen in **Visakhapatnam (2020)** and **Neyveli (2020)**, which shows that risk builds in a repeated manner.

### Causes of Industrial Accidents in India

#### 1. Regulatory and inspection failures

- **Static inspection system:** The current system allows boiler certification for **up to one year**, even though conditions change daily.
- **No phase-specific oversight:** The regulatory framework does not increase monitoring during **restart or unstable operational phases**, where risks are higher.
- **Weak enforcement capacity:** Inspectorates are often **understaffed, underfunded, and lack technical expertise**, which weakens enforcement.

#### 2. Policy and governance issues

- **Focus on ease of doing business:** The system promotes **self-certification and scheduled third-party audits**, which reduces surprise inspections.
- **Wrong incentives:** The system **penalises downtime instead of unsafe operations**, which discourages maintenance shutdowns.
- **Limited monitoring approach:** The framework focuses on **fabrication standards instead of continuous monitoring and auditing**, which limits safety checks.

#### 3. Technical and operational failures

- **Poor maintenance practices:** Industries often neglect regular inspection and repair, which leads to **equipment failure and malfunction**.
- **Inadequate risk assessment:** Many units fail to carry out proper hazard identification and safety audits, which allows risks to remain hidden.
- **Ageing infrastructure stress:** Industrial expansion is pushing **older plants to operate close to their limits**, which increases the chances of failure.

#### 4. Labour and workplace issues

- **Contract labour vulnerability:** A large number of workers are migrants hired through subcontractors, which creates **unclear responsibility in case of accidents**.
- **Lack of training and awareness:** Many workers do not have proper knowledge about **hazardous materials, machinery, and emergency procedures**.
- **Language barriers in safety:** Safety manuals and signage are often **not available in workers' native languages**, which reduces understanding.
- **Weak legal accountability:** The **OSH Code, 2020** does not clearly fix criminal liability on principal employers for safety lapses in contractor operations.

## 5. Structural safety culture problems

- **Poor safety culture:** Many organisations do not prioritise safety, which leads to **violations of protocols and unsafe practices**.
- **Fragmented responsibility:** Operators and contractors often **shift blame after accidents**, which weakens accountability.
- **Informal sector risks:** A large part of industrial activity takes place in the **informal sector**, where regulation is weak and risks are higher.

## Impacts of Industrial Accidents in India

### 1. Human and health impacts

- **Loss of life:** Industrial disasters cause **immediate deaths**, as seen in the Sakti incident.
- **Severe injuries:** Many survivors suffer from **burns, respiratory damage, and long-term disabilities**.
- **Inter-generational effects:** Exposure to toxic substances can cause **long-term health problems across generations**.

### 2. Environmental impacts

- **Air pollution:** Gas leaks release **toxic substances into the air**, which can spread over large areas.
- **Water contamination:** Chemical leaks and discharge pollute **rivers and water bodies**, making them unsafe.
- **Soil degradation:** Hazardous substances make **agricultural land infertile and unsafe for crops**.
- **Biodiversity loss:** Toxic exposure harms **plants, animals, and entire ecosystems**.

### 3. Economic and social impacts

- **Loss of livelihoods:** Industrial shutdowns lead to **job losses and reduced income for workers**.
- **Economic disruption:** Accidents disturb **local economies, supply chains, and investor confidence**.
- **Impact on agriculture:** Contamination affects **crop production and farmers' income**.
- **Displacement of people:** People living in affected areas are forced to **leave their homes**, causing social disruption.

## Initiatives Taken to Prevent Industrial Accidents in India

### 1. Legal and regulatory framework

- **Factories Act, 1948:** This Act provides rules for **worker safety, health, and welfare**, especially in hazardous industries.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** This Act gives the government powers to **protect and improve environmental quality**.
- **Hazardous Chemicals Rules, 1989:** These rules require industries to prepare **safety reports, emergency plans, and public information systems**.
- **Boiler Accident Inquiry Rules, 2025:** These rules have been introduced to improve accident investigation, but their impact on structural issues is still uncertain.

### 2. Disaster management and preparedness

- **Chemical Accidents Rules, 1996:** These rules mandate **off-site emergency plans and crisis groups** at different administrative levels.

- **Guidelines on Chemical Disaster Management (2007):** These guidelines focus on **risk mapping, emergency planning, and regular mock drills.**

### 3. Insurance and labour protection

- **Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991:** This Act ensures **immediate relief to affected persons without requiring proof of fault.**
- **OSH Code, 2020:** This Code aims to improve safety and working conditions through **audits and employer responsibility**, though gaps remain.

### Way Forward

#### 1. Strengthening regulation and enforcement

- **Dynamic inspection system:** The system should shift from annual certification to **continuous monitoring and real-time audits.**
- **Increase inspection capacity:** Authorities should improve **staffing, funding, and technical expertise** to ensure better enforcement.
- **Strict penalties:** There should be **strong penalties and faster legal action** for safety violations.

#### 2. Improving safety culture

- **Safety as a core value:** Organisations should treat safety as a **central priority in all operations and decisions.**
- **Encourage reporting:** Workers should be encouraged to **report risks and unsafe conditions without fear.**

#### 3. Technological and planning measures

- **Use of advanced tools:** Industries should use **data-based systems and predictive tools** to identify risks early.
- **Better industrial zoning:** Hazardous industries should be located **away from densely populated areas.**

#### 4. Worker-centric reforms

- **Training and awareness:** Workers should receive **regular training on safety and emergency response.**
- **Language accessibility:** Safety information should be **provided in workers' native languages** for better understanding.
- **Clear accountability:** The law should ensure **direct responsibility of principal employers** for safety lapses in contractor operations.

### Conclusion

Industrial accidents in India show that risks build slowly due to weak regulation, poor safety practices, and labour neglect. These are not isolated events but systemic failures. Addressing them requires **continuous monitoring, strict enforcement, and worker-focused reforms.** Without such changes, industries and regulators will continue to treat accidents as a normal cost, which will keep endangering human lives and the environment.

### Question for practice:

Examine the causes, impacts, and regulatory gaps responsible for industrial accidents in India, and suggest measures to address the creeping risk in industrial safety.

**Source:** The Hindu

### **Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer**

**Source:** The post "Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer" has been created, based on "Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer" published in "The Hindu" on 18th April 2026.

#### **UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance**

**Context:** India is one of the world's largest democracies with high voter participation and an increasingly active female electorate. However, women remain significantly underrepresented in legislative institutions. This gap between participation and representation highlights the urgent need for implementing the Women's Reservation Bill.

#### **Present Status of Women's Representation**

1. Women constitute nearly **half of India's population**, yet their representation in **State Assemblies is only around 9%**.
2. Women's representation in **Parliament remains approximately 14-15%**, which is below global democratic benchmarks.
3. This imbalance shows that electoral participation has not translated into legislative empowerment.

#### **Structural Reasons for Underrepresentation**

1. Political parties act as gatekeepers and tend to nominate fewer women candidates compared to men.
2. Electoral politics requires financial resources, networks, and social capital, where women face structural disadvantages.
3. Cultural norms and safety concerns discourage women from entering political competition.
4. These barriers create a cycle of exclusion that limits women's legislative presence.

#### **Need for the Women's Reservation Bill**

##### **1. Correcting Structural Inequality**

- a. The present political system is influenced by privilege and networks rather than purely merit-based access.
- b. Reservations act as a corrective institutional intervention to address historical gender exclusion.

##### **2. Evidence from Local Governance**

- a. Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has produced transformative governance outcomes.
- b. Women representatives have shifted policy priorities toward health, education, sanitation, and drinking water.
- c. These sectors are central to inclusive human development.

### 3. Creating Leadership Pipelines

- a. Women's representation challenges entrenched patriarchal social norms.
- b. Young girls begin to see leadership roles as achievable.
- c. This gradually creates a pipeline of future women political leaders.

### Need for Reservation in State Assemblies and Parliament

1. Representation at the State level remains critically low at around 9%.
2. State governments influence sectors such as education, health, law and order, and local development.
3. The limited presence of women restricts the participation of half the population in policy formulation.

### Limitations of Voluntary Party-Level Reforms

1. Political parties have repeatedly promised to increase women's representation.
2. However, voluntary efforts have not produced meaningful improvements.
3. Structural challenges require legislative intervention through reservation.

### Role in Deepening Democracy

1. High voter turnout among women reflects democratic participation but does not ensure political empowerment.
2. True democratic strengthening requires representation at decision-making levels.
3. Reservation bridges the gap between participation and representation.

### Developmental Benefits of Women's Representation

1. Gender-inclusive governance leads to more equitable public policies.
2. It improves social development indicators such as health and education outcomes.
3. It contributes to sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

### Way Forward

1. The Women's Reservation Bill should be implemented without further delay to address long-standing structural exclusion.
2. Political parties should complement reservations by voluntarily increasing women's candidate nominations beyond the minimum threshold.
3. Capacity-building programmes should be introduced to strengthen leadership skills among women representatives.
4. Measures to improve women's political safety and access to campaign finance should be strengthened.
5. Social awareness campaigns should be promoted to change patriarchal attitudes toward women's leadership roles.
6. Lessons from the successful implementation of reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions should guide reforms at higher legislative levels.

**Conclusion:** India has already demonstrated the success of reservation policies in local governance institutions. Extending reservations to State Assemblies and Parliament represents a logical step toward democratic deepening. The Women's Reservation Bill is therefore essential not only for gender justice but also for strengthening inclusive and representative democracy.

**Question:** Despite high female voter participation in India, women remain underrepresented in legislatures. Examine the need for the Women's Reservation Bill and discuss its role in deepening democracy. Suggest suitable measures for its effective implementation.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

### **India-Iran: A partnership of strategic necessity**

**Source:** The post "India-Iran: A partnership of strategic necessity" has been created, based on "India-Iran: A partnership of strategic necessity" published in "The Pioneer" on 18th April 2026.

#### **UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations**

**Context:** India and Iran share deep civilisational ties rooted in centuries of cultural exchange and trade interactions. In the contemporary geopolitical context, their relationship is driven primarily by connectivity interests, energy security needs, and India's strategic autonomy in West Asia. However, the partnership also faces several geopolitical and economic constraints.

#### **Strategic Importance of Iran for India**

##### **1. Connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia**

- a. The Chabahar Port provides India with direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan.
- b. The port strengthens India's regional connectivity strategy and enhances trade outreach toward Eurasia.
- c. It also supports Iran's economy by generating transit revenues under sanctions pressure.

##### **2. Role of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**

- a. The International North-South Transport Corridor connects India with Russia and Europe through Iran via a multimodal transport network.
- b. It reduces transportation time and cost compared to traditional maritime routes.
- c. It enhances Iran's importance as a transit hub and supports India's Eurasian engagement.

##### **3. Energy Security Cooperation**

- a. Iran possesses one of the world's largest oil reserves and has historically been a reliable crude supplier to India.
- b. India used mechanisms such as the rupee-rial arrangement to continue oil trade during sanctions.
- c. Energy cooperation helps India diversify its import basket and strengthen long-term energy security.

##### **4. Maritime Security Cooperation**

- a. Stability in the Arabian Sea and the Strait of Hormuz is critical for India's energy imports and trade flows.

- b. Cooperation with Iran helps secure maritime chokepoints and shipping lanes essential for India's economy.

#### 5. Support for Strategic Autonomy in West Asia

- a. India has maintained balanced relations with Iran alongside partnerships with the United States and Israel.
- b. Under S. Jaishankar, India has followed a policy of multi-alignment in West Asia.
- c. Even leaders such as Shashi Tharoor have acknowledged the professionalism of India's diplomatic balancing strategy.

#### 6. Trade and Humanitarian Cooperation

- a. India exports essential commodities such as basmati rice, tea, sugar, and medicines to Iran during sanctions-induced shortages.
- b. India's pharmaceutical sector plays a stabilising role in Iran's domestic health supply chain.
- c. Such cooperation strengthens India's credibility as a dependable partner.

#### Challenges in India-Iran Relations

##### 1. Impact of US Sanctions on Iran

- a. Economic sanctions imposed by the United States restrict India's ability to expand trade and investment with Iran.
- b. These sanctions disrupted India's crude oil imports from Iran after 2019.
- c. Financial restrictions complicate banking transactions and infrastructure cooperation.

##### 2. Balancing Relations with the United States and Israel

- a. India's strategic partnership with the United States creates diplomatic constraints in expanding engagement with Iran.
- b. India must carefully balance relations between competing geopolitical actors in West Asia.
- c. This limits the pace and scale of cooperation with Iran.

##### 3. Regional Instability in West Asia

- a. Conflicts in the Red Sea region and tensions involving Iran create uncertainty in trade routes.
- b. Instability affects maritime security and increases risks to Indian shipping and energy imports.

##### 4. Slow Progress in Connectivity Projects

- a. Infrastructure development at Chabahar Port and along the INSTC corridor has progressed more slowly than expected.
- b. Sanctions-related uncertainties discourage private investment participation.

##### 5. Economic Risks from Iran-US Confrontation

- a. Escalation between Iran and the United States can disrupt global supply chains and energy markets.

- b. Indian companies such as Reliance Industries may face export restrictions and refinery-related losses during geopolitical crises.

## 6. Competition from Other Regional Actors

- a. China's growing engagement with Iran under long-term strategic agreements creates competition for influence.
- b. This may reduce India's strategic space in Iran.

## Way Forward

1. India should accelerate infrastructure development and operationalisation of Chabahar Port to strengthen regional connectivity.
2. India should fast-track the implementation of the International North-South Transport Corridor to enhance trade integration with Eurasia.
3. India should continue calibrated diplomatic engagement with Iran while maintaining strategic partnerships with the United States and Israel.
4. India should expand cooperation in pharmaceuticals, food security supplies, and infrastructure sectors.
5. India should strengthen maritime security coordination to safeguard shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz.
6. India should leverage its strategic autonomy to play a constructive role in reducing tensions in West Asia.

**Conclusion:** India–Iran relations are shaped by mutual strategic necessity in connectivity, energy security, and regional diplomacy. Despite geopolitical constraints and sanctions-related challenges, the partnership remains vital for India's long-term strategic interests. A balanced and pragmatic engagement with Iran will remain essential for safeguarding India's geopolitical flexibility in West Asia.

**Question:** India–Iran relations are shaped by strategic necessity rather than sentiment. Examine the significance of India–Iran relations for India's connectivity, energy security, and regional diplomacy. Also, discuss the challenges in the bilateral relationship.

**Source:** [The Pioneer](#)

## The River Basin Management Scheme: Strengthening Water Governance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Governance And Gs Paper 1- water-bodies

### Introduction

Water is essential for ecosystems, livelihoods, and economic activities such as agriculture, industry, and energy. Increasing demand, uneven distribution, and ecological stress have intensified pressure on water resources in India. Complex and interlinked river systems further complicate management. **The River Basin Management (RBM) Scheme** introduces a scientific and integrated approach to manage rivers, groundwater, and ecosystems at the basin level. It aims to ensure sustainable use, improve coordination, and address challenges like floods, erosion, and water imbalance.

### What is River Basin Management?

1. **Integrated resource management:** RBM manages **rivers, lakes, groundwater, and ecosystems together** to ensure balanced and sustainable use of water resources.
2. **Need in Indian context:** India's river systems are **complex and interlinked**, making basin-level planning necessary to address floods, erosion, and uneven water distribution.
3. **Scheme nature and objective:** It is a **central sector scheme** under the Ministry of Jal Shakti focusing on **sustainable use, irrigation, hydropower, and flood management**.

### Institutional Architecture for Coordinated Water Resource Management

1. **Central sector scheme:** It is implemented under the **Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti**. It supports planning, investigation, and development.
2. **Key implementing agencies:** The scheme works through **Brahmaputra Board, Central Water Commission (CWC), and National Water Development Agency (NWDA)**. Each agency handles specific functions.
3. **Brahmaputra Board role:** It prepares **master plans, flood control measures, and erosion prevention works**. It also undertakes **drainage development, raised platforms, and capacity building**.
4. **CWC role:** It conducts **surveys, investigations, and prepares Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)**. It focuses on basins like **Indus, Brahmaputra, Barak, and Teesta**.
5. **NWDA role:** It prepares **Pre-Feasibility Reports, Feasibility Reports, and DPRs**. It supports **interlinking of rivers and water balance studies**.
6. **Geographical focus and support:** The scheme focuses on **North Eastern region, Indus Basin, and Himalayan rivers**. It supports states like **Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland**.
7. **Financial commitment:** The scheme has **₹1276 crore (2021–26)** and proposed **₹2183 crore (2026–31)**. This shows **increased focus on integrated planning**.

### Operational Approach: Planning, Investigation, and Community-Centric Interventions

1. **Basin planning:** Preparation and updating of **river basin master plans** provide a long-term roadmap for water resource development and conservation.
2. **Survey and investigation:** Field studies like **hydrological, geological, and topographical surveys** support data-based planning and DPR preparation.
3. **Project development:** Focus on **multipurpose projects** for irrigation, hydropower, flood control, and drainage management.

4. **Flood and erosion management:** Measures include **anti-erosion works, bio-engineering techniques, and flood control structures** to protect land and communities.
5. **Drainage development:** Activities improve **water flow and reduce waterlogging**, enhancing land productivity.
6. **Community-based interventions:** Initiatives like **springshed management and indigenous water practices** improve local water use and ecosystem health.
7. **Use of modern technology:** Tools like **GIS, remote sensing, LiDAR, and drone surveys** improve accuracy in planning and implementation.

### Significance of RBM

1. **Strategic basin focus:** The scheme prioritises **Brahmaputra, Barak, Teesta, and Indus basins** due to their importance in water security and ecological stability.
2. **Support to vulnerable regions:** It provides **technical and financial support** to states like Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland.
3. **Improved water infrastructure:** DPRs and planning lead to **expansion of irrigation, hydropower generation, and better flood control**.
4. **Progress in interlinking rivers:** Identification of **30 river link projects**, with **26 Feasibility Reports and 15 DPRs completed**, supports long-term water security.
5. **Flood protection outcomes:** Significant protection of **Majuli Island** and other erosion-prone areas shows on-ground impact.
6. **Capacity and technology advancement:** Adoption of advanced tools improves **efficiency, accuracy, and long-term planning capacity**.

### Major Concern related to River Basin Management

1. **Geographical & Logistics Constraints:** Many projects are located in remote, difficult terrains like the North East and Jammu & Kashmir. These areas have limited working seasons and high logistical costs for transporting equipment like LiDAR and drones.
2. **Interstate & Federal Conflicts:** Water is primarily a state subject in India, leading to "conflictual federalism" where states and the centre often disagree over water allocation and property rights.
3. **Data & Knowledge Gaps:** Effective governance requires transparent data sharing. However, there is often limited sharing of real-time data on river flows and water quality between stakeholders, which fuels mistrust and hampers coordinated responses to floods and droughts.
4. **Institutional Fragmentation:** Water management is often handled in "silos"—groundwater vs. surface water, or irrigation vs. drinking water—with little dialogue between departments.

5. **Climate Change & Environmental Risks:** Intensifying climate change leads to erratic rainfall and glacial melt, particularly in Himalayan basins like the Indus and Teesta. Traditional engineering solutions often fail to account for these dynamic, long-term ecological costs.
6. **Reductionist planning mindset:** Water is treated as a **stock resource for human use**. This ignores its role in the **eco-hydrological cycle**.
7. **Over-reliance on structural interventions:** Excessive focus on **dams, canals, and diversion projects** disturbs natural flow, sediment movement, and ecosystems.

### Way Forward

1. **Strengthening coordination:** Improve **institutional coordination** among central agencies, states, and local communities for better basin management.
2. **Sustained technical support:** Continue **financial and technical assistance** to less developed and border states.
3. **Focus on demand management:** Move beyond supply expansion. Encourage **efficient use and water-saving practices**.
4. **Expansion of technology use:** Increase use of **modern tools like GIS, LiDAR, and hydrological modelling** for better planning.
5. **Enhancing community role:** Promote **local participation and indigenous practices** for sustainable water use.
6. **Maintaining continuity of projects:** Ensure long-term continuation of **basin planning, Detailed Project Report (DPR) preparation, and flood management works**.

### Conclusion

The River Basin Management Scheme strengthens water governance through integrated planning, institutional coordination, and modern technology. It supports irrigation, hydropower, and flood control while addressing regional imbalances. Continued success depends on sustained investment, improved coordination among agencies and states, and greater community participation to ensure long-term water security and sustainable basin-level development.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the role of the River Basin Management Scheme in strengthening water governance in India, along with its institutional framework, operational approach, significance, and major concerns.

Source: [PIB](#)

## Strategies to enhance fertilizer security

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Agriculture

### Introduction

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India's fertilizer security is under strain due to **heavy dependence on imports**, especially from the Gulf for LNG, ammonia, sulphur, urea, and DAP. The system is further stressed by **excessive reliance on urea for nitrogen use, rising demand, and limited domestic production growth**. This has widened the supply gap and increased vulnerability. A comprehensive strategy focusing on **domestic capacity, balanced nutrient use, efficiency improvement, and policy reforms** is essential to ensure long-term fertilizer security.

### Major Issues with India's Fertiliser Sector

1. **High import dependence:** India depends on imports for ~70% of fertilisers and feedstocks, exposing it to global risks.
2. **Dependence on imported gas for urea production:** Domestic urea production relies on ~85% imported gas, increasing vulnerability.
3. **Excessive use of urea:** Farmers use more than required urea, leading to imbalance.
4. **Distorted pricing system:** Urea is sold at < \$70/tonne while global price is ~\$795/tonne, causing inefficient use and diversion.
5. **Diversion and misuse:** Low prices create arbitrage opportunities, leading to use in non-agricultural sectors and smuggling.
6. **Low Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE):** Granular urea has only 35–40% efficiency, leading to wastage of nutrients.
7. **Environmental and health impact:** Excess use of nitrogen fertilisers leads to release of **nitrous oxide, which is 273 times more harmful than CO<sub>2</sub>** and also contaminates groundwater with nitrates, causing diseases like **blue baby syndrome, thyroid problems, and diabetes**.
8. **Policy bias against efficient fertilisers:** Liquid urea has ~90% NUE but is not subsidised, showing irrational policy.
9. **Inefficient fertiliser composition:** DAP contains 18% nitrogen along with 46% phosphorus, worsening nitrogen overuse.
10. **Lack of TSP production:** No domestic production of TSP with 46% phosphorus, despite need for balanced fertilisation.

### Government Initiatives and Progress

1. **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS):** Provides fixed subsidy on P (Phosphorus) and K (Potassium) fertilisers and allows price flexibility for companies.
2. **Fertiliser subsidy support:** The total fertiliser subsidy was raised to ₹1,91,836 crore, reflecting strong government support to protect farmers from global price rise.
3. **Fixed price of urea:** Urea is sold at a fixed price of ₹242 per 45 kg bag, with the government covering the cost difference through subsidy.
4. **Special subsidy for DAP:** A one-time subsidy of ₹3,500 per tonne was provided to keep DAP affordable despite rising global prices.
5. **One Nation One Fertilizer (ONOF):** The government introduced uniform branding as **"Bharat Urea, Bharat DAP, and Bharat NPK"** to ensure quality and reduce confusion among farmers.
6. **Expansion of domestic production:** The government has operationalised six new urea plants, adding 76.2 LMT capacity and increasing domestic production to over 314 LMT.
7. **Nano fertiliser initiatives:** The government promotes nano urea and nano DAP through field demonstrations, awareness campaigns, and availability at PMKSK centres.
8. **Use of technology in application:** Initiatives like Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra and Namu Drone Didi programme promote drone-based spraying of fertilisers.

9. **Neem coated urea programme:** The government mandates neem coating of urea to reduce nitrogen loss and improve efficiency, reducing fertiliser requirement by about 10%.
10. **PM-PRANAM scheme:** This Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth (PM-PRANAM ) scheme incentivises states to reduce chemical fertiliser use and promotes balanced nutrient application.
11. **Promotion of biofertilisers:** The government supports use of biofertilisers like Rhizobium, Azotobacter, and PSB through research and extension activities.
12. **Soil Health Card scheme:** Farmers are provided soil health cards that test 12 parameters and guide appropriate fertiliser use every two years.
13. **Digital monitoring systems:** Systems like Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS) and Mobile Fertilizer Management System (mFMS) track fertiliser supply from production to retail and improve transparency in distribution.
14. **International supply agreements:** India has signed long-term agreements, including 3.1 million tonnes annual DAP supply from Saudi Arabia, and cooperation with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

### What Should Be Done?

#### 1. Strengthening domestic production systems:

- **Revival of flexible production methods:** Urea plants should use **gas and naphtha mix** and continue coal-based utilities to handle input shortages and reduce costs.
- **Improving efficiency and capacity:** Old plants should be modernised and coal-based units should receive **proper reimbursement based on realistic norms** to sustain production.

#### 2. Transition towards green fertilizers:

- **Adoption of green ammonia:** Green ammonia should be promoted to **reduce dependence on imported ammonia and LNG**, and support cleaner and more sustainable fertilizer production.
- **Scaling green urea production:** Demonstration plants should be set up, and existing plants should gradually replace grey ammonia to achieve **20–25% production through green ammonia**.

#### 3. Diversification of nitrogen sources:

- **Promoting balanced fertilizers:** Increasing share of **NP/NPK fertilizers from current 18%** can reduce overdependence on urea.
- **Expanding ammonium sulphate use:** Ammonium Sulphate (AS) with **20.5% nitrogen and 23% sulphur** should be promoted, as its current use is less than **1 MT** despite production potential.

#### 4. Reforming subsidy structure:

- **Correcting subsidy imbalance:** Urea receives **85–90% subsidy without cap**, while alternatives get lower support, creating distortion.

- **Making alternatives affordable:** Removing subsidy cap of ₹9,479 per tonne on AS can reduce price gap, as it is currently **four times costlier than urea**.

#### 5. Improving nitrogen use efficiency (NUE):

- **Promoting efficient fertilizer use:** Site-specific integrated nutrient management should be adopted to reduce wastage.
- **Use of soil-enhancing inputs:** Organic fertilizers and **bio-char** can improve soil health and increase NUE by **about 10 percentage points**.

#### Conclusion

Fertilizer security requires a **shift from import dependence to a balanced and efficient system**. Strengthening domestic production, promoting green fertilizers, diversifying nutrient sources, and correcting subsidy distortions are key steps. Improving nitrogen use efficiency will further reduce pressure on resources. A coordinated approach can ensure **self-reliance, sustainable agriculture, and long-term resilience in the fertilizer sector**.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges affecting India's fertilizer security and evaluate the strategies required to achieve self-sufficiency and sustainable nutrient use.

Source: [Businessline](#)

### Costs and wages: On the Noida labour unrest

**Source:** The post "**Costs and wages: On the Noida labour unrest**" has been created, based on "**Costs and wages: On the Noida labour unrest**" published in "The Hindu" on 20th April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3- Economy

**Context:** The recent factory unrest in Noida highlights that labour dissatisfaction is not limited to wage revision but is rooted in deeper structural problems in India's industrial labour market. The protests reflect concerns related to contract employment, lack of social security, rising cost of living, and weak enforcement of labour protections.

#### Structural Issues Behind the Factory Unrest

##### 1. High Informality Despite Formal Industrial Employment

- a. A significant proportion of workers in formal establishments lack basic employment protections such as written contracts and social security benefits.
- b. In 2025, about 58.2% of workers had no written job contract.
- c. Around 51.7% were not eligible for any social security benefits.
- d. Nearly 47.3% lacked eligibility for paid leave.

## 2. Growing Dependence on Contract Labour

- a. Firms increasingly rely on intermediaries and contractors to hire workers instead of direct employment.
- b. Contract workers are less likely to receive written agreements, paid leave, or access to schemes like Employees' State Insurance (ESI).
- c. This weakens the enforcement of labour protections and increases vulnerability to arbitrary dismissal.

## 3. Regional Variations in Labour Deprivation

- a. The extent of labour informality varies significantly across states.
- b. In Uttar Pradesh, about 67.8% of workers lacked written contracts.
  - Around 62.4% were not eligible for paid leave.
  - Nearly 59.2% lacked access to social security benefits.
  - About 46.3% lacked all three protections simultaneously.
- c. Similar patterns are observed in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan.

## 4. Rise in Contract Workers in Industrial Employment

- a. The share of contract workers in total industrial employment increased from about 35% in 2014–15 to 42% in 2023–24.
- b. This reflects a structural shift towards flexible but insecure labour arrangements.

## Limitations of Wage Revisions

### 1. Low Base Effect in Minimum Wage Increase

- A. The increase in minimum wages appears significant, partly because the earlier wage levels were very low.
- B. In Delhi, minimum wages for unskilled workers increased from ₹9,568 in 2016 to ₹18,456 in 2025.
- C. In Haryana, wages increased by about 39% between 2016 and 2025.
- D. In Uttar Pradesh, wages increased from ₹7,107 in 2016 to ₹11,313 in 2026.

### 2. Inflation Has Offset Wage Gains

- a. Consumer price index for industrial workers increased significantly across major industrial centres.
- b. CPI-IW rose by about 43.7% in Delhi and over 50% in Gurugram and Ghaziabad.
- c. Similar increases occurred in Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, and Agra.
- d. Rising LPG costs increased household expenditure by ₹3,000–₹4,000 per month for workers.

## Poor Working Conditions and Labour Vulnerability

1. Workers reported concerns regarding long working hours in difficult environments.
2. There was a lack of access to basic workplace facilities.
3. Contract workers remained vulnerable to arbitrary dismissals.
4. Weak enforcement of labour protections reduced the effectiveness of formal labour laws.

## External Economic Pressures Affecting Industrial Units

1. Industrial units faced input cost pressures due to tariffs imposed by the United States.
2. Additional disruptions occurred due to shipping challenges linked to the Strait of Hormuz.
3. Trade unions argued that such external pressures were disproportionately passed on to labour instead of being absorbed by industries.

#### **Nature of the Problem: Employment Structure Rather than Wages Alone**

1. Evidence suggests that worker unrest is driven not only by wage issues but by employment insecurity and lack of social protection.
2. The protests reflect dissatisfaction with the contractualisation of labour and weakening labour rights enforcement.

#### **Way Forward**

1. Governments should strengthen the enforcement of written employment contracts in formal establishments.
2. Expansion of universal social security coverage for industrial workers is required.
3. Regulation of contract labour practices should be improved to ensure parity with regular workers.
4. Minimum wages should be indexed more effectively with inflation.
5. Industrial policy should balance competitiveness with labour welfare protections.

**Conclusion:** The unrest in Noida demonstrates that labour stability depends not only on wage increases but also on secure employment conditions, social protection coverage, and effective labour governance. Addressing structural labour vulnerabilities is essential for sustaining industrial growth and social stability.

**Question:** Factory unrest in India's industrial belts reflects structural issues beyond wages. Using the example of the recent unrest in Noida, examine the underlying causes and suggest policy measures to address labour insecurity in industrial employment.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

#### **On delimitation and Parliament seats**

**Source:** The post "On delimitation and Parliament seats" has been created, based on "On delimitation and Parliament seats" published in "The Hindu" on 20th April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** Delimitation refers to the process of fixing the number of seats and boundaries of territorial constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It ensures fair political representation based on population and supports the democratic principle of **one citizen-one vote-one value**.

#### **Existing Constitutional Provisions on Delimitation**

1. Delimitation is carried out by a **Delimitation Commission** constituted through an Act of Parliament.
2. Past delimitation exercises were conducted based on the **1951, 1961, and 1971 Census**.
3. The number of Lok Sabha seats was fixed at **543 seats** based on the **1971 Census** population of about **54.8 crore**.

4. The delimitation process was frozen to encourage population control measures across States.
5. As per constitutional provisions, the next readjustment of seats is to be undertaken after the **2027 Census**.

### Key Provisions of the Proposed 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill

1. The Bill proposed to increase the maximum strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 to 850 seats**.
2. It proposed that seat allocation across States be based on the **latest Census figures** after delimitation.
3. It proposed to delink **one-third reservation for women** from the next Census and enable implementation based on delimitation using the **2011 Census**.

### Provisions of the Delimitation Bill, 2026

1. The Bill proposed the constitution of a **Delimitation Commission** by the Union government.
2. The Commission would allocate Lok Sabha seats among States and Union Territories based on the **latest available Census figures**.
3. If implemented immediately, the allocation would have been based on the **2011 Census**.

### Government's Rationale for Increasing Lok Sabha Seats

1. The government argued that increasing seats by about **50%** would enable the smoother implementation of **one-third reservation for women**.
2. It was suggested that each State and Union Territory would receive a **50% pro-rata increase** in seats without altering their proportional representation.

### Concerns Raised by the Opposition

1. The Opposition argued that there was **no immediate need** to bundle women's reservation with delimitation.
2. The Bill did not contain an explicit constitutional guarantee for a **50% pro-rata increase** in seats for each State and Union Territory.
3. There were concerns that delimitation based on population changes could alter the **federal balance of representation**.
4. It was argued that such a sensitive issue required wider consultation and detailed parliamentary scrutiny rather than passage in a short session.

### Key Constitutional Issue: One Citizen–One Vote vs Federal Balance

1. Article **81(2)** of the Constitution provides that the ratio between population and seats across States should be maintained as far as practicable.
2. Population growth variations across States since **1971** create tensions between democratic equality and federal fairness.
3. States that successfully controlled population growth may face reduced representation relative to high-growth States.

### Way Forward

1. Delimitation reforms should balance democratic equality with federal principles.
2. A wider political consensus should be developed through parliamentary committees.

3. A **pro-rata seat increase mechanism** may be considered to maintain inter-State representation balance.
4. Strengthening representation in **Panchayats and Municipalities** can improve grassroots democratic participation.

**Conclusion:** Delimitation is essential for maintaining representative democracy, but must be implemented carefully to preserve India's federal structure and political balance. A consultative and transparent approach will ensure legitimacy and acceptance of future delimitation reforms.

**Question:** Discuss the constitutional framework, recent proposals, and challenges associated with the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies in India. Suggest a balanced way forward.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

## India-Turkey Relations: Challenges and Scope for Reset

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International Relations

### Introduction

India-Turkey relations have remained **unpredictable and fragile**, largely shaped by **third-party problems, especially Pakistan**. Even minor India-Pakistan tensions affect bilateral ties. Despite strong economic and strategic potential, confidence-building remains limited. Recent consultations show efforts to revive engagement, but **deep political differences and external linkages continue to constrain stable relations**.

### Different Phases of India-Turkey Relations

1. **Cold War Era Alignment with Pakistan:** During the Cold War, Turkey and Pakistan were **close strategic partners and US allies**. Turkey consistently supported Pakistan, which limited independent engagement with India.
2. **1980s De-hyphenation Phase:** In **1984**, both countries agreed to pause differences on **Kashmir and Cyprus**, improving ties. Turkey later developed a more **independent India policy**.
3. **Growth Phase under Erdoğan:** After **2002**, relations improved through **high-level visits and trade expansion**. Bilateral trade rose from **\$700 million to \$13.82 billion by 2022**.
4. **Post-2019 Strategic Regression:** After the **abrogation of Article 370**, Turkey supported Pakistan again. This shifted its policy back to a **security-driven and Pakistan-aligned approach**.
5. **Recent Breakdown after Operation Sindoor:** Turkey's support to Pakistan during **Operation Sindoor** led to strong backlash in India. This caused a sharp decline in **political and economic engagement**.

### Significance of Türkiye for India

1. **Strategic Location and Connectivity Role:** Türkiye lies between **Europe and Asia**, making it important for trade routes and connectivity to European markets.

2. **Role in Multilateral Forums:** Türkiye participates in platforms like the **UN and G20**, where cooperation can support India's global interests.
3. **Importance in Islamic World:** Türkiye's influence among **Muslim-majority countries** helps India manage wider diplomatic relations in West Asia.
4. **Gateway for Economic Engagement:** Turkish routes and ports can help Indian businesses access **European markets efficiently**.
5. **Institutional Framework of Engagement:** Mechanisms like **Foreign Office Consultations (2000)**, **JCETC (1983)**, and **Policy Planning Dialogue (2020)** enable structured dialogue.
6. **Humanitarian Engagement:** India's **Operation Dost (2023)** to provide **relief, rescue, and medical assistance after the devastating earthquake in Türkiye**, showing cooperation despite political differences.

### Challenges in India-Turkey Relations

1. **Persistent Pakistan Factor:** Turkey's support to Pakistan on **Kashmir** is the main issue. It keeps relations linked to India-Pakistan tensions.
2. **Defence and Strategic Alignment with Pakistan:** Turkey's defence exports and military cooperation with Pakistan have increased. This deepens mistrust in India.
3. **Cyprus Issue and Counter Positions:** India supports **Cyprus**, while Turkey supports Pakistan. This creates a **mirror conflict situation**.
4. **Limits of Trade-Centric Relations:** Economic ties failed to prevent political tensions during crises like **Operation Sindoor**. Trade alone could not build trust.
5. **Economic and Tourism Impact of Tensions:** Bilateral trade fell to **\$8.71 billion**, and Indian tourist arrivals declined by **37% in June 2025**.
6. **Diplomatic Gaps and Lack of Engagement:** No major visits by Indian leadership to Turkey show **weak political engagement**. Dialogue remains limited.
7. **Perception Gap and Limited Understanding:** Turkish institutions and public opinion show **low interest in India's perspective**. This weakens mutual trust.

### Emerging Geopolitical and Economic Opportunities

1. **Trade Opportunities through FTA and CEPA:** After the **India-EU FTA (2026)**, Indian goods get easier access to Turkish markets. Türkiye may seek a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India.
2. **Alternative Connectivity Corridors:** Türkiye's **Development Corridor** can offer routes for Indian trade to Europe, especially as **IMEC faces delays**.
3. **Convergence in Regional Interests:** Both countries share interests in **Gulf, Central Asia, and Africa**, creating space for cooperation.

4. **Role in West Asian Diplomacy:** Türkiye's role in mediating conflicts, along with countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, aligns with India's regional interests.
5. **Changing Strategic Orientation of Türkiye:** Türkiye is moving from a **NATO-centric role to multi-alignment**, increasing its relevance for India.

### Way Forward

1. **Need for De-hyphenation from Pakistan and Cyprus Issues:** Both sides should avoid linking ties with **India–Pakistan (Kashmir)** and **Turkey–Cyprus disputes**, as this mutual linkage keeps relations constrained and prevents independent bilateral engagement.
2. **Balancing Political and Economic Engagement:** Relations should not depend only on trade. Strong **political trust and dialogue** are needed.
3. **Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms:** Regular use of platforms like **Foreign Office Consultations, JCETC, and Policy Planning Dialogue** can ensure continuous and structured engagement.
4. **Enhancing Mutual Understanding and Perception:** Both countries should improve awareness of each other's strategic importance, as current perception gaps weaken trust and cooperation.
5. **Leveraging Regional Convergence:** Cooperation in West Asia, Central Asia, and Africa, along with connectivity projects like corridors, can create shared strategic and economic benefits.
6. **Using Pragmatic Diplomatic Approach:** Following India's engagement with countries like China, Malaysia, and Azerbaijan despite tensions, both sides should adopt a flexible and interest-based approach to manage differences.

### Conclusion

India–Turkey relations reflect a mix of **strategic potential and recurring disruptions**, driven by external linkages and weak political trust. Economic ties alone have proved insufficient during crises. However, **converging interests in West Asia, connectivity, and global forums** make disengagement impractical. A sustainable reset requires **de-hyphenation from Pakistan, stronger political dialogue, and better mutual understanding**, ensuring relations move beyond episodic cooperation toward a stable and balanced partnership.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the key challenges in India–Turkey relations and examine the scope for a sustainable reset in the current geopolitical context.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## Differentiating Welfare and Development

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- issues relating to planning, mobilisation, of resources, growth, development

### Introduction

Development has become a central electoral promise in democratic politics. It is used to signal economic growth, infrastructure expansion, employment generation, and better public services. In India, political campaigns emphasise visible outcomes such as roads, housing, and basic amenities. However, this approach creates confusion between welfare and development. It also masks inequality and reduces complex socio-economic issues to simple slogans. The pace and nature of development are often misunderstood in political discourse.

### Welfare vs Development: Conceptual Framework

1. **Meaning of Welfare:** Welfare refers to **short-term, redistributive support**. It aims to reduce poverty and ensure basic needs like food security, income, and essential services.
2. **Meaning of Development:** Development is a **long-term structural process**. It focuses on economic growth, productivity, and expansion of human capabilities.
3. **Time Horizon Difference:** Welfare is **immediate and consumption-based** in nature. Development is **gradual and production-oriented**, unfolding over long periods.
4. **Complementary Nature:** Welfare and development are **not substitutes but complementary**. Welfare can support development if it builds human capacity.
5. **Overlap in Practice:** Welfare programmes often exist along with growth strategies. This overlap creates confusion in policy and political narratives.

### Key Challenges

1. **Conceptual Confusion:** Welfare delivery is often projected as development. This weakens clarity and creates misunderstanding in policymaking.
2. **Short-Term Political Focus:** Political actors emphasise **visible and immediate results**. This reduces attention on long-term structural change.
3. **Myth of Quick Development:** Development is presented as a fast outcome. In reality, it is a **slow and continuous process over decades**.
4. **Fiscal Constraints:** Excessive redistribution can **strain government finances**. It limits the ability to invest in long-term growth.
5. **Crowding Out Investment:** High welfare spending may reduce **productive investment in public goods**. This affects future growth potential.
6. **Neglect of Public Goods:** Public goods like education, health, infrastructure, and rule of law create **broad, long-term and inclusive benefits**. Excess focus on welfare transfers reduces investment in these areas, weakening sustainable development.
7. **Design and Efficiency Issues:** Poorly designed welfare schemes lead to **leakages and exclusion errors**. This reduces their effectiveness.

8. **Welfare Populism:** Measures like **free electricity, loan waivers, and cash transfers** prioritise immediate gains. They are often driven by electoral considerations.
9. **Limited Productivity Impact:** Populist welfare does not **increase productive capacity**. It fails to support long-term economic growth.
10. **Institutional Limitations:** Weak institutions reduce the ability to sustain development. Development requires strong governance and stable systems.

### Way Forward

1. **Clear Conceptual Distinction:** Welfare and development should be **clearly differentiated in policy thinking**. This helps in better planning and implementation.
2. **Productive Welfare Design:** Welfare should focus on **health, education, nutrition, and employment support**. These improve human capabilities and productivity.
3. **Strengthen Public Goods:** Investment should increase in **education, public health, infrastructure, and governance systems**. These create long-term benefits.
4. **Ensure Fiscal Sustainability:** Welfare policies must be **targeted and financially balanced**. This prevents pressure on public finances.
5. **Long-Term Policy Orientation:** Policies should move beyond **short electoral cycles**. Development needs continuity and sustained effort.
6. **Improve Institutional Capacity:** Strong institutions ensure **effective delivery and long-term impact**. They support stable and inclusive development.
7. **Align Welfare with Development:** Welfare should support development goals. It should not replace long-term growth strategies.

### Conclusion

Welfare and development serve different but connected roles in policymaking. Confusing them leads to short-term focus and weak long-term outcomes. Development is a gradual and continuous process based on institutions, productivity, and human capabilities. Welfare should support this process by reducing vulnerability and building capacity. A balanced approach is essential to ensure fiscal stability, sustained growth, and inclusive development over time.

### Question for practice:

Examine the distinction between welfare and development, and analyse the challenges arising from their conflation in democratic politics.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Do More MPs Ensure Better Representation?

**Source:** The post “Do More MPs Ensure Better Representation?” has been created, based on “Do More MPs Ensure Better Representation?” published in “Indian Express” on 21st April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** The proposal to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from 543 to nearly 850 seats through delimitation is often justified on the basis of improving the population-to-MP representation ratio. However, democratic representation depends not only on numerical proportionality but also on institutional accessibility, governance capacity, and effective decentralisation.

### Reasons given in favour of increasing the number of MPs

1. The average population per constituency has increased significantly and crossed about 2.2 million persons per constituency according to the 2011 Census.
2. The increase in population since the last delimitation exercise has created inequalities in representation across states.
3. It is argued that reducing constituency size by increasing the number of MPs may improve access between citizens and their representatives.
4. Some observers also argue that increasing seats could indirectly improve women’s representation in Parliament.

### Limitations of the argument that more MPs automatically improve representation

1. Representation today is not constrained only by physical distance because improvements in transport infrastructure and digital communication have significantly increased accessibility between citizens and their representatives.
2. India’s population is projected to peak at slightly above 1.6 billion in the early 2060s, which indicates that the demographic justification for permanent institutional expansion may be temporary in nature.
3. Increasing Lok Sabha seats would create a permanent structural change in Parliament even though the demographic pressures motivating the change are time-bound.
4. India already has a very large democratic base at the grassroots level with more than 250,000 Panchayats, around 3,700 urban local bodies, and nearly 3.2 million elected representatives across local governments.
5. Nearly 1.5 million women are already participating in governance through local bodies, which shows that the issue is not the absence of representatives but the unequal distribution of authority and resources across different levels of government.
6. Women’s representation in Parliament remains low at about 13.6 percent after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which indicates that the real constraint lies in political party nominations and implementation of reservation rather than the number of seats available.
7. Increasing the number of seats through delimitation may permanently alter the federal balance and the weight of votes across states, and such institutional changes are difficult to reverse once implemented.

### Alternative measures to strengthen democratic representation

1. Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions by increasing their financial autonomy and administrative powers can improve responsiveness at the grassroots level.
2. Empowering urban local bodies with greater decision-making authority can improve service delivery in rapidly urbanising regions.
3. Improving digital governance platforms can enhance citizen participation and communication between elected representatives and the public.
4. Effective implementation of the women's reservation framework can significantly improve gender representation without expanding the size of Parliament.
5. Rationalisation of constituency boundaries through calibrated delimitation can improve representational equity without necessarily increasing the total number of seats.

**Conclusion:** Increasing the number of MPs may improve representational ratios mathematically, but effective democratic representation depends more on strengthening institutional capacity at multiple levels of governance. Therefore, improving decentralisation, empowering local bodies, and implementing reservation policies may provide more sustainable solutions than expanding the size of the Lok Sabha alone.

**Question:** Increasing the number of MPs through delimitation does not necessarily improve democratic representation in India." Critically examine and suggest alternative institutional measures to strengthen representation.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

### India's AI value paradox

**Source:** The post "India's AI value paradox" has been created, based on "India's AI value paradox" published in "BusinessLine" on 21st April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3- Science and technology

**Context:** India is witnessing rapid expansion in artificial intelligence infrastructure through large-scale investments in data centres and cloud ecosystems. However, India still faces limitations in developing indigenous AI technologies and capturing the full economic value generated by artificial intelligence. This situation reflects an emerging **AI value paradox**, where infrastructure capacity is growing faster than innovation capability.

#### India's Strength in AI Infrastructure Expansion

1. India's data centre sector is witnessing significant multi-billion-dollar investments driven by policy incentives and rising digital demand.
2. India possesses competitive operational costs and a large technology workforce, which make it an attractive destination for global AI and cloud infrastructure deployment.
3. India has developed strong digital public infrastructure that supports large-scale digital adoption across sectors.
4. These advantages are positioning India as an important node in the global digital economy.

#### Infrastructure Expansion Without Ownership of Core Technologies

1. India contributes only about **2-3 percent of global AI patent filings**, which reflects limited ownership of core technologies.

2. Public expenditure on research and development in India remains low at about **0.6–0.7 percent of GDP**, which constrains frontier innovation capacity.
3. India ranks behind the United States and China in research strength, investment levels and compute capacity according to the Stanford AI Index.
4. Although data and infrastructure inputs are increasingly available domestically, high-value outputs such as advanced AI models and platforms are still largely developed outside India.

### Uneven Enterprise Adoption of Artificial Intelligence

1. Artificial intelligence has become an important priority at the boardroom level in large enterprises across India.
2. Large firms are experimenting with AI across business functions and are gradually building internal capabilities.
3. However, many mid-sized firms remain cautious because of concerns related to costs, organisational readiness and uncertainty regarding returns on investment.
4. In many organisations, cloud adoption has focused mainly on migrating legacy systems rather than redesigning workflows around automation and real-time data.
5. As a result, enterprise productivity gains from artificial intelligence remain uneven across sectors.

### The Talent Paradox in India's AI Ecosystem

1. India produces one of the largest pools of technology professionals in the world.
2. However, artificial intelligence development requires deeper research capability, advanced mathematical skills and sustained experimentation capacity.
3. Much of India's technology workforce remains oriented towards implementation rather than foundational innovation.
4. There is therefore a growing need to develop **T-shaped talent**, which combines deep domain expertise with the ability to apply AI tools across multiple functions.

### Dual Nature of India's AI Startup Ecosystem

1. A segment of India's startup ecosystem risks engaging in "AI-washing" by emphasising artificial intelligence without developing strong underlying technologies.
2. Some startups function mainly as intermediaries by building interfaces on top of global AI models instead of creating original platforms.
3. At the same time, several startups are developing domain-specific AI solutions suited to India's needs.
4. For example, Sarvam AI and Krutrim are developing language models adapted to India's linguistic diversity.
5. Similarly, Qure.ai is applying computer vision in healthcare diagnostics and CropIn is improving agricultural productivity through artificial intelligence applications.

### Structural Challenges Limiting India's AI Value Capture

1. India continues to face low levels of investment in frontier research and development.
2. India has limited compute-intensive innovation capacity compared to leading global economies.
3. Many enterprises are still in early stages of integrating artificial intelligence into core operational workflows.
4. Mid-sized firms face constraints related to costs, institutional readiness and uncertainty regarding returns on AI investments.

5. There remains a shortage of researchers working at the cutting edge of artificial intelligence technologies.

### Way Forward

1. The government should increase public investment in research and development to strengthen India's frontier innovation ecosystem.
2. Policymakers should support indigenous development of artificial intelligence models and platforms suited to India's needs.
3. Universities and industries should collaborate to develop T-shaped professionals capable of applying artificial intelligence across sectors.
4. Enterprises should move beyond cloud migration and redesign workflows around automation and real-time decision-making systems.
5. Investors should support deep-technology startups with longer investment horizons to strengthen India's innovation capacity.

**Conclusion:** India has already built strong advantages in terms of digital infrastructure, data availability and technology talent. However, the long-term benefits of artificial intelligence will depend on India's ability to convert these strengths into indigenous innovation capability. Therefore, India must focus not only on hosting AI infrastructure but also on creating the technologies that generate value in the artificial intelligence economy.

**Question:** Even as India rapidly expands its AI infrastructure, it faces challenges in capturing value from AI innovation and adoption." Examine the paradox and suggest measures to address it.

**Source:** [Business Line](#)

## The strategic vulnerability in India's LPG supply model

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

### Introduction

India's LPG system reflects a **structural imbalance between demand, supply, and energy use**. Consumption reached **33.15 million tonnes**, while domestic production met only **40%**, forcing **60% imports**. Demand is nearly **250% of indigenous output**, and most of this fuel goes into household kitchens. This creates a deeper risk because supply shocks directly affect welfare. High dependence on a single import route further turns this imbalance into a **serious and lasting energy security concern**.

### Nature of the Vulnerability in India's LPG Model

1. **High import dependence and widening gap:** India depends on imports for **60% of LPG needs**, showing a **large mismatch between production and consumption**. This is not a short-term gap but a **persistent structural issue**.
2. **Household-centric consumption pattern:** More than **90% of LPG is used in households**, while commercial use is below **10%**. This makes demand rigid, as kitchens cannot reduce or delay consumption.

3. **Critical dependence on a single route:** Around **90% of imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz**, making supply highly exposed. This route can no longer be treated as fully reliable.
4. **Direct exposure to global disruptions:** About **54% of normal LPG availability is at risk** if this corridor is disrupted. This quickly turns a global shock into a **domestic supply crisis**.

### Comparative Perspective: Why India is More Exposed

1. **Import dependence alone is not decisive:** Countries like Japan, China, and South Korea also import large LPG volumes. The real difference lies in **usage patterns, alternatives, and storage**.
2. **Japan's diversified household energy mix:** LPG serves only about **40% of households** in Japan. Electricity accounts for **55% of residential energy**, reducing dependence on LPG.
3. **Strong storage buffer in Japan:** Japan maintains about **108.3 days of LPG reserves**, providing strong protection against disruptions. This cushions its higher import dependence.
4. **Different demand structure in China and South Korea:** In China, LPG demand is largely driven by **petrochemicals**, not households. South Korea relies more on **natural gas and electricity** for homes.
5. **India's unique exposure:** In India, imported LPG goes mainly into **household kitchens**, where substitution is difficult. This makes India's vulnerability **more severe than other countries**.

### Structural Weaknesses in India's LPG Ecosystem

1. **Weak strategic storage capacity:** Underground cavern storage is kept only for **emergency use** and is not used in daily supply. India has only **140,000 tonnes (about 1.5 days of demand)**, showing very low crisis-level protection.
2. **Operational storage is limited in duration:** Storage across ports, refineries, and bottling plants supports **daily supply and distribution**. It provides about **15-18 days of cover**, but it is **continuously used and refilled**, so it cannot act as a full emergency reserve.
3. **Tightly linked supply chain:** The system includes **215 bottling plants and 25,600 distributors**, operating on steady flow. Any disruption at import points quickly affects **distribution and availability**.
4. **Concentrated global supply market:** A few Asian countries consume **over half of global exportable LPG**. The remaining supply is already committed to various uses.
5. **Limited flexibility in sourcing:** LPG is not freely available in surplus markets. A disruption in Gulf supply quickly leads to **tight global conditions and competition**.

### Way Forward

#### 1. Supply-Side Reforms (Securing Availability)

a) **Prioritisation and separation of demand streams:** Domestic LPG and refinery-origin propane and butane should be **reserved for household use**, while petrochemical and industrial users should **arrange separate imports**. This prevents competition for the same pool and ensures **stable supply for welfare-sensitive consumption**.

b) **Diversification of import sources:** LPG sourcing should expand beyond the Gulf to **the United States, Russia, Norway, and Canada**, reducing dependence on a single route like the Strait of Hormuz.

## 2. Storage and Infrastructure Strengthening (Building Resilience)

a) **Expansion of strategic storage:** India should build **2–3 weeks of buffer stock**, requiring about **1.3–1.9 million tonnes**, to handle prolonged disruptions.

b) **Strengthening logistics and supply chain:** Investment in **terminals, storage, rail movement, and pipeline connectivity** is needed to improve flexibility.

## 3. Economic and Fiscal Measures (Managing Crisis Impact)

a) **Targeted subsidy and welfare support:** The government can **temporarily increase LPG subsidy, raise refill caps, and extend DBT support** to protect vulnerable households.

b) **Price stabilisation measures:** The government can **compensate Oil Marketing Companies for crisis-related costs** through **time-bound transfers** to avoid sudden price spikes.

c) **Financial support for alternative sourcing:** Tools like **interest subventions, sovereign-backed credit lines, and guarantee windows** can reduce the cost of emergency imports.

## 4. Demand-Side Transition (Reducing Dependence)

a) **Promotion of alternative cooking energy:** Electric cooking should be expanded in urban areas. A sustained shift can reduce **exclusive dependence on LPG cylinders**.

b) **Encouraging energy mix diversification:** PNG expansion and induction cooking can reduce pressure on LPG demand. Electricity acts as the **broader alternative**.

## 5. Long-Term Energy Security Approach (System Redesign)

a) **Balanced policy across time horizons:** Immediate focus should be on **allocation**, medium-term on **resilience through storage and contracts**, and long-term on **diversification of cooking energy**.

## Conclusion

India's LPG vulnerability is driven by high import dependence, heavy household reliance, and concentration of supply routes. Weak strategic storage and tight supply chains increase exposure to disruptions. A durable solution needs clear prioritisation of household supply, diversified sourcing, stronger storage and logistics, and gradual demand shift. Reducing dependence on a single fuel and corridor is essential to ensure stable supply, protect welfare, and strengthen long-term energy security.

## Question for practice:

Evaluate the strategic vulnerability in India's LPG supply model, considering its high import dependence, supply chain risks, storage limitations, and the need for policy and energy transition reforms.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## High-Value Crop Diversification in India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Agriculture

### Introduction

Agriculture plays a central role in achieving a Viksit Bharat, with growth reaching **4.45 percent** in the last decade. This growth reflects a clear shift towards diversification and value addition. Horticulture has emerged as the core of this transformation. High-value crops such as fruits, vegetables, spices, and plantation crops generate higher returns than traditional crops. They also support exports, improve nutrition, and create employment, making them important for sustainable and income-led agricultural development.

### What Are High-Value Crops (HVCs)?

- 1. High-value crops:** High-value crops primarily refer to horticultural produce such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, and aromatic plants. These crops are termed "high value" because they generate significantly higher net returns than traditional staple crops like cereals and pulses.
- 2. Economic Significance:** These crops generate 3–4 times higher returns per unit land. They improve farm income and promote diversification.
- 3. Data and Statistics on High-Value Crops**
  - **Growth in Production:** Horticulture production increased from 277.35 million tonnes (2013-14) to 370.74 million tonnes (2024-25). This shows steady expansion.
  - **Production Composition:** Output includes 117.65 million tonnes fruits, 217.80 million tonnes vegetables, and 35.29 million tonnes other crops. This shows diversified production.
  - **Contribution to Economy:** Horticulture contributes about 37 percent of Gross Value Output (GVO). It plays a strong role in value addition.
  - **Global Position:** India ranks **second in fruits, vegetables, and potato production**. It contributes **9.18 percent fruits** and **8.18 percent vegetables globally**.
  - **Leadership in Key Crops:** India is the **largest producer of onions and shallots**, contributing **22.42 percent globally**. This shows strong global presence.

### Horticulture as a Driver of Agricultural Growth in India

- 1. Income and Value Addition:** Horticulture provides higher returns per unit land. It strengthens value addition in agriculture.

2. **Nutrition and Processing Support:** It improves nutrition through diverse food supply. It also supports agro-processing industries.
3. **Employment Generation:** It creates employment in farming, processing, and marketing. It supports rural livelihoods.
4. **Export Potential:** Horticulture supports exports through value-added products. It connects India to global markets.

### Strategies for High-Value Crop Development

**1. Region-Specific Policy Approach:** Budget 2026-27 adopts a crop-specific and region-based strategy. It focuses on using local agro-climatic strengths to increase income and exports.

### 2. Coastal Region Crops (Coconut, Cashew, Cocoa, Sandalwood)

#### A. Coconut Sector:

- **Production, Livelihoods and Export Growth:** The coconut sector supports **about 30 million people, including nearly 10 million farmers**. India produced **13.97 million tonnes in 2024-25**, and exports reached **Rs.4,349.03 crore**, showing **25 percent growth**, which reflects rising global demand.
- **Institutional and Policy Support in Coconut:** Support includes Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra, formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and a Coconut Promotion Scheme. These measures improve productivity, replace old trees, and strengthen market linkages.

#### B. Cashew Sector:

- **Resilient Crop with Export Strength:** Cashew is grown on 12.05 lakh hectares with production above 8.02 lakh tonnes. It grows well on poor soils and helps reduce soil erosion, making it suitable for wasteland development.
- **Cashew Trade and Economic Role:** Cashew exports reached USD 369.17 million in 2024-25. This strong performance supports rural income and strengthens India's presence in global markets.

#### C. Cocoa Sector:

- **Intercropping and Commercial Value:** Cocoa is mainly grown as an intercrop under coconut and arecanut plantations. It uses available space and shade, helping farmers earn additional income without extra land.
- **Cocoa Production and Institutional Support:** India produced 32.91 thousand metric tonnes of cocoa, with exports of USD 295.58 million. The Directorate supports planting, nurseries, and training to improve productivity.

#### D. Sandalwood:

- **High-Value and Cultural Importance:** Indian sandalwood is valued for its **premium essential oil used in perfumes and religious practices**. It has strong global demand due to its superior quality.
- **Regional Concentration and Potential:** More than 90 percent of sandalwood resources are in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It has strong potential to generate employment and increase export earnings through value-added products.

#### 3. North-East Region:

- **Resource Base and Economic Importance:** India has nearly **150 million agarwood trees**, with **about 90 percent located in the North-Eastern Region**. Tripura alone has a market potential of **around Rs.2,000 crore annually**.
- **Uses and Value Addition:** Agarwood is used in perfumery, medicine, and religious practices. Products include chips, powder, oil, beads, and tea, showing strong value addition potential.
- **Policy Support and Export Regulation:** Exports are regulated under the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**. Export quotas are fixed at **151,080 kg for chips and 7,050 kg for oil**. Integration with the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** portal simplifies export procedures.
- **Expansion and Sustainability Measures:** States are encouraged to expand cultivation using geospatial mapping, especially in Tripura and Assam. Focus is on sustainable cultivation and processing.

#### 4. Himalayan and Hilly Region Crops (Walnut, Almond, Chilgoza)

- **Production and Regional Concentration:** Walnut production reached **3.22 lakh tonnes**, and almond production **13.94 thousand metric tonnes**. **Jammu and Kashmir dominates production**, especially for both crops.
- **Export and Market Linkages:** Walnut exports were valued at **USD 7.80 million**, showing presence in international markets and supporting farmer income.
- **Chilgoza:** Chilgoza is grown in arid Himalayan regions and supports tribal livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh. It is highly nutritious and economically valuable.
- **Policy Support for Nut Crops:** The Budget promotes **high-density planting and rejuvenation of old orchards**. It also encourages **rural youth participation in value addition activities**.

#### Benefits of Crop Diversification

1. **Economic Benefits:** High-value crops increase farmer income and export earnings. Coconut, cashew, and cocoa generate strong foreign exchange.

2. **Structural Benefits:** Diversification reduces dependence on cereal crops. It strengthens agro-processing and value chains.
3. **Environmental Benefits:** Cashew grows on wasteland and reduces soil erosion. Agarwood supports agroforestry and biodiversity.
4. **Regional Development Benefits:** Agarwood and nut crops support tribal and remote areas. They improve livelihood opportunities.

### Major Concerns Related to Crop Diversification

1. **High Initial Investment:** Crops like sandalwood and agarwood need high capital and long growth period.
2. **Perishability Issues:** Horticulture crops have short shelf life. Cold storage is required to reduce losses.
3. **Climate Sensitivity:** Nut crops in hilly areas depend on snowfall and temperature. Climate change affects productivity.
4. **Fragmented Landholdings:** Many farmers operate on small land. This limits large-scale processing and efficiency.
5. **Quality and Standards Issues:** Meeting global quality standards is difficult. This affects exports to advanced markets.

### Way Forward

1. **Infrastructure Development:** Strengthening cold chain and post-harvest management is needed. It will reduce losses.
2. **FPO and Market Linkages:** More Farmer Producer Organisations should be promoted. This will improve bargaining power.
3. **Brand Building:** Indian Cashew, Cocoa, and Sandalwood should be promoted as premium brands. This will increase global value.
4. **Digital and Geospatial Tools:** Use of mapping tools will improve monitoring and planning. It will support sustainable growth.
5. **Youth Participation:** Rural youth should be involved in processing and startups. This will build value chains from village to global markets.

### Conclusion

High-value crop diversification reflects a clear shift towards value-based agriculture in India. Region-specific strategies and policy support are strengthening this transition. The focus on horticulture, plantation crops, and

nut crops is improving farmer incomes, exports, and employment opportunities. With better infrastructure, stronger institutions, and increased value addition, high-value crops can play a major role in ensuring sustainable agricultural growth and balanced regional development in the coming years.

**Question for practice:**

Discuss the role of high-value crop diversification in India's agricultural growth, with reference to horticulture, region-specific strategies, and its impact on farmer income, exports, and rural livelihoods.

Source: [PIB](#)

### Doping in Sports: Issues and Policy Measures

**Source:** The post "Doping in Sports: Issues and Policy Measures" has been created, based on "Doping in Sports: Issues and Policy Measures" published in "Indian Express" on 22nd April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- Governance

**Context:** The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), which is an autonomous body of World Athletics, has classified India as an "extremely high doping risk country" in athletics. The AIU has downgraded the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) to **Category A**, indicating serious concerns regarding the integrity of athletics governance in India. This development may negatively affect India's credibility in its bid to host the **2036 Olympic Games**.

#### Reasons Behind the "Extremely High" Doping Risk Classification

##### 1. High Anti-Doping Rule Violations in athletics

- a. India recorded **48 Anti-Doping Rule Violations in 2022**, which placed the country second globally.
- b. India recorded **63 Anti-Doping Rule Violations in 2023**, which again placed the country second globally.
- c. India recorded **71 Anti-Doping Rule Violations in 2024**, which placed the country first globally.
- d. India has already recorded **30 Anti-Doping Rule Violations in 2025 so far**, which currently places the country first globally.
- e. These consistently high violation numbers indicate the presence of a systemic doping problem in athletics.

##### 2. Highest number of doping positives across sports globally

- a. According to the 2024 report of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), **260 Indian athletes tested positive for prohibited substances in 2024**.
- b. India was the only country in the world to record doping violations in **triple digits**.
- c. India recorded a **positivity ratio of 3.6 percent**, which was among the highest in the world.
- d. These statistics indicate serious weaknesses in India's anti-doping enforcement mechanisms.

##### 3. Inadequate scale of testing compared to major countries

- a. The National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) collected **7,113 urine and blood samples in 2024**.

- b. China conducted **24,214 tests**, which resulted in only **43 positive cases**.
- c. Germany conducted **15,081 tests**, which resulted in **54 positive cases**.
- d. France conducted **11,744 tests**, which resulted in **91 positive cases**.
- e. Russia conducted **10,514 tests**, which resulted in **76 positive cases**.
- f. Italy conducted **9,304 tests**, which resulted in **85 positive cases**.
- g. The United Kingdom conducted **8,273 tests**, which resulted in **30 positive cases**.
- h. These figures show that India conducted fewer tests but recorded a significantly higher number of positive cases.

#### 4. Weak domestic anti-doping programme

- a. The AIU stated that India's domestic anti-doping programme is not proportionate to the level of doping risk present in the country.
- b. The AIU highlighted that intelligence gathering related to doping activities remains inadequate.
- c. The AIU emphasized that out-of-competition testing mechanisms remain insufficient.
- d. The AIU further noted that testing at the state and district levels requires significant strengthening.

#### Meaning and Implications of Category A Classification

**1. Mandatory testing before major competitions:** All national team athletes must undergo testing before participating in major international competitions such as the Olympic Games and World Athletics events.

#### 2. Expansion of testing mechanisms

- a. Athletes must undergo **in-competition testing** as part of stricter monitoring requirements.
- b. Athletes must also undergo **no-notice out-of-competition testing** under the Category A framework.
- c. Athletes must undergo **pre-competition blood testing for screening purposes**.

**3. Responsibility for athletes training abroad:** The Athletics Federation of India remains responsible for ensuring testing compliance even when athletes train outside India.

**4. Use of accredited laboratories:** All athlete samples must be analysed by **WADA-accredited laboratories** for full menu analysis.

#### Implications for India's 2036 Olympic Bid

- 1. India's doping record was highlighted as a concern during its presentation to the International Olympic Committee.
- 2. The downgrade may affect India's credibility as a responsible sporting nation.
- 3. The downgrade may increase international scrutiny of India's sports governance systems.
- 4. The downgrade may create additional pressure on India to demonstrate improvements in anti-doping compliance.

#### Measures Required to Address the Doping Challenge

##### 1. Strengthening intelligence-based anti-doping systems

- a. India must strengthen intelligence gathering mechanisms to identify doping supply chains.

b. India must improve monitoring of coaches and support staff involved in athlete training.

**2. Increasing out-of-competition testing:** India must expand randomized out-of-competition testing to improve deterrence against doping practices.

**3. Expanding grassroots-level testing:** India must strengthen testing mechanisms at the state and district levels to detect doping at early stages.

**4. Criminalisation of doping networks:** Criminal action must be taken against suppliers, distributors, and facilitators of prohibited substances to create a strong deterrent effect.

**5. Institutional coordination:** The Athletics Federation of India, the National Anti Doping Agency, and the Union Sports Ministry must coordinate effectively to improve anti-doping enforcement.

**Conclusion:** India's classification as a high-risk doping country reflects structural weaknesses in its anti-doping ecosystem. The Category A classification provides an opportunity for India to strengthen regulatory enforcement and improve sporting integrity. Effective reforms in testing, intelligence gathering, and institutional coordination will be essential for improving India's credibility ahead of its **2036 Olympic hosting ambitions**.

**Question:** The rising doping violations in Indian athletics raise serious concerns about governance, ethics, and India's global sporting ambitions." Discuss.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

### **In a turbulent world, India needs to plan for the worst**

**Source:** The post "In a turbulent world, India needs to plan for the worst" has been created, based on "In a turbulent world, India needs to plan for the worst" published in "Indian Express" on 22nd April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-3-International Relations

**Context:** Scenario planning is a strategic forecasting technique used by states to anticipate geopolitical, military, and economic contingencies before crises emerge. In a turbulent global order marked by conflicts such as the recent US-Israeli attack on Iran and risks like closure of the Strait of Hormuz, scenario-building becomes critical for a highly energy-dependent country like India.

#### **Importance of Scenario Planning for India**

1. Scenario planning helps governments anticipate disruptions such as energy shocks arising from closure of maritime chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz.
2. It enables preparation for geopolitical transitions such as the rise of China and weakening of existing global economic structures.
3. It supports macroeconomic stability by preparing responses to capital outflows, currency depreciation, inflation, and slowing GDP growth.
4. It strengthens national security preparedness by aligning military planning with long-term strategic threats.

### Global Best Practices in Scenario Planning

1. During the Cold War, the United States used “grand strategy” frameworks to prevent the spread of communism through structured forecasting mechanisms.
2. Andrew Marshall institutionalised net assessment techniques that predicted Soviet economic decline and China’s future rise.
3. The US later institutionalised scenario writing through the National Intelligence Council.
4. Countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom regularly produce structured strategic scenario studies.
5. Singapore is widely regarded as a leading practitioner of scenario-based policy planning.
6. China integrates scenario planning into its five-year plans and military strategy formulation.

### India’s Institutional Preparedness: Present Status

1. India established the Directorate of Net Assessment under the Integrated Defence Staff following engagement with US strategic experts.
2. However, civilian bureaucratic institutions and foreign service structures have not fully institutionalised scenario-based planning approaches.
3. Currently, India has two major institutional options for scenario writing:
  - NITI Aayog can undertake geopolitical and geoeconomic scenario planning.
  - National Security Council can prepare military and security-related contingency scenarios.
4. Despite these mechanisms, India remains an “outlier” compared to other major powers in systematic long-term forecasting.

### Emerging Strategic Scenarios India Must Prepare For

#### 1. Scenario 1: China’s Global Strategic Expansion

- a. China may attempt to dominate global governance institutions and challenge the dollar’s monetary dominance.
- b. It may expand aircraft carrier capabilities and restructure military command systems into Eurasian tri-service commands.
- c. Such developments could alter regional power balances and directly affect India’s security environment.

#### 2. Scenario 2: Economic Instability within India

- a. Continued foreign capital outflows could weaken the rupee.
- b. A weaker rupee would increase the import bill and fuel inflationary pressures.
- c. Rising inflation could slow GDP growth and affect economic stability.

### Way Forward

1. India should institutionalise structured scenario-planning frameworks across civilian and defence institutions.
2. Scenario planning should integrate geopolitical, economic, technological, and military forecasting.
3. Coordination between strategic bodies like NITI Aayog and the National Security Council should be strengthened.

4. Long-term forecasting should be embedded into national decision-making processes similar to advanced strategic states.

**Conclusion:** Scenario planning is not merely a forecasting exercise but a strategic necessity in an uncertain global environment. Strengthening institutional scenario-writing capacity will enhance India's resilience against geopolitical shocks and economic disruptions while supporting its rise as a major power.

**Question:** In a turbulent global order, scenario planning is essential for safeguarding national interests." Discuss in the context of India.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

### Challenges for India's Informal Urban Workforce

**UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1-** population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanisation, their problems and their remedies.

#### Introduction

Recent protests in Noida highlight growing insecurity in urban livelihoods. These incidents reflect a deeper structural crisis affecting India's cities. Around **90% of the workforce is informal**, and regular salaried jobs remain limited in urban areas. Over time, the **bargaining power of workers has weakened significantly**, increasing their vulnerability to state policies and market forces. This situation shows rising urban precarity and the urgent need to address challenges faced by informal workers.

#### Informal Workers and Their Key Issues

**1. Informal workers:** They work without formal contracts, job security, or social protection. Most urban workers fall in this category due to low salaried employment.

#### 2. Major Issues of Informal Workers:

- **Invisibility and weak protection:** Lack of proper data makes them invisible. This leads to **unfair employment terms, no labour protection, and no social security**.
- **Unstable income and unfair wages:** They often do similar work as formal workers but do not receive minimum wages. Income remains irregular and uncertain.
- **Irregular work opportunities:** Work depends on market demand. **Interrupted orders prevent long-term planning and stable livelihoods.**
- **Lack of social security:** They are excluded from major laws. They lack support during illness, disability, old age, or unemployment.
- **Limited access to resources and state support:** They do not get access to **skills, funds, or proper health services**, limiting their growth.

- **Weak organisation and bargaining power:** Workers remain scattered and unorganised. This results in very low bargaining power with employers and the state.
- **Unsafe working conditions:** Poor safety awareness and weak regulation expose them to health risks and workplace accidents.

### Reasons for Rising Urban Precarity and Worker Vulnerability

1. **Shift in urban economic structure:** Cities have moved from industrial production to social reproduction. Formal industries declined, as seen in mill closures.
2. **Decline of organised labour:** Urban areas are no longer centres of strong labour unions. Workers now focus on basic survival needs like food, water, and shelter.
3. **Urbanisation of survival economy:** Daily life revolves around **managing basic needs rather than stable employment**, increasing insecurity.
4. **Policy shift towards market-led governance:** Under the Washington Consensus, the state reduced its direct role and promoted **privatisation and market-based delivery of services**. This led to a shift from **rights-based public services to user-fee driven systems**.
5. **From rights-based to market-based services:** The state reduced its role in providing **water, health, education, and environmental protection**. Services became **need-based and fee-driven**.

### Impact of Urban Development Model

1. **Housing insecurity and slum conditions:** Around **40% of urban poor live in slums**. They spend **30–50% of income on rent** for poor-quality housing.
2. **Exposure to environmental risks:** About **60% of informal settlements are in flood-prone or hazardous areas**, increasing vulnerability.
3. **Privatisation of essential services:** Water and electricity shifted to user-fee models, raising costs for poor households.
4. **Gentrification and forced evictions:** Slums are cleared for **high-end real estate and 'world-class' infrastructure**, displacing workers.
5. **Commodification of urban commons:** Natural resources and public spaces are increasingly treated as market goods, limiting access for the poor.
6. **State shift in housing policy:** The state moved from **direct provider to facilitator of private real estate**. Public land is diverted to high-end projects.
7. **Weakening of labour protections:** Labour laws have been diluted, reducing job security and worker rights.

8. **Financial exclusion and debt traps:** According to Reserve Bank of India, lack of collateral forces workers to depend on moneylenders, leading to chronic debt.

### Government Initiatives for the Informal Sector

#### 1. Database and Identification:

- **e-Shram Portal:** It creates a **national database of unorganised workers** and provides a **Universal Account Number (UAN)** to enable targeted delivery of benefits.

#### 2. Social Security and Insurance:

- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM):** It offers a **voluntary pension of ₹3,000 per month after 60 years** for informal workers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** It provides **accidental insurance coverage** at a low premium.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY):** It offers **life insurance coverage** for financial security.

#### 3. Financial Inclusion Measures:

- **Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi):** It provides **collateral-free micro-credit** to street vendors.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (MUDRA):** It offers **loans to micro and small enterprises** to promote self-employment.

#### 4. Livelihood and Employment Support:

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):** It supports **self-help groups and income generation activities**.

#### 5. Skill Development Initiatives:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** It provides **vocational training and skill certification** to improve employability.

#### 6. Employment Generation Programmes:

- **Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 (VB G RAM G):** It ensures **125 days of guaranteed wage employment**, reducing distress migration.
- **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY):** It encourages employers to **create new jobs and promote formal employment**.

#### 7. Labour Reforms and Formalisation:

- **Labour Codes (2020):** They consolidate labour laws to **extend coverage to gig, platform, and unorganised workers.**
- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY):** It incentivises employers to **hire workers under formal systems like EPFO.**
- **Udyam Portal:** It simplifies **registration of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** to support formalisation.

#### What Should Be Done?

1. **Restore rights-based delivery of basic services:** Ensure water, housing, health, and education are provided as public rights, not through user-fee models. Reduce dependence on privatised service delivery.
2. **Extend labour protection to informal workers:** Bring informal workers under labour laws and social security systems to ensure minimum wages, safety, and income protection.
3. **Ensure access to affordable and secure housing:** Control high rent burden and **prevent forced evictions.** Promote housing with **legal protection and basic sanitation.**
4. **Expand access to formal financial systems:** Increase access to institutional credit and banking services to reduce reliance on moneylenders and avoid debt traps.
5. **Institutionalise worker participation in urban governance:** Create platforms like workers' councils in city governance, as seen in Kerala Urban Commission, to include informal workers in decision-making.
6. **Adopt an integrated and intersectional urban policy:** Link **informal labour issues with climate risks, disasters, and urban development planning** for more balanced and inclusive outcomes.

#### Conclusion

Urban precarity is a result of structural changes, weak labour protection, and market-driven policies. Informal workers face multiple insecurities in jobs, housing, and services. A shift towards **rights-based governance, stronger labour protection, and inclusive urban planning** is necessary. Sustainable cities require **active participation of workers and balanced development policies** that protect livelihoods and dignity.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the major challenges faced by India's informal urban workforce and examine the reasons behind rising urban precarity along with the need for policy reforms.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

**India's LPG crisis is the wake-up call it cannot ignore**

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

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## Introduction

India is facing a serious energy challenge. The 2026 gas crisis shows LPG shortages, high LNG prices, and rising import bills. This is not a short-term problem. It shows a deep structural issue in the energy system. High import dependence and weak infrastructure have increased risks. Energy insecurity now affects growth, inflation, and economic stability. The focus must shift from temporary fixes to long-term energy self-reliance.

## Nature and Reasons for India's LPG Crisis

1. **High import dependence and widening gap:** India depends on imports for about 60% of LPG and 88.6% of crude oil, showing a large mismatch between production and demand.
2. **Rising energy demand pressure:** LNG imports may reach 28–29 MMT, while total energy demand is expected to triple by 2047, increasing pressure on imports.
3. **Household-centric consumption pattern:** More than 90% of LPG is used in households, making demand rigid and difficult to reduce during supply shocks.
4. **Critical dependence on a single route:** Around 90% of LPG imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making supply highly exposed to disruptions.
5. **Direct exposure to global disruptions:** About 54% of LPG supply is at risk if this route is disrupted, turning global shocks into domestic crises.
6. **Infrastructure inefficiencies and underutilisation:** LNG regasification capacity exceeds 50 MMT, but utilisation remains at 50–60% due to pipeline constraints and demand mismatch.
7. **Reactive policy response:** Government actions manage short-term shortages but fail to address the core issue of import dependence.

## Compressed Biogas (CBG): A Strategic Opportunity

1. **Large untapped domestic potential:** India has a potential of 62 MMT of CBG annually from agricultural waste, animal waste, and municipal waste.
2. **Very low current production:** Current output is only 920 tonnes per day from 132 plants, showing a major gap between potential and actual output.
3. **Multiple benefits of CBG:** CBG supports energy security, environmental sustainability, and rural economic growth at the same time.
4. **Policy support already exists:** Initiatives like **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)** and **Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN)** provide incentives, assured offtake, and a clear framework for growth.
5. **Opportunity for structural shift:** CBG can reduce dependence on imports and support a domestic, sustainable energy system.

### Challenges in Scaling CBG (Execution Gaps)

1. **Fragmented and unreliable feedstock supply:** Lack of organised biomass collection makes it difficult for plants to operate efficiently.
2. **Financing delays and limited support:** Funding is often delayed or insufficient, reducing project viability.
3. **Slow and complex regulatory approvals:** Project approvals can take six to nine months, increasing delays and uncertainty.
4. **Underdeveloped digestate market:** Digestate (the nutrient-rich organic residue left after biogas production) has no strong or organised market. This limits an important source of revenue for plant operators, making CBG projects less profitable and less financially viable.
5. **Gap between vision and execution:** Strong policy intent exists, but systems to implement projects at scale are still missing.

### Required Structural Reforms

1. **National feedstock security framework:** State-wise mapping, aggregation systems, and long-term contracts can ensure reliable biomass supply.
2. **Technology and feedstock alignment:** Matching feedstock types with suitable technologies can improve efficiency and output.
3. **Single-window clearance system:** Faster approvals are needed to reduce delays and improve ease of doing business.
4. **Improved financial mechanisms:** Tools like viability gap funding, green bonds, and carbon credits can attract private investment.
5. **Promotion of energy crops:** Crops like Napier grass can provide stable feedstock with high yield.
6. **Strategic land allocation:** Using 2–3% of agricultural land for energy crops can ensure supply without harming food security.

### Way Forward

1. **Supply-side reforms for stability:** Domestic LPG and refinery gases should be prioritised for households, while industrial users should arrange separate imports.
2. **Diversification of import sources:** Expanding sourcing to countries like the US, Russia, Norway, and Canada can reduce dependence on the Gulf.
3. **Building strategic storage capacity:** Creating 2–3 weeks of buffer stock (1.3–1.9 million tonnes) can handle supply disruptions.

4. **Strengthening logistics and infrastructure:** Investment in terminals, pipelines, and rail networks can improve flexibility and distribution.
5. **Targeted subsidy and price stability:** Temporary subsidies and compensation to oil companies can prevent sudden price increases.
6. **Financial support for emergency imports:** Credit support and guarantee systems can reduce the cost of alternative sourcing.
7. **Promoting alternative cooking energy:** Electric cooking and PNG expansion can reduce dependence on LPG.
8. **Balanced long-term energy strategy:** Immediate focus on supply, medium-term on resilience, and long-term on diversification of energy sources.

## Conclusion

India's LPG crisis highlights deep structural weaknesses in its energy system. Rising import dependence and slow execution have increased risks. A shift toward domestic alternatives like CBG is necessary for long-term stability. Strong reforms and better implementation are essential. Moving beyond short-term fixes, India must build a resilient and self-reliant energy framework to ensure sustainable growth and reduce vulnerability to global shocks.

## Question for practice:

Discuss how India's LPG crisis reflects structural energy vulnerabilities and examine the role of Compressed Biogas (CBG) and related reforms in achieving energy self-reliance.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Beyond trade deals to building a new architecture

Source: The post "Beyond trade deals to building a new architecture" has been created, based on "Beyond trade deals to building a new architecture" published in "The Hindu" on 23rd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

**Context:** India recently signed major trade agreements with the European Union and the United States, which indicate progress in its external economic engagement. However, these agreements also highlight deeper structural problems in the global trade system where access to technology, markets, and resources is increasingly shaped by geopolitics rather than economics. Therefore, India must shift from dependency-driven partnerships to capability-based strategic cooperation.

## Why the Earlier Global Trade System Is Weakening

1. Earlier, globalisation allowed countries to trade freely based on efficiency and cost advantages rather than political alignment.
2. Today, access to critical goods such as computer chips, rare minerals, and medical supplies depends heavily on geopolitical relations.
3. The United States and China increasingly use economic power as a strategic tool to control supply chains and influence partner countries.
4. International institutions that earlier enforced trade rules have weakened in their ability to prevent such restrictions.

### **Risks from Dependence on Major Powers**

1. India depends on Taiwan for advanced semiconductor chips required for digital and industrial growth.
2. India depends heavily on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients used in the generic medicines sector.
3. Similar dependencies exist in electronics, solar panels, and rare earth minerals.
4. The United States has demonstrated willingness to impose tariffs and sanctions to influence partner behaviour, such as penalising India over Russian energy purchases.
5. Russia's weakening position after the Ukraine conflict has reduced India's ability to balance relations between major powers.
6. Therefore, dependence on either the United States or China for critical supply chains creates strategic vulnerability.

### **Need for Sector-Specific Strategic Partnerships**

1. India's traditional strategy of maintaining balanced relations with all major powers is becoming insufficient in the present geopolitical environment.
2. India should instead form smaller and focused partnerships with selected countries in specific sectors such as space, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence.
3. Such partnerships can help middle powers jointly set standards, build capabilities, and reduce dependence on dominant global actors.
4. These partnerships can create real interdependence based on mutual strengths rather than political alignment.

### **Lessons from the European Coal and Steel Community Model**

1. In 1951, six European countries formed the Coal and Steel Community by integrating their critical industrial sectors.
2. This cooperation created economic interdependence that reduced conflict and eventually led to the formation of the European Union.
3. The example shows that practical cooperation in key sectors can gradually build trust and long-term strategic stability.

### **Opportunities for India in Emerging Technology Partnerships**

1. India's Unified Payments Interface demonstrates the ability to handle massive digital transaction volumes and can become a global digital public infrastructure model.
2. India's Aadhaar system and Digital Locker platform provide scalable identity and governance solutions for developing countries.

3. Open-source digital standards developed with partner countries can create alternatives to surveillance-driven Chinese platforms and dominance of American big technology firms.
4. In artificial intelligence, collaboration between France, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and India can combine research strength, capital investment, manufacturing capacity, and engineering talent.
5. Setting standards early in Africa and Asia can help India shape future technological ecosystems.

### Way Forward for India

1. India should prioritise sector-specific partnerships in space technology, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence.
2. India should build coalitions with middle powers rather than relying excessively on major global powers.
3. India should develop institutions that allow partner countries to set shared standards without waiting for approval from dominant global actors.
4. India must move from reactive diplomacy to proactive partnership-building for shaping global governance structures.

**Conclusion:** India's strategic autonomy today depends less on balancing major powers and more on building capability-based partnerships with equals. Sector-focused cooperation in emerging technologies and supply chains can transform India's strengths into long-term geopolitical leverage and ensure sustainable strategic independence.

**Question:** India must move from managing relationships with major powers to building sector-specific partnerships with equals." Discuss in the context of changing global trade, technology supply chains, and geopolitical competition.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

### Outer Space Governance

**Source:** The post "**Outer Space Governance**" has been created, based on "**Lunar governance should be multilateral**" published in "The Hindu" on 23rd April 2026.

**UPSC Syllabus:** GS Paper-2- International Relations

**Context:** The renewed global interest in lunar exploration has brought attention to the question of governance of extraterrestrial resources. While the United States-led Artemis Accords seek to create a framework for cooperation in lunar activities, concerns have emerged about their implications for multilateral space governance. Therefore, there is a strong need to ensure that lunar governance remains inclusive and rules-based under international frameworks.

### Concerns Regarding the U.S. Approach to Lunar Governance

1. The Artemis Accords allow countries to extract, use, and sell lunar resources, thereby creating a governance norm outside the United Nations framework.
2. These Accords introduce the concept of "safety zones" around lunar installations to prevent interference, which could function as exclusion zones in practice.

3. Such provisions may allow early entrants to consolidate control over resource-rich areas without formal violation of the Outer Space Treaty.
4. This approach risks enabling unilateral rule-making in a domain that legally belongs to all humanity.

### **Weakening of Multilateral Legal Institutions**

1. The United States has previously imposed sweeping tariffs under emergency economic powers despite World Trade Organization rules.
2. Since 2019, appointments to the WTO Appellate Body have been blocked by the United States, weakening dispute resolution mechanisms.
3. Similar patterns of bypassing multilateral institutions raise concerns about unilateral norm-setting in space governance as well.
4. Therefore, trust in unilateral governance initiatives becomes limited among other countries.

### **Limitations of the Artemis Accords Framework**

1. The Artemis Accords operate outside the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space framework.
2. Legal experts argue that the Accords provide mechanisms for interpreting lunar resource rights in favour of early signatories.
3. The availability of water ice at only a few lunar south pole locations increases the risk of strategic competition over limited resources.
4. The Accords therefore risk enabling a “first-mover advantage” instead of equitable access.

### **Importance of Multilateral Governance of Lunar Resources**

1. The Moon and its resources are considered part of the common heritage of humankind under international space law principles.
2. Multilateral frameworks ensure transparency, accountability, and equitable participation of all countries in space governance.
3. The 1979 Moon Agreement provides a model for an international regime to govern lunar resource exploitation.
4. Collective rule-making reduces the risk of conflict and promotes peaceful cooperation in outer space activities.

### **Strategic Risks of Unilateral Lunar Governance**

1. If a small group of countries establishes operational control over lunar resource zones, it may create long-term inequalities in access to extraterrestrial resources.
2. Such arrangements could weaken confidence among developing countries in the fairness of the global space governance system.
3. Fragmented governance may lead to competition rather than cooperation in future space exploration missions.

### **Way Forward**

1. Countries should strengthen negotiations under the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

2. Major spacefaring nations should support the development of an inclusive international legal regime for lunar resource extraction.
3. The United States should engage constructively with the Moon Agreement framework to strengthen trust among partner nations.
4. Global space governance should prioritise transparency, equity, and peaceful cooperation.

**Conclusion:** As lunar exploration enters a new phase driven by technological advances and commercial interests, governance frameworks must remain multilateral and inclusive. A rules-based international regime is essential to ensure that the Moon remains a shared domain of humanity rather than a site of strategic competition.

**Question:** "Lunar resource governance must be based on multilateral frameworks rather than unilateral or bloc-based agreements." Discuss in the context of the emerging global space race and the Artemis Accords.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

### India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Internal security

#### Introduction

India's Left Wing Extremism (LWE) journey reflects a shift from deep internal security crisis to a phase of relative stability. In 2009, it was seen as the gravest threat, with violence peaking in 2010 and weakening governance across large regions. By 2026, the decline of Maoist insurgency marks a major turning point. This transition creates an opportunity where the focus must move from security control to governance credibility, dignity, and sustained development in affected regions.

#### Background of Left Wing Extremism Regions

1. **Nature of LWE challenge:** LWE emerged as a major internal security threat rooted in inequality and underdevelopment, mainly affecting **tribal and remote regions across central and eastern India, often called the "red corridor."**
2. **Peak of violence and its impact:** In 2010, the Dantewada attack killed **76 CRPF personnel**, showing the severity of the crisis and the strength of Maoist insurgency.
3. **Effect on governance and society:** Violence weakened state legitimacy, disrupted governance, and forced people to live under constant fear of both insurgents and security forces.
4. **Spread and affected regions:** LWE spread across states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, mainly in forest and tribal areas.
5. **Gradual decline of LWE:** Violent incidents reduced from **1936 (2010) to 374 (2024)**, showing an **81% decline**, and deaths reduced by **85%**, marking strong progress.

6. **Reduction in affected districts:** LWE-affected districts declined from **126 to fewer than 20**, showing the success of sustained efforts.

#### From Security Gains to Governance Credibility

1. **Recognition of threat:** Manmohan Singh identified LWE as the most serious internal security threat in 2009, highlighting its scale and intensity.
2. **Achievement of security success:** Amit Shah declared in 2026 that India is free from Maoist insurgency after years of coordinated efforts.
3. **Role of coordinated strategy:** Strong political will, Centre-State coordination, and joint planning helped weaken insurgency and restore control.
4. **Security as an enabling condition:** Security operations created space for development but did not complete the process of transformation.
5. **Need for governance credibility:** Long-term peace depends on trust, effective administration, and continuous state presence in these regions.
6. **Risk of policy withdrawal:** As violence reduces, there is a danger that attention and policy focus may also decline, which can weaken gains.

#### Transformation of Left Wing Extremism Regions

1. **Shift to community-centred development:** Development is moving from extractive models to community-based strategies that strengthen local participation and ownership.
2. **Examples of area-based plans:** Regions like Jungle Mahal, Saranda, Budha Pahad, Malkangiri, and Bastar show the importance of sustained and focused interventions.
3. **Building local value economies:** Focus is on local consumption, attracting investment, and restoring community control over resources.
4. **Livelihood diversification:** Forest produce systems, agroforestry, MSMEs, and eco-tourism are key to creating stable income sources.
5. **Importance of administrative presence:** Development requires consistent delivery of services like roads, schools, health care, and banking facilities.
6. **Rights-based engagement:** People must be treated as rights-bearing citizens, not as beneficiaries, through respectful engagement and listening.
7. **Human dimension of conflict:** Tribal communities lived between state and insurgents, facing fear, neglect, and delayed access to rights and justice.

#### Framework for Post-LWE Transformation

1. **Focus on dignity and rights:** Governance must ensure justice, strong institutions, and equal opportunities, with dignity as the central principle.
2. **Peace beyond absence of violence:** Reduction in violence alone is not sufficient; lasting peace requires justice, dignity, and trust in everyday governance.
3. **Post-LWE as a moral threshold:** The present phase demands sustained state presence, as decline in violence should not lead to decline in policy attention and governance focus.
4. **Conflict transformation approach:** John Paul Lederach highlights that conflict reflects broken relationships that need rebuilding through trust and fairness.
5. **Need for structured action plan:** A region-specific plan for affected districts should link outcomes with financial support and clear accountability.
6. **AIEEEE governance framework:** This includes **Accountability, Innovation, Evidence, Equity, Empathy, and Efficiency (AIEEEE)** to guide policy execution.
7. **Importance of convergence:** Effective delivery requires coordination of schemes, monitoring systems, and financial provisions at the local level.
8. **Justice and trust building:** Humane policing, faster case disposal, legal aid, and review of undertrial cases are necessary to build credibility.
9. **Youth empowerment:** Sports, education, skill development, and women-led enterprises are essential to channel youth aspirations into growth.

#### Government Initiatives

1. **National Policy and Action Plan (2015):** A multi-pronged strategy that combines **security measures, development programmes, and protection of rights** to address Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in a comprehensive way.
2. **Security strengthening measures:** Deployment of **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)**, creation of **280 new security camps**, and formation of **Joint Task Forces** have improved coordination and operational capacity on the ground.
3. **Special Central Assistance (SCA):** Financial support is provided to bridge critical gaps in infrastructure, with **₹30 crore for most affected districts** and **₹10 crore for districts of concern**.
4. **Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme:** Around **₹3260 crore** has been released to support **training, operational needs, ex-gratia payments, and rehabilitation of surrendered cadres**, strengthening the capacity of states.
5. **Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS):** About **₹1741 crore** has been sanctioned to improve **State Intelligence Branches, Special Forces, district police systems, and fortified police stations**.
6. **Expansion of fortified police stations:** The number increased from **66 in 2014 to 612**, ensuring stronger and safer security presence in sensitive areas.

7. **Road connectivity initiatives:** Under schemes like **Road Requirement Plan (RRP-I)** and **Road Connectivity Project for LWE Areas (RCPLWE)**, **17,589 km of roads** were sanctioned, out of which **14,618 km have been completed**, improving access and development.
8. **Telecom connectivity projects:** Through initiatives like **Mobile Connectivity Projects (Phase I & II)** and **4G saturation programmes**, **10,505 mobile towers** have been planned and **7,768 installed**, improving communication in remote regions.
9. **Financial inclusion measures:** Establishment of **1007 bank branches**, **937 ATMs**, and **5731 post offices**, along with banking correspondents, has improved access to financial services.
10. **Education and skill development:** Setting up of **178 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)**, **48 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)**, and **61 Skill Development Centres (SDCs)** supports education and employment opportunities.
11. **Civic Action Programme (CAP):** This programme builds trust between security forces and local communities through welfare activities and direct engagement.

## Conclusion

India's LWE phase has shifted from conflict control to legitimacy building. While violence has reduced, the real challenge is sustaining trust through governance, justice, and dignity. Peace must translate into visible change in people's lives. The future depends on converting security gains into inclusive development, ensuring these regions become integral to India's growth story.

## Question for practice:

Examine how India's transition from Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has shifted the focus from security operations to governance credibility, and discuss the key measures required to ensure a sustainable post-LWE transformation.

Source : [The Hindu](#) and [PIB](#)

## Common Concerns: on India-South Korea ties

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International Relation

## Introduction

India and South Korea are strengthening their partnership at a time of rising global uncertainty and economic disruptions. The recent visit of Lee Jae Myung after a long gap reflects renewed political commitment. Both countries are focusing on expanding trade, technology cooperation, and strategic alignment. At the same time, shared concerns such as global conflicts, maritime disruptions, and energy insecurity are shaping their engagement and pushing them towards deeper and more coordinated cooperation.

## Evolution of India-South Korea Relations

1. **Ancient cultural linkage:** The relationship goes back to Queen Suriratna (Heo Hwang-ok), who is believed to have come from Ayodhya. This link reflects a deep civilizational connection between the two societies.
2. **Modern diplomatic relations:** Formal diplomatic ties were established in **1973** at the ambassador level. This created the base for structured political and economic engagement.
3. **Strategic upgradation of ties:** The relationship was elevated to a **Strategic Partnership in 2010** and later to a **Special Strategic Partnership in 2015**. This shows growing convergence in economic and strategic interests.
4. **Recent strategic vision:** A **Joint Strategic Vision (2026–2030)** has been launched to deepen cooperation. It also aims to ensure regular high-level meetings and better coordination.

### Significance of India–South Korea Relations

1. **Trade and investment potential:** Bilateral trade is around **\$27 billion**, with a target to reach **\$50 billion by the end of the decade**. This shows there is large untapped economic potential.
2. **Complementary economic strengths:** India provides a large market and workforce, while Korea offers advanced manufacturing and technology. This complementarity creates strong opportunities for mutual benefit.
3. **Technology and industrial cooperation:** Both countries are working in areas like **critical minerals, quantum computing, and shipbuilding**. This helps in building long-term industrial and technological capacity.
4. **Strategic Indo-Pacific alignment:** Both countries support a **free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region**. This strengthens regional stability and ensures secure trade routes.
5. **Shared democratic values:** Both countries are based on **democracy, market economy, and rule of law**. These shared values create mutual trust and support long-term cooperation.
6. **Soft power connections:** Korean culture like K-pop is popular in India, while Indian cultural influence is visible in Korea. This creates a natural social connection between the people.

### Economic and Technological Cooperation

1. **Industrial partnerships:** Many Korean companies operate in India and are well-known household names. India has become a major production base for these companies.
2. **Supply chain resilience:** Both countries aim to build strong and diversified supply chains. This is important in a world facing frequent disruptions.
3. **Emerging technology collaboration:** The focus is shifting to advanced sectors like **AI, digital technology, and semiconductors**. This reflects a move towards future-oriented cooperation.
4. **Maritime and infrastructure cooperation:** Agreements in **shipbuilding and maritime logistics** aim to improve connectivity. This will also strengthen trade efficiency and regional presence.

### Challenges and Concerns related to India–South Korea Relations

1. **Low trade performance:** Bilateral trade remains around **\$27 billion**, which is low for two large economies. This shows that the relationship is not reaching its full potential.
2. **Trade imbalance:** India exports about **\$6 billion**, while imports from Korea are about **\$21 billion**. This creates a significant trade imbalance.
3. **Issues with CEPA agreement:** The **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** agreement is seen as uneven and has not delivered expected benefits. Talks to upgrade it have been stalled for a long time.
4. **Non-tariff barriers:** Indian exporters face strict regulatory standards in Korea. These barriers reduce access for sectors like agriculture and pharmaceuticals.
5. **Limited tourism exchange:** Despite cultural interest, tourist flows remain low. This reduces mutual understanding and engagement.
6. **Inconsistent political engagement:** High-level visits have not been regular over the years. This has affected the continuity of the relationship.
7. **Stalled defence cooperation:** Some defence projects have faced delays due to procedural and trust issues. This limits deeper security cooperation.
8. **Strategic hesitation:** South Korea's focus on the US and other regions reduces its attention towards India. This affects the depth of strategic engagement.
9. **China factor:** South Korea's economic dependence on China creates caution in its strategic decisions. This influences its approach towards India.

### Common Global Concerns Affecting Both Countries

1. **Impact of global conflicts:** Ongoing tensions like the **U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict** create economic uncertainty. Both countries are affected due to their global trade links.
2. **Maritime trade disruptions:** Instability in sea routes affects supply chains and trade flows. This directly impacts both economies.
3. **Energy insecurity risks:** Both countries depend on energy imports and face risks of shortages. This creates long-term economic challenges.
4. **Shared vulnerability:** Both economies are exposed to global shocks due to their trade dependence. This makes cooperation more important.

### Way Forward

1. **Fast-track CEPA negotiations:** Resolving pending issues in CEPA can improve trade balance. It can also increase overall economic engagement.

2. **Improve market access:** India should focus on gaining better access in services like IT and healthcare. This will help diversify exports.
3. **Address non-tariff barriers:** Simplifying regulations can make trade smoother. This will especially benefit small and medium businesses.
4. **Strengthen technology partnerships:** Both countries should deepen cooperation in areas like **semiconductors and AI**. This will support long-term growth.
5. **Enhance strategic cooperation:** Regular high-level meetings and defence dialogue can build trust. This will improve coordination in regional issues.
6. **Promote people-to-people ties:** Increasing tourism, education exchange, and cultural interaction is important. This will strengthen the social base of the relationship.

### Conclusion

India–South Korea relations have strong foundations but remain underutilised in economic and strategic terms. Trade gaps, weak people-to-people ties, and delays in agreements continue to limit progress. At the same time, shared global risks highlight the need for closer cooperation. Sustained engagement, faster reforms, and deeper coordination can help both countries build a resilient and future-oriented partnership.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the significance, challenges, and future prospects of India–South Korea relations in the context of shared global concerns and evolving strategic cooperation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)