

9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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

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India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key

Source: The post “India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key” has been created, based on “India must reboot neighbourhood policy — trade is the key” published in “Indian Express” on 01st April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- International Relations

Context: India currently has a rare strategic opportunity to reboot its neighbourhood policy due to recent political transitions in countries such as **Bangladesh, Nepal,** and **Sri Lanka**. Trade-led regional integration can become the most effective instrument for strengthening India’s relations with its neighbours and ensuring long-term regional stability.

Reasons why rebooting neighbourhood policy is necessary

1. Political transitions in neighbouring countries

- a. Political changes in Bangladesh after the exit of **Sheikh Hasina** and the electoral success of **Tarique Rahman** have opened space for a more interest-based and pragmatic bilateral relationship with India.
- b. Nepal has witnessed a generational political shift with the rise of leaders such as **Balendra Shah**, which provides India an opportunity to rebuild trust based on equality and sovereignty.
- c. Sri Lanka’s political transition after the 2024 elections has also created conditions for more pragmatic and cooperative engagement with India.

2. Fragmentation of the global trading system

- a. The global trading system is becoming increasingly uncertain due to rising tariffs, sanctions, and geopolitical competition among major powers.
- b. Smaller South Asian economies are therefore likely to depend more on regional markets such as India for stable export opportunities.

3. Strategic competition with China

- a. Despite geographical proximity and historical ties with India, countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka continue to depend heavily on imports from **China**.
- b. India faces a large trade deficit with China but maintains trade surpluses with its smaller neighbours, which creates an imbalance in regional economic relations.
- c. India must therefore increase imports from neighbouring countries to promote mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

Importance of trade as the central pillar of neighbourhood policy

1. Geographical advantages remain underutilised

- a. India shares a long land border of nearly 4,000 kilometres with Bangladesh, which creates strong potential for cross-border trade integration.
- b. India’s close maritime proximity to Sri Lanka also provides natural advantages for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation.

- c. India's open border with Nepal provides a unique opportunity for deep economic integration, but this advantage has not been fully utilised due to infrastructure and regulatory barriers.

2. Trade promotes political trust and stability

- a. Greater economic interdependence through trade helps in generating employment opportunities and strengthening supply chains across the region.
- b. Trade cooperation also reduces political mistrust and contributes to long-term stability in bilateral relations.

3. Connectivity can transform eastern South Asia

- a. Improved connectivity between India, Bangladesh, and Nepal can significantly boost economic development in eastern India and the wider eastern subcontinent.
- b. Better regional connectivity will also strengthen integration of India's northeastern region with neighbouring economies.

4. Energy cooperation offers additional opportunities

- a. India can strengthen regional cooperation in energy security with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.
- b. Such cooperation has become particularly important because economic instability in the **Gulf region** is affecting energy supplies and remittance flows across South Asia.

Challenges in India's neighbourhood trade policy

1. **Protectionist trade approach:** India has traditionally followed a protectionist trade policy toward neighbouring countries despite demanding greater market access from major economies globally.
2. **Presence of non-tariff barriers:** Several non-tariff barriers such as customs delays, regulatory restrictions, and weak border infrastructure continue to limit regional trade integration.
3. **Legacy mindset in regional diplomacy:** India's neighbourhood policy has often been shaped by the assumption that smaller neighbouring countries should respond with political loyalty in return for economic support from India. This approach has generated resentment in several neighbouring countries and weakened India's regional influence.

Way Forward

1. India should shift its neighbourhood policy from a "special relationship" framework to one based on sovereign equality and mutual respect.
2. India should increase imports from neighbouring countries to create more balanced trade relationships.
3. India should invest in modern border infrastructure, transport corridors, ports, and digital connectivity to strengthen regional integration.
4. India should promote cross-border investments and regional supply chains to enhance economic interdependence.
5. India should adopt transparent rules-based trade mechanisms, including safeguards such as rules of origin, to ensure sustainable regional cooperation.

Conclusion: India's neighbourhood policy must increasingly rely on trade-driven regional integration rather than political management alone. A trade-centred approach can strengthen mutual prosperity, reduce strategic vulnerabilities, and establish India as the primary economic anchor of South Asia.

Question: India's neighbourhood policy requires a shift from political management to economic integration led by trade and connectivity." Discuss in the context of recent political transitions in South Asia.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

FCRA Amendment Bill 2026

Source: The post "FCRA Amendment Bill 2026" has been created, based on "FCRA Amendment Bill 2026" published in "Indian Express" on 01st April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)** regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions and hospitality by associations and NGOs to ensure that such inflows do not adversely affect national interest, public order, or national security. The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced in the Lok Sabha to address operational and legal gaps related to cases where the FCRA registration of an association is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases.

Key Provisions of the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

- The amendment proposes the creation of a **designated authority** to supervise and manage foreign contributions and assets in cases where the FCRA certificate of an association is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases to exist.
- The amendment empowers the **Central government** to appoint the designated authority that will control the funds and assets of such associations during the period when the registration remains cancelled or ceased.
- The Bill provides that the assets and funds of the association may be returned to the organisation after it regains its FCRA certificate.
- Clause 16A(7) of the amendment provides that in the case of a **place of worship**, the designated authority may entrust the management or operation of the asset to another person in the prescribed manner.
- The amendment further provides that while entrusting such management, it must be ensured that the **religious character of the place of worship is maintained**.
- The government has stated that the amendment seeks to improve transparency in the utilisation of foreign funding and prevent its misuse against constitutional values and national interest.

Background Context

- The FCRA came into force on **May 1, 2011**, to regulate foreign contributions received by associations and NGOs in India.
- The Act has already been amended in the years **2016, 2018, and 2020** to strengthen regulatory oversight.
- At present, around **16,000 associations** are registered under the Act and receive nearly **₹22,000 crore annually** as foreign contributions.

Reasons for the Controversy

1. The amendment has triggered political controversy, particularly in **Kerala**, where opposition parties have expressed concerns about its possible implications for civil society organisations.
2. **Pinarayi Vijayan**, the Chief Minister of Kerala, stated that the amendment could allow cancellation of FCRA registration if renewal applications are not processed within the stipulated time, which could result in the Central government taking control of the assets of institutions.
3. He further expressed concerns that procedural or technical delays in renewal could lead to cancellation of registration and subsequent control of assets by the designated authority.
4. Opposition leaders have also expressed apprehensions that the amendment could disproportionately affect **Christian minority institutions** that depend on foreign contributions for charitable and welfare activities.
5. **Rahul Gandhi** stated that the amendment could benefit the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh** while leaving charitable and community welfare organisations vulnerable to administrative control.
6. The Congress party also alleged that the amendment could weaken NGOs and community organisations and increase the discretionary powers of **the Central government over foreign-funded institutions**.

Government's Justification

1. The Central government stated that the amendment aims to strengthen transparency and accountability in the use of foreign contributions by associations and NGOs.
2. The government also stated that the amendment is intended to address operational and legal gaps identified in cases where FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or otherwise ceases.
3. The Minister of State for Home Affairs stated that the amendment would help prevent the misuse of foreign funding for activities such as forced religious conversions and actions against national interest.
4. The government further clarified that the amendment includes provisions for returning the assets to the organisation after restoration of its FCRA certificate.

Way Forward

1. The government should ensure that **clear procedural safeguards** are introduced to prevent cancellation of FCRA registration due to minor technical or administrative delays in renewal applications.
2. The process for appointment and functioning of the designated authority should be made **transparent and rule-based** to reduce concerns regarding administrative discretion.
3. The government should provide **time-bound mechanisms for disposal of renewal applications** so that organisations are not adversely affected by procedural uncertainty.
4. Adequate safeguards should be introduced to ensure that **minority institutions and charitable organisations are not disproportionately affected** by regulatory action.
5. The authorities should strengthen **consultation with stakeholders such as NGOs and civil society organisations** before implementing major regulatory changes.
6. The amendment should be implemented in a manner that balances **national security concerns with the autonomy and functioning of civil society organisations**.

Conclusion: The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to establish a structured mechanism for managing the funds and assets of associations whose FCRA registrations are cancelled or ceased. However, concerns regarding possible administrative overreach, procedural risks in renewal

processes, and the potential impact on minority-run institutions have led to political controversy, particularly in Kerala. Therefore, ensuring procedural safeguards and transparency in implementation will be essential to balance national security considerations with the autonomy of civil society organisations.

Question: Discuss the key provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026. Why has it triggered political controversy, particularly in Kerala? Examine the concerns raised by stakeholders.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Counting people is not counting disaster risk

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

Introduction

Counting total population instead of people exposed to hazards creates a distorted picture of disaster risk. A State may face intense cyclones or floods but still receive less funding if its population is smaller. This weakens disaster preparedness. A proper system must measure where people live and how vulnerable they are, not just how many people exist in a State.

Evolution of Disaster Financing Framework in India

1. **Early relief-based approach:** Disaster financing began as relief funding from the 2nd Finance Commission through the Margin Money Scheme. It focused only on post-disaster expenditure.
2. **Shift to pre-funded mechanisms:** The 9th Finance Commission replaced the scheme with the Calamity Relief Fund, giving States funds in advance. This improved preparedness.
3. **Creation of national-level funds:** The 10th and 11th Finance Commissions set up national funds like the **National Calamity Relief Fund** with a **75:25 Centre-State contribution**.
4. **Institutionalisation through law:** The Disaster Management Act, 2005 created the **NDRF and SDRF**, giving a structured system for disaster financing.
5. **Reforms under the 14th Finance Commission:** Funds were reorganised into **the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF)**, with **80% for response and 20% for mitigation**, and allocation based on capacity, exposure, and risk.
6. **Expansion under the 15th Finance Commission:** The allocation size increased significantly and used an additive Disaster Risk Index combining hazard, exposure, and vulnerability.

Revised Framework of the 16th Finance Commission

1. **Higher allocation size:** A total of **₹2,04,401 crore** is allocated to SDRF, a **59.5% increase** over the previous Commission.
2. **Shift to multiplicative risk formula:** Disaster Risk Index is defined as **Hazard × Exposure × Vulnerability**, recognising that risk occurs when all three interact.

3. **Conceptual correctness:** The framework rightly states that hazard alone is not disaster. Disaster occurs only when people and vulnerability are present.
4. **Operational weakness:** The method used to measure exposure and vulnerability does not reflect actual disaster conditions, leading to distorted results.

Structural Flaws in Measuring Disaster Risk (16th Finance Commission Framework)

1. **Faulty measurement of Exposure:** Exposure is calculated using total State population scaled from 1 to 25, giving higher scores to populous States like Uttar Pradesh. This ignores people living in hazard zones. Exposure should reflect location-specific risk. The IPCC defines exposure as people in hazard-prone areas, not total population.
2. **Distortion due to multiplicative formula:** The formula gives advantage to large population States. High population multiplies the score even if hazard is low. Odisha has the highest hazard score of 12, but its population score of 5 reduces its DRI to 79.8. In contrast, Bihar has 224.2 and Uttar Pradesh has 413.2, despite lower hazard exposure.
3. **Misrepresentation of Vulnerability:** Vulnerability is measured using per capita NSDP. It assumes poorer States are more vulnerable. This ignores housing quality, health systems, and preparedness. Average income hides inequalities within States and does not reflect real vulnerability.
4. **Evidence of flawed vulnerability scoring:** Kerala faced ₹31,000 crore flood damage in 2018, yet its vulnerability score is only 1.073 due to higher income. Jharkhand, despite high poverty-based vulnerability, loses 0.78 percentage points due to low population score. Overall, 20 States lost funding share, mainly smaller or relatively wealthier States.

Consequences of the Faulty Framework

1. **Penalty for disaster-prone States:** Odisha, with 574.7 km coastline and strong preparedness, faces a 1.57 percentage point reduction in funding share.
2. **Reward for demographic size:** States with larger populations gain more funds, even with lower disaster exposure.
3. **Undermining preparedness efforts:** States investing in early warning systems and evacuation lose incentives due to reduced funding.
4. **Misallocation of resources:** Funds do not reach areas with highest actual risk, weakening disaster response capacity.
5. **Conflict with climate realities:** States like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Assam face rising climate risks but receive less support.

Way Forward

1. **Redefining exposure correctly:** Exposure should count people living in hazard zones like coastal belts, flood plains, and seismic regions.

2. **Use of scientific data sources:** Data from the **Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC) Vulnerability Atlas and Census blocks** should be used for precise mapping.
3. **Creating a composite vulnerability index:** Vulnerability should include **kutcha housing share, health infrastructure, agricultural dependence, insurance coverage, and early warning systems**.
4. **Use of existing datasets:** Data from **the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) database, National Health Mission (NHM) surveys, and India Meteorological Department (IMD) records** should be used to build a realistic vulnerability profile.
5. **Institutionalising standard metrics:** The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** should be mandated to publish an annual State-level Disaster Vulnerability Index for use in future Finance Commission allocations.
6. **Need for methodological continuity:** A stable and accepted framework will avoid disputes in each Finance Commission cycle.

Conclusion

Disaster funding must reflect real risk, not total population size. The present system turns risk assessment into a headcount exercise. This weakens support for highly exposed States and discourages investment in preparedness. A shift to hazard-based exposure and multidimensional vulnerability is essential. Without reform, disaster finance will remain misaligned with climate risks and growing disaster frequency.

Question for practice:

Examine how the 16th Finance Commission's disaster risk assessment framework leads to misallocation of disaster funds in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The West Asia cauldron of conflict and its fallout

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2-International relations

Introduction

West Asia is caught in a major conflict led by Benjamin Netanyahu and supported by Donald Trump. The war began on **February 28, 2026** with U.S.-Israel joint strikes on Iran under **Operation Epic Fury**. The **June 2025 12-day war** acted as a precursor. The conflict has caused **several thousand deaths, over half civilians**, and shows signs of becoming a **long-drawn war with possible ground involvement**.

Iran's Resilience and Strategic Response

1. **Survival despite leadership decapitation:** Iran survived despite the killing of Ali Khamenei and Ali Larijani. The state has not collapsed.

2. **Continuity of nuclear capability:** Iran's **uranium stockpile remains safe**, showing that key strategic assets are intact.
3. **Sustained but calibrated retaliation:** Iran has continued to strike back with **lower intensity**, but it has maintained pressure on its adversaries.
4. **Time advantage in prolonged conflict:** Experts believe **time is on Iran's side**, as it is prepared for a long war of attrition.
5. **Strategic use of oil chokepoint:** Iran may block the Strait of Hormuz, which carries **nearly 30% of global oil shipments**, to trigger a global crisis.
6. **Diplomatic signalling and leverage:** Iran offered **safe passage to friendly countries** and demanded **U.S. withdrawal from West Asia bases and restraint on Israel**.

Limitations and Challenges of the U.S.-Israel Strategy

1. **Overdependence on air power:** The strategy relies on **saturation bombing**, which has not ensured decisive success against a large and resilient Iran.
2. **High cost and weapon strain:** Use of **Patriot missiles, THAAD interceptors, and Tomahawk missiles** is creating **serious cost and replenishment issues**.
3. **Signs of internal war fatigue:** Sections of the **U.S. Navy show war weariness**, indicating limits to prolonged operations.
4. **Failure of regime collapse assumption:** Despite heavy attacks, **Iran has not collapsed**, challenging the core assumption of the strategy.
5. **Israel's flawed containment strategy:** Israel attempted to contain Iran with U.S. backing, but this approach has **not produced expected outcomes**.
6. **Conflict driven by advantage, not order:** The war is focused on **extracting advantage rather than maintaining global order**, increasing instability.

Implications of the War

1. **Risk of regional expansion:** Israel aims to extend the conflict to **Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria**, widening the war.
2. **Severe oil and energy disruption:** Tensions around Hormuz are increasing **oil prices and energy insecurity worldwide**.
3. **Maritime and trade disruptions:** Shipping lanes and logistics systems are under stress, affecting **global trade flows**.
4. **Shift to 'no peace, no war' phase:** The conflict has entered a stage of **continuous tension without full-scale war resolution**.

5. **Global economic impact:** Most economies are already affected and are **not in a position to sustain prolonged conflict**.
6. **Weak global response:** Many U.S. allies in Europe refused support, showing **lack of international unity**.

Ideological and Structural Dimensions

1. **Shia resistance narrative:** The conflict draws from the memory of the Battle of Karbala, symbolising **resistance, sacrifice, and endurance**.
2. **Strengthening of Shia identity:** External pressure may strengthen **religious and transnational Shia identity**, rather than weaken it.
3. **Limits of military superiority:** Western power cannot ensure victory as **ideological and cultural factors dominate outcomes**.
4. **Leadership transition and radicalisation:** The rise of **Mojtaba Khamenei** reflects **growing radical and militant tendencies**, not moderation.

Way Forward

1. **Immediate de-escalation is necessary:** Steps must be taken to **reduce violence and prevent further civilian loss**.
2. **Diplomatic engagement and armistice:** The U.S. should **restrain Israel and move toward negotiated settlement**.
3. **Avoiding provocative actions:** Attacks near sensitive sites like nuclear facilities must be avoided to **prevent escalation**.
4. **Securing global energy routes:** Ensuring stability in Hormuz is essential to **protect global economic systems**.
5. **Reassessment of strategic objectives:** The U.S. must reconsider policies driven by **miscalculation and overreach**.

Conclusion

The conflict highlights that **military dominance cannot ensure strategic success** against a resilient and ideologically driven state. Iran's endurance and the disruption of global systems show a **prolonged war of attrition**. Without timely diplomacy and restraint, the crisis risks expanding further, causing **greater instability, economic damage, and long-term global consequences**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key strategic, economic, and ideological dimensions of the ongoing West Asia conflict and examine its implications for regional stability and the global order.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A West Asia security rethink amid America's role

Source: The post "A West Asia security rethink amid America's role" has been created, based on "A West Asia security rethink amid America's role" published in "The Hindu" on 02nd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- International Relations

Context: The ongoing military confrontation involving the United States, **Israel**, and **Iran** has triggered a strategic rethink across **West Asia**, exposing weaknesses in existing regional security arrangements. Gulf states are increasingly exploring alternative regional security mechanisms due to declining confidence in traditional American security guarantees.

Changing Security Architecture in West Asia

1. Declining credibility of the U.S.A security umbrella

- a. The response of the United States to threats against Gulf states has been widely perceived as inconsistent and insufficient in recent years.
- b. Incidents such as attacks on Gulf infrastructure and continued escalation with Iran have exposed the operational limitations of American security commitments in the region.
- c. The growing energy self-sufficiency of the United States has reduced its strategic dependence on Gulf hydrocarbons and has affected its long-term engagement priorities in the region.
- d. Washington's expectation that Gulf states may financially support conflict-related efforts reflects a shift from security guarantees towards burden-sharing arrangements.

2. Iran as a central variable in regional security

- a. Iran's retaliatory doctrine includes the expansion of conflict across the region if its regime survival is threatened by external military action.
- b. Iran's ability to threaten closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** underlines its strategic leverage over global energy transportation routes.
- c. Any sustainable and long-term regional security architecture will remain difficult to establish without Iran's participation or cooperation.

3. Growing intra-Gulf security coordination

- a. Countries such as **Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain** are attempting deeper coordination despite earlier geopolitical divisions.
- b. Earlier disputes, such as the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar, highlighted serious internal fractures within the Gulf region.
- c. Regional actors are now prioritising collective responses to immediate security threats to strengthen their strategic resilience.

4. Limitations of traditional regional institutions

- a. Regional institutions such as the **Arab League** have been criticised for their inability to respond effectively to rapidly evolving geopolitical crises.

- b. As a result, regional countries are increasingly advocating flexible and issue-based coalitions instead of relying exclusively on rigid institutional frameworks.

5. Israel's expanding military reach is shaping threat perceptions

- a. Israel's demonstrated capability to project air power across a wide geographical area from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf has created new security concerns among several Arab states.
- b. Israel's operations beyond its immediate borders indicate evolving deterrence doctrines that are reshaping regional threat perceptions.

6. Pakistan's attempt to reposition itself in West Asian geopolitics

- a. **Pakistan** is projecting itself as a mediator between Iran and the United States to enhance its diplomatic relevance in the region.
- b. Pakistan is leveraging its geographic proximity to Iran, its Islamic identity linkages, and its status as a nuclear-armed Muslim-majority country to strengthen its strategic positioning.
- c. Engagement with countries such as **Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt** reflects its efforts to increase its role in emerging regional security arrangements.

7. Emerging role of extra-regional actors

- a. Gulf states are increasingly exploring diversified partnerships beyond the United States to reduce dependence on a single external security provider.
- b. Asian energy consumers such as **India** may gain importance in future regional security cooperation frameworks due to their economic stakes in the region.
- c. Earlier diplomatic developments, such as the China-brokered rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, illustrate the growing multipolar influence shaping West Asian geopolitics.

Implications for India

1. Energy security concerns

- a. India depends heavily on crude oil imports from West Asia, which makes its energy security vulnerable to regional instability.
- b. Disruptions in maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz can significantly affect India's energy supply stability and increase global oil prices.

2. Diaspora protection challenges

- a. More than eight million Indians reside in Gulf countries, which makes their safety a major concern during periods of regional conflict.
- b. Escalating tensions in the region increase the likelihood of evacuation requirements and humanitarian contingencies involving Indian citizens.

3. Strategic balancing requirement

- a. India maintains strong diplomatic relations simultaneously with Iran, Israel, the Gulf monarchies, and the United States, which makes strategic balancing increasingly complex.

- b. A volatile regional environment complicates India's diplomatic efforts to maintain strategic autonomy while safeguarding national interests.

4. Emerging security partnership opportunities

- a. Gulf countries may increasingly seek security cooperation with major Asian energy partners such as India in the evolving geopolitical environment.
- b. This situation opens opportunities for India to expand its defence diplomacy and maritime security cooperation with Gulf states.

Way Forward

1. India should promote dialogue-based regional security frameworks that include all stakeholders, including Iran, in order to support long-term regional stability.
2. India should strengthen its strategic petroleum reserves and diversify its energy import sources in order to reduce vulnerability to supply disruptions.
3. India should expand maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region to protect critical sea-lanes of communication.
4. India should enhance evacuation preparedness mechanisms to ensure the safety of its diaspora during conflict situations.
5. India should deepen engagement with Gulf Cooperation Council countries through structured diplomatic and institutional partnerships.

Conclusion: The evolving conflict dynamics in West Asia indicate a transition from a United States-centric regional security architecture towards a more fragmented and multipolar order. This transition presents both risks and strategic opportunities for India, which require calibrated diplomacy and proactive regional engagement to safeguard its long-term interests.

Question: The ongoing U.S.–Israel conflict with Iran is reshaping the regional security architecture of West Asia. Examine the emerging security dynamics in the region and analyse their implications for India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism

Source: The post “Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism” has been created, based on “Corridor of opportunity: On the end of Left Wing Extremism” published in “The Hindu” on 02nd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The recent declaration by **Amit Shah** regarding the effective end of **Left Wing Extremism** marks a significant milestone in India's internal security landscape. The weakening of the Maoist insurgency after decades of conflict presents a historic opportunity for the expansion of governance, development, and democratic participation in previously affected regions.

Success of India's Strategy Against Left-Wing Extremism

1. Decline in Maoist operational capabilities

- a. Intensive paramilitary operations over the last three years have significantly weakened the organisational and military strength of Maoist insurgent groups.
- b. Thousands of insurgents have surrendered or been arrested, which indicates the erosion of their operational networks and recruitment base.
- c. The neutralisation of key cadres has reduced the ability of insurgents to coordinate large-scale attacks against the state.

2. Expansion of state presence in previously inaccessible regions

- a. The weakening of Maoist influence has enabled the state to establish administrative and security presence in remote and forested regions that were previously beyond effective governance.
- b. Improved access to these areas has created opportunities for delivering welfare schemes and public services to marginalised communities.

3. Adoption of a dual strategy combining security operations and rehabilitation

- a. The government adopted a dual approach that combined strict security operations against armed insurgents with rehabilitation policies for those who surrendered.
- b. Rehabilitation measures have encouraged many insurgents to reintegrate into mainstream society and reduce violence in affected regions.

4. Improvement in the delivery of welfare services

- a. The government has initiated programmes to ensure the establishment of schools and the distribution of identity documents such as **Aadhaar** and ration cards in previously neglected regions.
- b. These initiatives are strengthening state legitimacy by improving access to welfare schemes and social protection mechanisms.

Concerns Associated with the Militarised Approach to Tackling LWE

1. Concerns regarding human rights and civil liberties

- a. The strong militarised approach adopted to counter Left Wing Extremism has raised concerns among civil society groups regarding possible violations of civil liberties and human rights.
- b. Critics have argued that policing measures in certain areas went beyond the spirit of existing anti-terrorism laws and affected judicial processes.

2. Risk of alienation of tribal communities

- a. Tribal communities residing in forested and mineral-rich areas were historically affected by displacement, lack of land rights, and inadequate access to development benefits.
- b. If post-conflict governance does not address these structural grievances, there is a risk of renewed alienation and instability.

3. Possibility of unregulated resource extraction

- a. Many Left Wing Extremism-affected regions are rich in mineral resources, which creates the possibility of rapid expansion of extractive economic activities after the weakening of insurgency.

- b. Without proper safeguards, such an extraction could lead to the displacement and marginalisation of tribal populations.

4. Need for political reconciliation after security operations

- a. Long-term peace in conflict-affected regions requires reconciliation between the state and affected communities in addition to security-based solutions.
- b. Healing the social and institutional consequences of prolonged conflict is essential for sustainable stability.

Importance of Inclusive Development in Former LWE-Affected Areas

1. Strengthening tribal rights and participation

- a. Inclusive development should prioritise the protection of tribal land rights and ensure their meaningful participation in democratic decision-making processes.
- b. Expanding access to political representation will strengthen trust between tribal communities and the state.

2. Improving governance and institutional access

- a. The expansion of governance institutions such as schools, healthcare centres, and welfare delivery systems will help integrate remote regions into the national development framework.
- b. Strengthening local administrative capacity will reduce governance deficits that previously contributed to insurgency.

3. Ensuring accountability in resource extraction

- a. Resource extraction activities in mineral-rich regions must follow transparent procedures and ensure fair compensation and rehabilitation for affected communities.
- b. Sustainable development practices should be prioritised to balance economic growth with environmental and social justice concerns.

4. Promoting livelihood opportunities and infrastructure development

- a. Expanding employment opportunities through skill development programmes and infrastructure investment will reduce economic vulnerabilities in affected regions.
- b. Improved connectivity through roads, digital infrastructure, and financial inclusion will strengthen integration with national markets.

Way Forward

1. The government should strengthen implementation of protective legislations such as the **Forest Rights Act** and the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act** to safeguard tribal autonomy and land rights.
2. Development initiatives in former Left Wing Extremism-affected areas should prioritise community participation and transparency in decision-making processes.
3. Security gains achieved through paramilitary operations should be consolidated through long-term governance reforms and institutional strengthening.

4. Rehabilitation policies for surrendered insurgents should be expanded to ensure their successful reintegration into society.
5. The government should promote reconciliation-based governance that addresses historical grievances and strengthens democratic legitimacy in affected regions.

Conclusion: The weakening of Left Wing Extremism represents a major achievement in India's internal security framework and opens a corridor of opportunity for inclusive governance. Sustainable peace in these regions will depend not only on security success but also on the protection of tribal rights, accountable development, and meaningful democratic participation of local communities.

Question: The weakening of Left Wing Extremism in India marks a major internal security achievement. However, sustaining peace in former LWE-affected regions requires inclusive development and protection of tribal rights. Discuss.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The Textbook Controversy and Core Issue

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2 - Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Introduction

The **Supreme Court of India** reacted strongly to a Class 8 NCERT textbook that referred to issues like corruption in the judiciary. It initiated suo motu action, banned the book, and formed a committee. The issue raises a key question: how to balance judicial dignity with fair criticism, especially when content may influence young minds and public trust in institutions.

Nature and Scope of Contempt of Court

1. **Types of contempt:** Contempt has two forms. **Civil contempt** means disobedience of court orders. **Criminal contempt** includes obstructing justice, prejudicing cases, and lowering the authority of the court.
2. **Meaning of scandalising the court:** Criminal contempt also includes **hostile criticism that damages public confidence** in the judiciary. This area is sensitive and needs careful limits.
3. **Purpose of criminal contempt:** It is not meant to protect the ego of judges. It is used when **false or harmful narratives about courts spread and affect justice delivery**.
4. **Link with public opinion:** Courts and public opinion are closely connected. If public trust weakens, the **ability of courts to function effectively also reduces**.

Judicial Authority and the Centrality of Public Trust

1. **Judiciary's power rooted in public confidence:** Courts lack control over money or force. Their real strength lies in **people's faith in their fairness and justice delivery**.

2. **Trust built through consistent judicial conduct:** Public confidence is developed through **protection of rights, fair decisions, and upholding constitutional values over time.**
3. **Public trust as the basis of institutional authority:** This trust acts as the **foundation of judicial review and balance of power**, allowing courts to check other branches.
4. **Threat from repeated negative narratives:** Motivated or exaggerated criticism, when widely spread, can **erode this trust and weaken judicial effectiveness.**

Judiciary Tolerance with Defined Limits

1. **Recognition of need for criticism:** Judges have accepted that **criticism is necessary for improvement.** It helps in identifying delays and inefficiencies.
2. **Restraint in using contempt power:** Frequent or emotional use of contempt can **damage the dignity of courts instead of protecting it.**
3. **Dignity earned through conduct, not punishment:** Respect for courts comes from **quality of judgments, fairness, and objectivity**, not from silencing critics.
4. **Broad shoulders approach as institutional strength:** Courts can ignore harsh remarks if they are not harmful. This reflects **confidence and maturity of the judiciary.**
5. **Freedom of speech as a core democratic value:** Fair and even strong criticism must be allowed. Suppressing it can harm **democratic discourse and accountability.**
6. **Clear limits to acceptable criticism:** Criticism must be **fact-based, reasoned, and free from malice.** It should not aim to damage institutional credibility.

Balancing Free Speech, Judicial Role and Due Process

1. **Judicial review as a key democratic function:** Courts ensure **accountability of executive and legislature** by checking misuse of power.
2. **Public trust strengthens judicial review:** People approach courts because of **confidence in justice delivery**, making judicial authority effective.
3. **Judiciary as protector of fundamental rights:** Courts safeguard **rights like equality, free speech, and religion**, making their credibility crucial.
4. **Need for caution in dealing with academic content:** When writings or textbooks are involved, courts must act carefully to **avoid chilling academic freedom.**
5. **Due process as a missing element in the case:** Authors were not given an opportunity to explain. **Notice, clarification, or correction could have resolved the issue.**
6. **Impact on young and impressionable minds:** The concern was that biased content may **shape long-term perceptions of the judiciary among students.**

Internal Challenges within Judiciary

1. **Presence of corruption as a serious concern:** Even limited instances of corruption can **damage the credibility of the entire institution**, as negative cases gain attention.
2. **Disproportionate impact of isolated misconduct:** A single corrupt judge can **undermine public trust built over years**, making the issue highly sensitive.
3. **Weakness of impeachment mechanism:** Impeachment is **lengthy, political, and rarely successful**, limiting its effectiveness as a deterrent.
4. **Transfer as an inadequate corrective tool:** Transfer only shifts the problem geographically. It does not **address misconduct or ensure accountability**.
5. **Limitations of in-house inquiry system:** Internal mechanisms exist but may fail if there is **non-cooperation or resistance from the accused**.
6. **Need for stronger institutional response:** The system was designed for rare misconduct. There is now a need for **clear, effective, and enforceable accountability mechanisms**.

Conclusion

The judiciary must protect its authority while allowing fair criticism. Public trust is its core strength. Contempt power should be used with restraint and clarity. Internal reforms are necessary to address accountability gaps. Respect for courts grows through fairness, transparency, and strong conduct, not by suppressing criticism or limiting democratic discourse.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the power of contempt of court should be balanced with freedom of criticism while preserving public trust and judicial credibility.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Orderly Exit: On India and Energy Transition Issues

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

Global energy shocks have been recurring, from the 1973 Yom Kippur War to the 2022 Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, the present crisis involving U.S.–Israeli strikes on Iran is different as it disrupts both oil and gas flows. This disruption comes at a time when the global energy system is already shifting towards cleaner sources, making it a deeper structural change rather than a temporary shock.

Changing Nature of Energy Systems

1. **Dual energy disruption:** The present crisis affects both oil and gas flows together, unlike earlier shocks that were mainly oil-based. This increases the scale and impact of disruption.
2. **Energy transition underway:** International Energy Agency shows that electric vehicles displaced **0.9 mb/d of oil demand in 2023**, rising to **1.3 mb/d in 2024**, indicating a clear structural shift.
3. **Limited but significant impact:** This shift still forms only **1–1.3% of global oil demand**, but it signals long-term change in consumption patterns.
4. **Shock as accelerator:** A disruption of around **8 mb/d supply** can speed up the transition away from fossil fuels.

Fragmentation of the Global Energy Order

1. **Decline of petrodollar system:** The earlier system ensured oil trade in dollars and supported U.S. financial dominance through recycling of surplus revenues.
2. **Shift to mineral-based system:** Energy is moving from global oil trade to geographically concentrated supply chains of critical minerals.
3. **Concentration of key minerals:** Lithium is concentrated in **Chile (30%), Argentina (13%), Australia (20%+)**, while cobalt is over **70% in DR Congo** and nickel is dominated by Indonesia.
4. **Role of new producers:** Copper is concentrated in Chile and Peru, while Canada and Australia are emerging as key suppliers of multiple minerals.
5. **China's processing dominance:** Control over processing and manufacturing lies mainly with China, giving it a decisive advantage in the new system.
6. **Possibility of new currency shift:** Future energy systems may depend on China and possibly the yuan, similar to earlier dependence on dollar-based oil.

India's Strategic Dilemma

1. **Opportunity for energy security:** The transition offers India a chance to reduce fossil fuel dependence and move towards cleaner energy.
2. **Risk of new dependencies:** Dependence may shift from oil imports to critical minerals and foreign technology supply chains.
3. **Technological vulnerability:** Heavy reliance on external manufacturing and processing can limit strategic autonomy.
4. **Balancing transition and sovereignty:** India must ensure that new energy systems do not recreate old patterns of dependence in a different form.

Building India's Energy Transition Ecosystem

9 PM Compilation April 2026

1. **Rapid renewable expansion:** India's renewable capacity crossed **250 GW by 2025**, driven by solar and wind deployment.
2. **Ambitious targets achieved early:** The target of **500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030** was achieved five years ahead of schedule, showing strong policy execution.
3. **Ecosystem-based approach:** Transition now involves coordination among policy, finance, industry, research and consumers to scale innovation.
4. **Solar sector success:** Long-term policy support, concessional finance and Production Linked Incentives made solar energy cost-competitive.
5. **Digital model as example:** Systems like UPI show how coordinated action can create large-scale impact across sectors.

Strengthening Innovation and System Integration

1. **Green hydrogen push:** The National Green Hydrogen Mission targets **5 million tonnes annual production by 2030**, supported by incentives under the SIGHT programme.
2. **Energy storage expansion:** Battery storage and pumped storage are being promoted, with viability gap funding to reduce risks.
3. **Grid infrastructure development:** The Green Energy Corridor is improving transmission and reducing curtailment.
4. **Multi-stakeholder participation:** Governments, financial institutions, manufacturers and research bodies are working together for reliability and affordability.
5. **Priority innovation areas:** Focus includes advanced storage, recycling of materials, long-duration storage, industrial decarbonization and AI-based energy systems.

Way Forward

1. **Diversified resource strategy:** India should secure access to critical minerals from multiple regions to reduce risk.
2. **Domestic capability building:** Strong focus is needed on manufacturing, processing and technology development within the country.
3. **Integrated ecosystem approach:** Innovation must move from isolated efforts to coordinated systems involving all stakeholders.
4. **Use of policy instruments:** Tools like incentives, demand aggregation and finance support can accelerate investment and reduce risks.
5. **Global South alignment:** A non-aligned strategy can help India avoid dependence on any single power and maintain strategic autonomy.

Conclusion

The current energy transition marks a major shift in global economic and geopolitical structures. India must ensure an orderly exit from fossil fuels by combining clean energy expansion with strong domestic capabilities. A balanced strategy, focused on diversification, innovation and autonomy, will help avoid new dependencies while securing long-term energy and economic stability.

Question for practice:

Examine how the ongoing global energy transition, combined with recent geopolitical disruptions, is reshaping energy systems and creating both opportunities and challenges for India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future

Source: The post "Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future" has been created, based on "Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future" published in "The Hindu" on 03rd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: India is implementing one of the world's largest rural drinking water supply programmes through the Jal Jeevan Mission, which has increased rural household tap water coverage from **16.72% in 2019 to over 81%**. The mission has reduced drudgery for women, saved nearly **5.5 crore hours daily**, and helped prevent nearly **four lakh deaths from diarrhoeal diseases**. However, ensuring long-term sustainability of rural drinking water systems now requires a strong **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for monitoring, coordination, and maintenance.

Importance of Digital Infrastructure in Rural Drinking Water Systems

1. Ensures long-term functionality of schemes

- a. Infrastructure creation alone cannot guarantee a continuous water supply unless the scheme's performance is regularly monitored and maintained.
- b. Digital platforms help track supply regularity, infrastructure functionality, and seasonal variations in water availability, thereby improving service delivery sustainability.

2. Creation of digital identity for water schemes

- a. The introduction of **Sujalam Bharat IDs** provides a unique digital identity for each drinking water scheme covering hydraulically connected assets from source to tap.
- b. The creation of **Sujal Gaon IDs** enables village-level mapping of infrastructure systems and improves transparency, monitoring, and accountability.

3. Enables real-time operational monitoring

- a. Digital monitoring systems allow continuous tracking of water supply regularity and source availability across rural drinking water schemes.

- b. These systems help detect declining source levels and irregular supply patterns early, enabling preventive maintenance instead of delayed corrective action.

4. Improves water quality surveillance and public health

- a. Digital platforms help detect contamination risks before they develop into major public health concerns in rural areas.
- b. Reliable water quality monitoring contributes to reducing water-borne diseases and strengthens safe drinking water delivery systems.

5. Strengthens the financial sustainability of schemes

- a. Digital dashboards help track operation and maintenance expenditure and support better financial planning for repairs and infrastructure upkeep.
- b. This ensures the lifecycle sustainability of rural drinking water assets and improves the long-term functionality of schemes.

6. Empowers Gram Panchayats and community institutions

- a. Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees play a central role in managing rural drinking water systems at the grassroots level.
- b. Access to digital information on pipelines, pumps, tanks, water supply regularity, and water quality strengthens their decision-making capacity and promotes **Jan Bhagidari**.

7. Promotes cooperative federalism through standardised data systems

- a. Standardised digital data formats allow States to share information easily while retaining control over their own water supply systems.
- b. This facilitates inter-State learning, benchmarking of performance, and adoption of best practices in rural drinking water governance.

8. Enables AI-driven infrastructure management

- a. Digital infrastructure enables frontline workers to upload images of pipelines and pumps that can be analysed using AI-based monitoring tools.
- b. Predictive analytics can detect infrastructure damage, identify supply risks, and flag maintenance needs in advance, improving the efficiency of service delivery.

Challenges in Digital Water Governance

1. Differences in data definitions and reporting standards across States

- a. Different States follow varying formats, indicators, and reporting mechanisms for rural water supply data, which creates inconsistencies in monitoring scheme performance.
- b. This results in delays in the reconciliation of datasets and prevents the creation of a unified national-level decision-support system.

2. Limited technical capacity at the Gram Panchayat level

- a. Many Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees lack adequate technical training to effectively use digital dashboards and monitoring platforms.
- b. This reduces their ability to interpret infrastructure performance data and limits the potential of community-led water governance.

3. Connectivity gaps in remote rural areas

- a. Poor internet connectivity and unreliable electricity supply in remote and hilly regions restrict real-time data uploading and monitoring of drinking water schemes.
- b. These gaps reduce the effectiveness of digital platforms supporting the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission.

4. Financial sustainability of operation and maintenance (O&M)

- a. Many rural drinking water schemes face challenges in ensuring regular funding for operation and maintenance activities after infrastructure creation is completed.
- b. Weak local revenue mobilisation and limited user-charge recovery reduce the long-term sustainability of scheme functionality.

5. Data reliability and quality concerns

- a. Inaccurate or incomplete field-level data entry reduces the reliability of digital monitoring systems and weakens evidence-based decision-making.
- b. Without trusted datasets, predictive analytics and AI-enabled maintenance planning cannot function effectively.

6. Institutional coordination challenges across multiple stakeholders

- a. Rural drinking water governance involves coordination between central ministries, State departments, engineers, and local bodies, which often leads to fragmented responsibilities.
- b. Lack of seamless institutional integration slows response time for repairs, maintenance, and service delivery improvements.

7. Digital literacy gaps among frontline workers and communities

- a. Many frontline workers and community members are not adequately trained in using mobile-based monitoring applications and digital reporting tools.
- b. This limits community participation in scheme monitoring despite initiatives such as Sujalam Bharat IDs and Sujal Gaon IDs.

Way Forward

1. The government should standardise national water data architecture to improve interoperability across States and institutions.
2. Capacity-building programmes should be strengthened for Gram Panchayats and Village Water and Sanitation Committees to improve digital governance outcomes.
3. Greater integration with groundwater monitoring and watershed management programmes should be ensured to improve the sustainability of water sources.

4. AI-based predictive maintenance tools should be scaled up across rural drinking water infrastructure systems.
5. Community ownership of drinking water assets should be strengthened through participatory initiatives such as Jal Mahotsav 2026.

Conclusion: Pipes and pumps are essential for expanding drinking water access, but trusted and shared digital information ensures their long-term sustainability and functionality. Strengthening Digital Public Infrastructure will transform rural drinking water schemes from infrastructure-creation programmes into reliable service-delivery systems and support India's goal of universal safe drinking water access under **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Question: Pipes and pumps can deliver water, but digital public infrastructure ensures the sustainability of rural drinking water systems." Examine the context of India's rural water supply transformation under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy

Source: The post "**Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy**" has been created, based on "**Some smart (phone) lessons for industrial policy**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 03rd April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: India's industrial policy has increasingly relied on the Production Linked Incentive Scheme to boost manufacturing competitiveness and integrate the country into global value chains. Among all sectors, the **smartphone PLI scheme** has emerged as one of the most successful examples of industrial transformation through targeted incentives. The smartphone sector's rapid growth offers a practical template for redesigning PLIs across other sectors to enhance exports, employment generation, and manufacturing scale.

Achievements of the Smartphone PLI Scheme

1. Rapid growth in production and exports

- a. Investments of about **\$1.2 billion** under the smartphone PLI scheme helped drive production growth from **\$30 billion in 2020 to \$64 billion by FY2025**.
- b. Smartphone exports increased from **\$3.1 billion to \$24 billion**, raising India's share in global smartphone exports from **1% to 8%**.

2. Expansion of employment opportunities

- a. The broader smartphone ecosystem attracted nearly **\$8 billion of investment** and generated approximately **1.5–2 lakh jobs**.
- b. Large assembly facilities established by companies such as Foxconn and Tata Electronics created significant employment, especially for women workers.

3. Strengthening of the supplier ecosystem

- a. The smartphone ecosystem expanded from around **12 firms in 2019 to more than 40 companies** in the Apple supplier network alone.
- b. This expansion helped create an additional **1.2 lakh direct jobs** and strengthened linkages with MSMEs supplying components.

4. Development of component manufacturing ecosystem

- a. The launch of the **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS)** aims to deepen domestic component manufacturing capacity.
- b. The scheme has already attracted applications worth nearly **twice the expected investment of ₹59,350 crore**, with employment commitments exceeding initial targets.

Key Lessons from the Smartphone PLI for Industrial Policy

1. Export-oriented policy design is essential

- a. The smartphone PLI scheme clearly targeted export-oriented production by focusing on higher-value devices suited for global markets.
- b. This approach helped integrate India into global value chains instead of relying solely on import substitution strategies.

2. Prioritising downstream assembly can accelerate scale

- a. The policy targeted final assemblers such as Foxconn, Pegatron, and Wistron that were already connected to global brands.
- b. Building large-scale assembly capacity created demand for domestic suppliers and strengthened the broader manufacturing ecosystem.

3. Leveraging India's labour advantage supports job creation

- a. Smartphone assembly is labour-intensive and aligns well with India's demographic advantage and workforce availability.
- b. Large facilities established under the scheme generated substantial employment, especially in labour-intensive manufacturing clusters.

4. Reducing tariffs on inputs improves competitiveness

- a. The government reduced import duties on key inputs such as printed circuit board assemblies, connectors, microphones, and camera modules.
- b. This ensured that domestic manufacturers remained globally competitive instead of facing cost disadvantages due to protectionist policies.

5. Administrative responsiveness improves investor confidence

- a. The expansion of export cargo capacity at Chennai airport and timely intervention during labour-related challenges improved operational efficiency.
- b. Such responsive governance strengthened investor confidence and ensured smooth implementation of the scheme.

6. Industry consultation strengthens policy effectiveness

- a. The smartphone PLI scheme was designed through extensive consultations with industry stakeholders.
- b. Continued collaboration between government and industry helped identify bottlenecks and improve implementation outcomes.

7. Ease of doing business complements financial incentives

- a. Incentives alone cannot ensure manufacturing success unless supported by improvements in logistics, infrastructure, and regulatory processes.
- b. The smartphone sector benefited from coordinated policy support that created a conducive business environment.

Challenges in Replicating Smartphone PLI Success Across Sectors

1. Weak export orientation in several PLI sectors

- a. Many PLI schemes continue to emphasise import substitution rather than integration into global value chains.
- b. This limits their potential to generate large-scale employment and export-led manufacturing growth.

2. Tariff and non-tariff barriers on intermediate inputs

- a. High import duties on raw materials and intermediate goods increase production costs in several sectors.
- b. These barriers offset the competitiveness benefits that PLIs are intended to provide.

3. Limited scale of downstream manufacturing in some industries

- a. Several PLI-targeted sectors lack globally competitive lead firms capable of anchoring supplier ecosystems.
- b. Without strong downstream players, the expansion of component manufacturing networks becomes difficult.

4. Implementation delays and low disbursement levels

- a. Although nearly **₹1.97 lakh crore** was allocated for PLI schemes across sectors, only about **10% has been disbursed** so far.
- b. Slow implementation reduces investor confidence and delays capacity creation.

5. Infrastructure and logistics constraints

- a. Manufacturing competitiveness depends heavily on reliable logistics, ports, power supply, and industrial clusters.
- b. Persistent infrastructure gaps reduce India's attractiveness compared to competitors such as Vietnam and China.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen export-linked incentive structures

- a. Future PLI schemes should prioritise export competitiveness and integration into global production networks.
- b. Sector-specific strategies should align incentives with global demand patterns.

2. Focus on labour-intensive sectors for employment generation

- a. Greater policy attention should be given to labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, garments, footwear, and toys.
- b. These sectors can generate large-scale employment similar to smartphone assembly manufacturing.

3. Reduce tariffs on intermediate goods

- a. Rationalising import duties on production inputs will improve the cost competitiveness of domestic manufacturers.
- b. This will help integrate Indian firms into global value chains more effectively.

4. Strengthen industrial clusters and logistics infrastructure

- a. Improving port connectivity, cargo handling capacity, and industrial corridor development will support export-oriented manufacturing.
- b. Efficient logistics systems are essential for scaling manufacturing production.

5. Institutionalise government–industry partnerships

- a. Continuous consultations with industry stakeholders should guide sector-specific PLI redesign.
- b. Such collaboration can help identify implementation challenges early and improve policy outcomes.

Conclusion: The smartphone PLI scheme demonstrates that export orientation, downstream assembly scale, labour-intensive manufacturing, and responsive governance can transform India's industrial performance. Applying these lessons across sectors can accelerate manufacturing growth, boost exports, and generate large-scale employment, strengthening India's position in global value chains.

Question: What lessons from the smartphone PLI scheme can be applied to redesign other PLI schemes for boosting exports and job creation in India?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

What happens when CAD rises

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Even with 7.4% growth, contained inflation, Current Account Deficit (CAD) at ~0.8% of GDP, and \$701.4 billion reserves, the rupee fell over 5% last year and equity markets turned volatile. This reflects a disconnect between strong macro fundamentals and external outcomes. When oil prices rise, import bills increase and CAD widens.

A stronger dollar and weak capital flows reduce financing support, so short-term pressures dominate currency movement despite stable fundamentals.

Oil Shock as the Starting Point of CAD Pressures

1. **War-driven oil price rise increases import bill:** Higher crude prices raise the **import bill before demand adjusts**, widening the trade deficit and increasing CAD.
2. **India's oil dependence raises dollar demand:** As a major oil importer, **dollar demand jumps sharply**, putting direct pressure on the rupee.
3. **Corporate margins get squeezed:** Higher import costs **reduce corporate profitability**, adding to economic stress.
4. **Short-term imbalance rises before adjustment:** Import costs increase immediately, while **demand adjusts slowly**, worsening short-term CAD.
5. **Quantified long-term impact on CAD:** A 1% oil price rise worsens CAB by up to 0.08pp of GDP over five years; 10% → ~0.8pp, 20% → ~1.6pp, and 5% → ~0.4pp, showing cumulative pressure.

Impacts of CAD Pressures on the Economy

1. **Currency weakens despite strong fundamentals:** The rupee **fell over 5% and stayed near record lows**, showing CAD pressure dominates short-term outcomes.
2. **Equity markets become volatile:** Rising external imbalance leads to **increased volatility in equity markets**.
3. **Mismatch between fundamentals and outcomes:** Strong indicators like growth and reserves **fail to stabilize currency in the short run**.
4. **Buffers partially absorb shocks:** **Services exports and remittances** reduce pressure but cannot fully offset CAD rise.
5. **Policy tools delay pass-through:** **Hedging and pricing policies** slow the impact but do not eliminate it.

From CAD to Currency Pressure: Role of Capital Flows

1. **CAD requires stable financing:** Even a **moderate CAD (~0.8% of GDP)** needs consistent capital inflows for balance.
2. **Decline in portfolio investment flows:** In 2025, **foreign portfolio investors pulled back**, reducing financing support.
3. **Weakening of FDI inflows:** **Net FDI softened** due to **profit repatriation and outbound investment**, weakening stability.

4. **Shift in market risk perception:** Reduced inflows changed **risk calculus**, increasing currency sensitivity.
5. **Flow dynamics overpower stock strength:** Strong reserves (**\$701.4 billion**) and growth cannot offset **thin and volatile inflows**.
6. **Reduced patient capital increases vulnerability:** Lower stable inflows make the rupee more sensitive to **risk appetite shifts**.

Role of Global Dollar Strength and Risk Aversion

1. **Stronger dollar tightens financial conditions:** A strong dollar leads to **tighter global liquidity**, reducing capital flows to India.
2. **Risk-off sentiment reduces inflows:** Investors shift to safer assets, increasing **risk premium** and lowering inflows.
3. **Simultaneous pressure on currency:** **Higher oil-related dollar demand and lower capital inflows** hit the rupee together.
4. **Short-term pricing driven by premia:** Currency movement is driven by **oil and risk premia in the short run**, not fundamentals.

Why the Pressure Persists Despite Strong Fundamentals

1. **Long-term anchor exists but does not act quickly:** The rupee is **~18% below PPP equilibrium**, showing strength in the long run but not immediate relief.
2. **Based on long-term real exchange rate behaviour:** Estimates use **monthly RER data over more than three decades**, showing mean-reverting trends over time.
3. **Very slow pace of adjustment:** Only **13% correction happens in one year, 25% in three years, and 44% in five years**, showing gradual adjustment.
4. **Long half-life delays correction:** It takes **more than five years** to correct half of the misalignment, slowing recovery.
5. **Adjustment is uneven and shock-driven:** Corrections often occur during **risk-off episodes and capital outflows**, not smoothly.
6. **India adjusts slower than peers:** Countries like **Brazil and Indonesia adjust faster**, highlighting India's slower response.
7. **Short-term shocks dominate fundamentals:** **Oil shocks and capital flow volatility** overpower fundamentals, keeping pressure on the rupee.

Conclusion

Rising CAD reflects dependence on **oil imports and volatile capital flows**. Stability needs **fuel tax adjustments, FX reserve use, hedging, diversified sourcing, and stable greenfield FDI through predictable policy and local-currency markets**. Long-term strength requires **export scale, energy diversification, strategic reserves, renewables, and efficiency** to reduce vulnerability.

Question for practice:

Discuss how a rise in the Current Account Deficit (CAD) affects the rupee despite strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and examine the role of oil prices, capital flows, and global factors in this process.

Source: [Businessline](#)

Allied healthcare needs attention

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Introduction

Healthcare is not limited to doctors and hospitals. It depends on **Allied and Healthcare Professionals (AHPs)** like lab technologists, physiotherapists and technicians who deliver actual care. They form nearly **60% of the workforce** and ensure safety and quality. India is expanding healthcare infrastructure, but the supply of trained allied professionals has not kept pace, creating a serious gap in service delivery and patient outcomes.

Magnitude of Workforce Crisis

1. **Severe workforce shortage:** India needs about **10.9 million healthcare workers** but has only **2.75 million**, leaving a gap of **over 8 million professionals**.
2. **Allied segment faces largest deficit:** Allied healthcare forms the biggest unmet demand within this shortage, making it a critical bottleneck.
3. **Demand-supply imbalance:** Annual demand is about **1 million AHPs**, while supply is only **0.2 million**, creating a widening gap.
4. **Estimates by institutions:** The shortage of over 8 million allied professionals and nurses is also highlighted by **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
5. **Impact on healthcare delivery:** This shortage slows diagnostics, delays surgeries, limits rehabilitation services and affects patient outcomes.
6. **Infrastructure-workforce mismatch:** Hospitals and diagnostic centres are expanding, but workforce planning has not scaled at the same pace.

Structural Challenges in Allied Healthcare

1. **High training cost with low returns:** Education requires years of specialised training and high financial investment, but early salaries remain modest.

2. **Reduced attractiveness of profession:** This mismatch discourages students, especially from small towns and modest backgrounds, affecting enrolment.
3. **Fragmented education system:** Training quality, faculty availability and standardisation vary widely across regions.
4. **Limited practical exposure:** Many students have strong theoretical knowledge but lack hands-on experience in real clinical environments.
5. **Employability gap:** Lack of early exposure to patients, equipment and teamwork makes transition to real work difficult.

Policy Response and Institutional Framework

1. **Creation of unified regulatory body:** The **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)** provides a framework for education standards, regulation and registration.
2. **Standardisation of curriculum:** From **2026–27**, competency-based curricula aim to ensure uniform quality across institutions.
3. **Budgetary support:** **₹1,000 crore allocation** aims to add **one lakh allied professionals in five years**.
4. **Recognition of national priority:** Workforce expansion in allied healthcare is now seen as essential for healthcare delivery.
5. **Need for effective implementation:** Legal framework exists, but outcomes depend on how regulations are implemented.

Implementation Challenges in Ongoing Reforms

1. **Student uncertainty during transition:** Students admitted between policy changes face ambiguity about degree recognition and professional registration.
2. **Need for grandfathering:** Without clear protection, thousands of students may face issues in qualification recognition and eligibility.
3. **Institutional ambiguity:** Colleges are unclear about recognition processes and whether admissions can continue during transition.
4. **Risk to training pipeline:** Delays in admissions and approvals can further reduce already limited workforce supply.
5. **Rigid curriculum requirements:** Mandatory exposure to specialised departments such as **organ transplantation, interventional radiology, oncology, neonatology and nuclear medicine** restricts participation of many institutions.
6. **Urban concentration of facilities:** These specialised departments exist mainly in tertiary hospitals located in major cities.

7. **Neglect of real training ecosystems:** Diagnostic laboratories, imaging centres, dialysis units and rehabilitation facilities operate as standalone centres but are not fully integrated into training requirements.
8. **Faculty shortage:** Limited availability of Master's and PhD-level faculty restricts expansion of programmes.
9. **Restriction on teaching roles:** NCAHP standards do not allow doctors to teach AHP programmes, creating a mismatch in emerging disciplines.

Way Forward

1. **Balance regulation with expansion:** Regulation should ensure quality but must not slow training capacity growth.
2. **Provide transition clarity:** A clear **grandfathering framework** should protect students enrolled during regulatory changes.
3. **Ensure institutional continuity:** Allow institutions to continue admissions while recognition processes stabilise.
4. **Adopt flexible training models:** Recognise networks of clinical facilities instead of requiring a single attached hospital.
5. **Strengthen practical exposure:** Integrate early and structured clinical exposure to improve employability.
6. **Promote industry-academia collaboration:** Hospitals and diagnostic centres should co-design curricula and training programmes.
7. **Support faculty development:** Expand postgraduate and doctoral programmes to build a strong academic pipeline.
8. **Recognise evolving skill needs:** Training should include digital tools, diagnostics technology and patient interaction skills.
9. **Increase awareness of careers:** Allied healthcare should be promoted as a viable career option alongside medicine and engineering.
10. **Align workforce with infrastructure:** Workforce planning must grow alongside hospital and healthcare expansion.

Conclusion

India has created a strong regulatory framework for allied healthcare. The key challenge is effective and flexible implementation. Expanding training capacity, ensuring continuity, and improving practical exposure are essential. Strengthening allied professionals will improve healthcare delivery, support employment, and help achieve the goals of a robust and inclusive health system.

Question for practice:

Examine the role of Allied and Healthcare Professionals in India's healthcare system and analyse the challenges and reforms needed to address their workforce shortage.

Source: [Businessline](#)

US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India

Source: The post "US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India" has been created, based on "US-China Recalibrate Ties: Five Takeaways for India" published in "Indian Express" on 04th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International Relations

Context: The ongoing recalibration of relations between the U.S.A. and China reflects a shift from ideological confrontation to managed strategic competition, which is reducing India's leverage in great-power politics. This transformation is narrowing India's strategic space and requires a capability-driven and realistic foreign policy response.

Changing nature of U.S.A – China relations

1. The U.S.A has increasingly begun to view China primarily as an economic competitor rather than as a systemic ideological rival, which has altered the earlier framing of great-power competition.
2. The U.S.A is placing greater strategic emphasis on the Western Hemisphere rather than the Indo-Pacific region, thereby reducing the centrality of Asia in its global priorities.
3. Both the U.S.A and China presently share an interest in maintaining relative stability in their bilateral relations, although their motivations for doing so remain different.
4. China is seeking stability to address domestic economic challenges and strengthen technological self-reliance in critical sectors.
5. The U.S.A is attempting to manage competition with China while focusing on domestic economic restructuring and alliance recalibration.

Implications for India

1. Declining utility of external balancing through the U.S.A

- a. India can no longer depend excessively on the U.S.A as a reliable strategic counterweight to China in all conflict scenarios.
- b. A more transactional relationship between the U.S.A and China increases the possibility that bilateral understandings between them may indirectly affect India's strategic interests.

2. Reduction in India's geopolitical salience

- a. India's strategic importance appears to be relatively declining simultaneously in both Washington and Beijing due to changing global priorities.
- b. This situation exposes a structural vulnerability in India's long-term external balancing strategy.

3. Emergence of bipolar technological ecosystems

- a. The global artificial intelligence ecosystem is increasingly becoming bipolar between the U.S.A and China.
- b. India cannot align with China's digital ecosystem due to security concerns, but excessive dependence on American foundational models may also create technological vulnerabilities.

4. Tactical improvement in U.S.A – Pakistan relations

- a. The recent tactical thaw in relations between the U.S.A and Pakistan has increased Pakistan's diplomatic manoeuvring space in the region.
- b. At the same time, the strategic nexus between China and Pakistan continues to remain intact and poses long-term security challenges for India.

5. Structural advantages gained by China in the energy transition

- a. China has significantly strengthened its position in renewable energy supply chains, electric vehicles, batteries, and solar manufacturing.
- b. The global transition from fossil-fuel dependence to electrification is likely to benefit China more than many other major powers, thereby widening the capability gap with India.

Policy responses India should adopt

1. India should recalibrate expectations from the U.S.A partnership

- a. India should continue selective cooperation with the U.S.A in defence modernisation, maritime domain awareness, and critical technologies.
- b. At the same time, India should avoid assuming that the U.S.A will provide unconditional support during regional crises involving China.

2. India should maintain calibrated engagement with China

- a. India should continue to insist that peace and stability along the Line of Actual Control remain a prerequisite for broader normalisation of bilateral relations.
- b. India should avoid accepting limited boundary settlements that may legitimise incremental territorial concessions.

3. India should strengthen economic and technological resilience

- a. India should reduce its dependence on China in critical manufacturing inputs and supply chains through diversification strategies.
- b. India should simultaneously avoid creating excessive technological dependence on the U.S.A in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence.

4. India should avoid excessive reliance on middle-power coalitions

- a. India should recognise that middle-power coalitions rarely shape global strategic rules and instead primarily pursue hedging strategies.
- b. India should therefore continue to pursue strategic autonomy supported by indigenous capability development.

5. India should revitalise neighbourhood and eastern engagement policies

- a. India should strengthen its Neighbourhood First Policy to prevent strategic encirclement in South Asia.
- b. India should reinvigorate its Act East Policy to deepen connectivity and cooperation with Southeast Asian partners.

Conclusion: India must increasingly shift from reliance on external balancing strategies towards strengthening its domestic military, economic, technological, and diplomatic capabilities in order to safeguard its long-term strategic autonomy in an evolving global order.

Question: “The recalibration of U.S.A –China relations is shrinking India’s strategic space.” Examine the implications of this shift and suggest policy responses India should adopt in the evolving global order.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right

Source: The post “**Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right**” has been created, based on “**Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 04th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The right to be considered for promotion is a judicially evolved constitutional principle derived from **Article 14 of the Constitution of India** and **Article 16(1) of the Constitution of India**, which guarantee equality before law and equal opportunity in matters of public employment. The judiciary has clarified that although promotion itself cannot be claimed as a fundamental right, every eligible government employee possesses a fundamental right to be fairly considered for promotion whenever vacancies arise. Recently, the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** reaffirmed this principle by holding that exclusion of an eligible employee from consideration by a Departmental Promotion Committee violates constitutional guarantees.

Constitutional Basis of the Right

1. The constitutional foundation of the right to be considered for promotion flows primarily from Articles 14 and 16(1).
2. **Article 14** ensures that state action must be non-arbitrary and based on fairness and reasonableness in administrative decisions affecting employees.
3. **Article 16(1)** guarantees equality of opportunity in matters relating to public employment, and the judiciary has interpreted employment to include not only recruitment but also career progression through promotions.
4. Therefore, denial of fair consideration for promotion to eligible employees amounts to a violation of equality principles under the Constitution.

Judicial Evolution of the Principle

1. 1991 Supreme Court Judgment (Lift Irrigation Corporation Case)

- a. In the **State of Mysore v. Syed Mahmood (promotion principle clarification context)** line of reasoning, later reflected in the **Orissa Lift Irrigation Corporation Ltd. v. Rabi Sankar Patro**, the Supreme Court clarified that government employees do not possess a fundamental right to promotion.

- b. However, **the Court clearly held that employees possess a fundamental right to be considered for promotion in accordance with applicable service rules** whenever promotion opportunities arise.
- c. This judgment established the distinction between the right to promotion and the right to consideration for promotion.

2. 1999 Constitution Bench Judgment (Ajit Singh vs State of Punjab)

- a. In **Ajit Singh (II) v. State of Punjab**, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court strengthened the doctrine by holding that every eligible employee falling within the zone of consideration has a fundamental right to be considered for promotion under Article 16(1).
- b. The Court further **clarified that denial of such consideration constitutes a violation of the employee's personal fundamental rights.**

3. 2024 Supreme Court Judgment (Bihar State Electricity Board vs Dharamdeo Das)

- a. In **Bihar State Electricity Board v. Dharamdeo Das**, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that although the right to be considered for promotion is a fundamental right, employees cannot claim retrospective promotion automatically from the exact date when a vacancy arose.
- b. The Court **clarified that administrative delays do not create a vested right to promotion from the vacancy date, although the right to fair consideration must still be protected.**

4. Recent High Court Trends

- a. Several High Courts in recent years have relied upon this principle to address administrative delays in promotion processes.
- b. For instance, the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** granted notional retrospective promotion to a junior engineer after finding that he had been wrongly excluded from Departmental Promotion Committee consideration due to a misinterpretation of eligibility rules.
- c. Similarly, the **Himachal Pradesh High Court** and the **Manipur High Court** directed state authorities to ensure timely promotion consideration in cases where delays had adversely affected employees nearing retirement.

How the Right Works in Practice

1. The right to be considered for promotion operates through institutional mechanisms such as Departmental Promotion Committees within government departments.
2. Eligible employees who fall within the prescribed zone of consideration must be evaluated fairly based on service rules and vacancy positions.
3. The government is required to convene Departmental Promotion Committee meetings regularly so that eligible candidates are not denied opportunities due to administrative delays.
4. Courts may grant notional promotions with retrospective effect if an employee is wrongly excluded from consideration.
5. However, this right does not guarantee actual promotion, and promotion decisions still depend on merit, seniority, eligibility criteria, and availability of vacancies.

Challenges in Implementation

1. Delay in Holding Departmental Promotion Committee Meetings: Government departments often delay Departmental Promotion Committee meetings for several years, which results in stagnation of employees in the same posts despite eligibility.

2. Misinterpretation of Service Rules: Administrative authorities sometimes incorrectly interpret eligibility conditions, which leads to wrongful exclusion of employees from promotion consideration.

3. Administrative Inefficiency: Weak personnel management systems and poor record maintenance frequently slow down promotion processes in public administration.

4. Increased Litigation Burden: Employees are often compelled to approach courts to enforce their right to be considered for promotion, which increases judicial workload and delays relief.

5. Retirement Before Consideration: Many employees retire before their cases are considered by promotion committees, which results in loss of career advancement opportunities.

Significance of the Principle

1. The recognition of the right to be considered for promotion strengthens transparency and fairness in public employment.
2. It promotes merit-based administrative functioning and improves morale among government employees.
3. It also reinforces accountability within administrative institutions and ensures compliance with constitutional guarantees of equality in service matters.
4. Thus, the principle plays an important role in maintaining administrative justice in India's public employment framework.

Way Forward

1. Departmental Promotion Committee meetings should be conducted at regular and time-bound intervals to prevent unnecessary delays in promotion consideration.
2. Service rules governing promotion eligibility should be clarified to reduce ambiguity and administrative discretion.
3. Government departments should adopt digital personnel management systems for maintaining accurate service records and monitoring promotion eligibility automatically.
4. Administrative accountability mechanisms should be strengthened to fix responsibility for delays in promotion processes.
5. Courts may continue to exercise supervisory jurisdiction in cases involving repeated violations of promotion consideration rights.

Conclusion: The right to be considered for promotion reflects the constitutional commitment to equality and fairness in public employment under Articles 14 and 16(1). Although promotion itself cannot be claimed as a fundamental right, ensuring fair consideration protects career progression opportunities and strengthens the rule of law in public administration.

Question: "There is no fundamental right to promotion, but there is a fundamental right to be considered for promotion." Examine this statement in the context of Articles 14 and 16. Discuss the judicial evolution of this principle and the challenges in its implementation.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Fresh IBC Amendments: How Govt Looks to Plug Gaps in Insolvency Code

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026 aims to fix delays and gaps in the insolvency system. The IBC, enacted in 2016, created a time-bound process to resolve stressed companies. Over time, delays, backlog and low recovery reduced its effectiveness. The amendments focus on **faster admission, reduced litigation, stronger creditor control, and new frameworks like out-of-court, group and cross-border insolvency.**

What is Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

1. **Purpose of IBC:** It provides a **time-bound mechanism to resolve defaulting companies**, either through revival or liquidation when revival is not possible.
2. **Core Objective:** It focuses on **resolution of financial stress and preservation of enterprise value**, not just recovery of dues.
3. **Evolution of the Framework:** The Code has been **amended six times earlier** to address stakeholder needs and emerging issues.

Persistent Challenges in the Existing IBC Framework

1. **Delay in Admission of Cases:** The NCLT has a **14-day timeline** to admit cases, but in practice it takes **months**, delaying the start of resolution.
2. **Backlog and Litigation Delays:** Heavy case load and **procedural overlaps increased litigation**, slowing down the resolution process.
3. **Limited Recovery Outcomes:** As of December 2025, **1,376 companies were resolved**, with **₹4.11 lakh crore recovered**, but recovery is only **over 34% of claims**.
4. **Weak Alternatives to Formal Process:** Earlier options were either a **long NCLT process** or a **weak out-of-court system**, offering limited recovery certainty.

Key Reforms Introduced under the IBC (Amendment) Bill, 2026

1. Measures to Speed up Insolvency Process:

- (a) **Mandatory admission of cases:** The **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** must **admit applications once default is proven**, with no scope for rejection beyond procedural checks.

- (b) **Time-bound appellate process:** NCLAT must **dispose of appeals within 3 months**, reducing delays at the appellate stage.
- (c) **Reduction in litigation delays:** The reforms aim to **remove procedural overlaps and limit disputes**, ensuring faster progress of cases.

2. New Resolution Mechanisms and Expansion of Framework:

- (a) **Creditor-Initiated Insolvency Resolution Process (CIIRP):** Financial creditors with **51% approval** can start an out-of-court resolution, enabling early action and reducing burden on tribunals.
- (b) **Group insolvency framework:** It allows **coordinated resolution of related companies**, improving consistency and reducing uncertainty.
- (c) **Cross-border insolvency provisions:** It provides rules for **recognition, cooperation and coordination with foreign jurisdictions**, aligning with global practices.

3. Strengthening Governance and Institutional Mechanisms:

- (a) **No RP-liquidator overlap:** The **Resolution Professional (RP)** cannot act as a liquidator, removing conflict of interest.
- (b) **Enhanced role of Committee of Creditors (CoC):** The CoC gets **greater control and supervisory role during liquidation**, improving accountability.
- (c) **Empowerment of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI):** The regulator can **set timelines and standards for the CoC**, ensuring discipline in the process.

4. Legal Clarifications to Remove Ambiguity:

- (a) **Expanded definition of corporate debtor:** The term now includes **foreign entities with limited liability**, widening the scope of the Code.
- (b) **Clarity on secured creditor rights:** Creditors are treated as secured **only to the extent of the value of their security**, and inter-creditor priority agreements are respected.
- (c) **Clarification on government dues:** Government dues are placed **lower in the repayment order**, making the priority among creditors clear and reducing confusion.
- (d) **Clean slate principle codified:** The successful bidder gets a **fresh start without past liabilities**, ensuring effective resolution.

5. Measures to Improve Resolution Efficiency and Value:

- (a) **Two-stage approval of resolution plans:** Approval is split into **implementation first and distribution later**, reducing delays due to disputes among creditors.
- (b) **Flexible resolution structure:** Assets can be **sold in parts through different plans**, helping better value realisation.

- (c) **Provision for Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) restoration:** A **one-time restoration is allowed with 66% CoC approval**, within a fixed time period.
- (d) **Direct dissolution after failed process:** Companies can be **closed quickly with 66% CoC approval**, saving time.
- (e) **Transfer of guarantor assets:** Assets of guarantors can be **included in the resolution process**, improving recovery chances.
- (f) **Streamlined CIRP process:** Reduces duplicate steps and **gives more powers to the Resolution Professional**, making the process efficient.

6. Rationalisation of Penalties and Process Discipline:

- A. **Shift from criminal to civil penalties:** Certain violations now attract **civil penalties instead of criminal punishment**, recognising that delays may not always be intentional.
- B. **Penalty for frivolous proceedings:** Strict penalties are imposed on **vexatious or unnecessary cases**, preventing misuse of the system.

Conclusion

The amendments aim to make the insolvency system **faster, more efficient and predictable**. They address delays, improve governance and introduce global practices. The reforms reinforce that **IBC is a resolution framework, not a recovery tool**, focused on preserving value. Effective implementation and institutional capacity will determine whether these changes deliver stronger outcomes.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to address delays and structural gaps in India's insolvency framework.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Time to Push for Rupee Internationalisation

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The rupee nearing the **95 per dollar mark** shows rising external pressure and highlights the need to increase global demand for the currency. At the same time, the use of rupee in foreign trade settlement has started in a limited way over the last four years. Global changes in payments and reserves now create a favourable situation to push rupee internationalisation.

Global Shift Towards De-dollarisation

1. **Impact of Geopolitical Events:** The Russia–Ukraine War led to Russia’s removal from **SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)**, forcing countries to rethink global payment dependence. The US–Israel–Iran conflict is further pushing countries to secure energy supplies and reduce reliance on the dollar.
2. **Declining Dominance of the Dollar:** The share of the dollar in global reserves fell from **64% in 2017 to 56.7% in 2025**, showing a steady decline. At the same time, its share in global payments remains high at around **50%**, due to its role as a reference currency.
3. **Rise of Alternative Reserve Assets:** The share of other currencies in reserves increased from **2.5% to 6.13%**, showing diversification. Gold reserves also rose sharply from **10% in 2015 to 23%**, emerging as a strong alternative.
4. **Decline in Foreign Investment in US Assets:** Foreign holdings of US treasury securities declined from **nearly 50% in 2014 to 32% (\$9 trillion)**. This shows reduced confidence in dollar-based assets.

India’s Policy Push for Rupee Internationalisation

1. **Regulatory Measures by RBI:** The Reserve Bank of India allowed rupee invoicing and settlement of foreign trade in **July 2022**. In **December 2023**, it expanded this to allow cross-border trade settlement in rupee and local currencies with all partners.
2. **Bilateral Trade Arrangements:** India signed agreements with UAE, Indonesia, and Maldives to settle trade in local currencies. Trade with Russia, including oil and defence supplies, has been settled in rupee since 2022.
3. **Institutional Support through Banking Channels:** As of February 2025, **156 Special Rupee Vostro Accounts** were opened by **123 foreign banks across 30 countries**. Around **26 Indian banks** are involved in facilitating such transactions.
4. **Initial Progress in Rupee Usage:** Rupee invoicing reached **6.18% of exports (₹2.64 lakh crore)** between April–January FY26. It remained around **5.8–5.9% since FY24**, while imports invoiced in rupee stood at **4.69%**.

Issues and Challenges Remain

1. **Gap Between Invoicing and Settlement:** Rupee settlement remains low, with **2.76% in exports and 2.32% in imports**, much below invoicing levels. This shows a clear gap between intent and actual usage.
2. **Dependence on Dollar-Based Systems:** The dominance of SWIFT makes global transactions dependent on Western-controlled systems. Countries excluded from it face serious constraints in international trade.
3. **Structural Advantage of the Dollar:** The dollar’s role as a reference currency in third-party trade increases its use in global invoicing. This makes it difficult for other currencies, including the rupee, to expand quickly.

4. **Emerging Systems with Limitations:** Alternatives like BRICS Pay face concerns such as dominance of certain countries. This limits trust and wider acceptance among participants.

Way Forward

1. **Promote Bilateral Local Currency Trade:** Increasing settlement of trade in rupee and local currencies can reduce dependence on the dollar. This requires deeper agreements with trading partners.
2. **Develop Alternative Payment Systems:** Systems like CIPS and SPFS can be linked to create alternatives to SWIFT. Interoperability among these systems can improve efficiency.
3. **Leverage Digital Currency Platforms:** Central Bank Digital Currencies offer new channels for cross-border payments. Around **13 cross-border CBDC projects**, including Project mBridge, are already under development.
4. **Utilise Global Sentiment Against Dollar:** Growing dissatisfaction with US policies and sanctions creates a favourable environment. Countries are now more open to reducing dollar dependence and adopting alternatives.

Conclusion

Global shifts, declining dollar dominance, and geopolitical tensions have created a strong case for rupee internationalisation. India has made policy progress, but settlement gaps remain. Expanding trade in rupee, building alternative systems, and using global sentiment can strengthen its role. The present moment offers a clear opportunity that must be used effectively.

Question for practice:

Examine how global de-dollarisation trends and India's policy measures are shaping the prospects of rupee internationalisation, and discuss the key challenges that still remain.

Source: [Businessline](#)

India's next social protection is care, not cash

Source: The post "India's next social protection is care, not cash" has been created, based on "India's next social protection is care, not cash" published in "BusinessLine" on 06th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: India's social protection system has traditionally focused on **cash transfers, pensions, and food security**, ensuring basic consumption needs. These measures are insufficient to address the **daily realities of older adults**, such as loneliness, chronic illness, limited mobility, and lack of social support. The elderly population in India is projected to rise from **149 million in 2022 to 347 million by 2050**, accounting for over 20% of the total population. Therefore, there is an urgent need to integrate **care-based social protection** alongside financial support to ensure holistic well-being.

Need for Care-Based Social Protection

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1. Cash transfers and pensions prevent hunger but **do not ensure access to medicines, regular health check-ups, or social engagement**.
2. Older adults living alone or in **migration-affected households** are especially vulnerable to social isolation and neglect.
3. Global evidence shows that societies that manage ageing populations effectively rely on a **community layer of long-term care**, rather than depending solely on hospitals or family care.
4. The World Health Organisation recommends a **continuum of home and community-based support** that helps older adults maintain **functional ability and dignity**.

Leveraging Existing Platforms

1. India already has a strong network of **self-help groups (SHGs) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)**, which can be leveraged for community-based care.
2. These SHGs include over **102 million women in more than 9.2 million groups**, forming a **trusted and locally rooted network** capable of last-mile service delivery.
3. SHGs have experience in **financial inclusion, enterprise promotion, nutrition, health, and convergence with government schemes**, making them suitable for elder care interventions.
4. Current frontline workers like ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and ANMs provide **episodic services** and are not structured for continuous engagement with older adults.
5. There is a clear gap in **regular check-ins, functional monitoring, and ongoing assistance**, which SHGs can fill effectively.

Proposal for Community-Based Care Layer

1. SHG members can be trained to provide **non-clinical, community-based elder care**, functioning as care coordinators.
2. Their responsibilities can include:
 - a. Conducting regular social check-ins to reduce **loneliness and isolation**.
 - b. Early identification of **health risks or functional decline** and referral to appropriate services.
 - c. Assisting older adults in accessing **pensions, entitlements, and healthcare services**.
 - d. Facilitating linkages with **local health systems and frontline workers**.
3. Integrating elder care within SHG activities ensures it is part of a **broader wellbeing agenda**, rather than a standalone program.

Benefits of Community-Based Care

1. It **closes a major gap in the social safety net**, as pensions alone do not ensure functional ability or independence.
2. It creates **dignified employment for women**, formalising previously unpaid caregiving roles.
3. It reduces strain on the health system by **ensuring treatment adherence, preventing hospitalisations, and flagging early warning signs**.
4. Regular engagement addresses **mental health challenges and loneliness**, enhancing dignity and social inclusion.
5. The model is **cost-effective**, as it builds on existing SHG infrastructure rather than creating new, expensive facilities.

Examples and Evidence

1. Programs like **Pune's Vriddha Mitra** and **Kerala's Kudumbashree** demonstrate that community-based elder care can be **organised, skilled, and scaled effectively**.
2. A **phased, targeted approach** should prioritise remote or migration-prone areas where older adults face the greatest isolation.
3. Implementation must consider **local realities and service gaps** to ensure the care model is effective in diverse rural and semi-urban contexts.

Challenges and Sustainability

1. Potential challenges include **overburdening SHG members, uneven quality of care, and coordination issues with health systems**.
2. These challenges can be addressed through **clear role definitions, structured training, supervision, and predictable compensation**.
3. Care must be treated as a **core function of social protection**, not an optional add-on, to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

Way Forward

1. The government should formally recognise **community-based elder care** as an integral part of social protection.
2. A **phased implementation strategy** should focus first on high-need areas such as remote or migration-affected regions.
3. Investment must be made in **capacity building and training** of SHG members and local cadres to maintain quality and accountability.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** should be established to track outcomes related to well-being, functional ability, and social inclusion.
5. Care programs should be integrated with existing health and welfare schemes to ensure **continuity and coordination of services**.
6. Encouraging **community participation and awareness** can foster ownership and sustainability of elder care initiatives.

Conclusion: India has the institutional foundation through **NRLM and SHGs** to extend social protection from cash to care. A **structured community-based care layer** can safeguard the **dignity, functional ability, and well-being** of older adults while reducing pressure on the health system. The focus must shift from scale alone to **sustained, trust-based, community-driven care**, ensuring older adults live with dignity, security, and social inclusion.

Question: In the context of India's ageing population, discuss the need for community-based care as a social protection measure beyond cash transfers. How can existing institutional platforms be leveraged for this purpose?

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026

Source: The post "**Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026**" has been created, based on "**Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026**" published in "**PIB**" on 06th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

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Context: The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026** is a continuation of India's efforts to modernise its regulatory framework by **reducing criminalisation of minor procedural lapses**. It proposes amendments in **79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries**, covering **784 provisions**, including 717 for decriminalisation and 67 for improving ease of living. The Bill replaces criminal penalties for minor offences with **civil penalties, warnings, or administrative mechanisms**, making the legal system **more practical, citizen-friendly, and balanced**. This reform builds upon the **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023**, expanding the scope of decriminalisation based on recommendations from a **Parliamentary Select Committee**.

Objectives of the Bill

1. The Bill aims to **reduce excessive criminalisation**, focusing on **compliance rather than punishment**.
2. It seeks to **simplify regulatory processes**, ensuring that minor lapses do not lead to disproportionate legal consequences.
3. It introduces a **trust-based, proportionate enforcement mechanism** for both citizens and businesses.

Pillars of the Bill

1. **Warning before Punishment:** First-time and minor lapses are addressed through advisory notices or warnings before penalties.
2. **Proportionate Penalties:** Penalties are **graded based on the severity of the offence**, ensuring fairness and avoiding unnecessary criminalisation.
3. **Faster and Fair Resolution:** Dedicated **adjudicating officers and appellate authorities** provide swift dispute resolution while reducing court burdens.
4. **Dynamic Penalty Framework:** Penalties are **periodically revised** to ensure they remain relevant, effective, and responsive.

Citizen-Centric Reforms

1. Minor everyday lapses now attract **civil penalties instead of criminal fines**, making the legal system simpler and fairer.
2. Examples include:
 - **Railways Act, 1989:** Refusing to vacate a reserved berth attracts a civil penalty of ₹1,000.
 - **Clinical Establishments Act, 2010:** Minor deficiencies attract civil penalties up to ₹10,000.
 - **Calcutta Metro Railway Act, 1985:** Smoking violations attract civil penalties of ₹2,000.
3. **Ease of Living Provisions:**
 - **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988:** Drivers get a **30-day grace period** after licence expiry.
 - **NDMC Property Tax:** Standardises taxation using the **Unit Area Method**.
 - **Accident Compensation:** Victims can approach the Claims Tribunal **12 months beyond the deadline** if sufficient cause exists.
 - **Delhi Police Act, 1978:** Being outdoors at night no longer attracts criminal liability.
 - **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988:** Ticketing violations are now administrative with civil penalties up to ₹500.

Ease of Doing Business Provisions

1. The Bill introduces **graded enforcement mechanisms** for businesses to correct minor lapses before facing penalties.

2. Examples include:
 - **Tea Act, 1953:** First-time procedural lapses get warnings; penalties apply only to repeated offences.
 - **Copyright Act, 1957:** False entries in the Register of Copyrights no longer attract imprisonment.
3. **MSME Benefits:**
 - **Legal Metrology Act, 2009:** First-time lapses trigger improvement notices, not penalties.
 - **Private Security Agencies Act, 2005:** Criminal fines for minor procedural lapses removed.
 - **Delivery of Books and Newspapers Act:** Warnings introduced for delayed submissions.
4. Export and trade sectors also benefit, e.g., the **APEDA Act, 1985**, where minor procedural lapses now follow a **warning-and-penalty framework**.
5. Outdated provisions like licensing under the **Coir Industry Act, 1953** have been removed to reduce compliance burdens for small businesses.

Key Legislative Changes

1. **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** Imprisonment replaced with civil penalties for procedural lapses.
2. **Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957:** Minor civic offences converted to civil penalties; outdated provisions removed.
3. **Apprentices Act, 1961:** Introduces a three-stage enforcement mechanism—advisory notice, warning, and monetary penalty.
4. Other amended laws include the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985**, the **Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950**, and the **MMDR Act, 1957**, replacing imprisonment with civil penalties or removing minor offences entirely.

Benefits of the Bill

1. Reduces **unnecessary criminalisation** for citizens and businesses.
2. Promotes **predictable, proportionate, and trust-based enforcement**.
3. Improves **ease of living** by ensuring minor lapses do not lead to criminal proceedings.
4. Enhances **ease of doing business** by allowing MSMEs and enterprises to correct procedural errors before penalties.
5. Encourages **voluntary compliance** while maintaining strict enforcement for serious offences.

Way Forward

1. The government should ensure the **effective implementation** of graded enforcement mechanisms across all ministries and sectors.
2. Continuous **awareness campaigns** are needed to educate citizens and businesses about civil penalties and compliance requirements.
3. Periodic review of penalties should ensure they **remain relevant and proportionate** to the severity of offences.
4. Integration with **digital compliance platforms** can simplify reporting and reduce administrative delays.
5. Monitoring mechanisms should assess the **impact on ease of living and ease of doing business**, ensuring reforms achieve their intended outcomes.

Conclusion: The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, modernises India's legal framework by **removing criminal penalties for minor procedural lapses**. By introducing **graded enforcement mechanisms**, civil penalties, and warnings, the Bill ensures a **balanced and trust-based regulatory environment**. The reforms improve both **ease of living and ease of doing business**, while serious offences continue to attract appropriate penalties. Overall, the Bill promotes a **predictable, fair, and citizen-friendly legal system**, encouraging compliance over punishment.

Question: Examine the key features and objectives of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026. How does it contribute to ease of living and ease of doing business in India?

Source: [PIB](#)

Transforming India's Nuclear Power Landscape

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

India plans a major expansion of nuclear power from **8,180 MW to 100 GW by 2047**. This shift is linked to **Viksit Bharat 2047** and **net-zero emissions by 2070**. The **SHANTI Act, 2025** replaces earlier laws and opens the sector to private participation. Nuclear energy is now seen as a key source for reliable and low-carbon electricity.

Current Status of Nuclear Energy in India

- Limited share in energy mix:** Nuclear capacity is about **8.8 GW** and contributes only **3% of electricity generation**, showing a very small role.
- Electricity capacity distribution:** Total capacity reached **476 GW in June 2025**, with **50% non-fossil sources** and **240 GW thermal power**.
- Generation imbalance:** Thermal power produces **75% of electricity**, while renewables with 50% capacity generate only 22%, and nuclear produces **57 TWh**.
- Indigenised technology base:** India operates **24 reactors**, mainly **PHWRs**, upgraded from **220 MW to 700 MW designs**.
- Low cost advantage:** The **700 MW PHWR cost is \$2 million per MW**, among the lowest globally.

Why Nuclear Energy is Central to India's Energy Transition

- Rising electricity demand:** Per capita electricity generation is **1,418 kWh**, far below **China (7,097 kWh)** and **USA (12,701 kWh)**.
- Low electrification share:** Per capita energy consumption is **7,893 kWh**, but only one-fifth is electricity, showing future demand growth.
- Net-zero requirement:** Climate goals require moving away from fossil fuels to low-carbon sources.

4. **Limitations of renewables:** Renewable generation depends on **climate, season, and geography**, and needs large storage investments.
5. **Land intensity issue:** Solar and wind require **10 times more land** compared to thermal plants.
6. **Need for baseload power:** Nuclear is a stable and low-carbon source, suitable for large-scale energy needs.

Initiative Taken

1. **Policy push for nuclear expansion:** The government set a target of **100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047**, linking nuclear energy with **Viksit Bharat and net-zero goals**.
2. **Legal transformation of the sector:** The **SHANTI Act, 2025** replaces the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** and the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010**, and allows **private and foreign participation**.
3. **Financial support and investment push:** Expansion requires over **\$200 billion investment**, and reforms aim to attract both **domestic and foreign private capital**.
4. **Institutional strengthening and regulatory reform:** The **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) is given statutory status**, and the framework attempts separation between **civilian and strategic nuclear activities**.
5. **Technological development and innovation:** ₹20,000 crore is allocated for **indigenous Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) (5 MW, 55 MW, 200 MW)**, along with focus on **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) scaling and advanced reactor research**.
6. **Operational expansion and deployment strategy:** Approval for **10 PHWR reactors (700 MW each)** under fleet mode, promotion of **modular construction**, and use of nuclear power for **captive industrial needs**.

What are the Challenges for Nuclear Expansion

1. **Huge investment requirement:** Expanding capacity by 90 GW needs over **\$200 billion (₹18 lakh crore)**.
2. **Project delays:** Approved projects like fleet mode reactors have **not yet started construction**.
3. **High cost of imported designs:** Foreign reactors may cost over **\$5 million per MW**, making them expensive.
4. **Slow international collaboration:** Projects at **Jaitapur, Mithi Viridi and Kovvada** remain delayed for over a decade.
5. **Financing complexity:** Nuclear power has **high upfront cost but low operating cost over 60 years**, requiring new financial models.

6. **Regulatory gaps:** Issues like **tariffs, fuel ownership, waste management, insurance, and dispute resolution** remain unclear.
7. **Institutional limitations:** AERB lacks full independence and needs stronger regulatory authority.

Way Forward

1. **Indigenisation of technology:** Foreign reactor designs need adaptation to reduce cost and improve efficiency.
2. **Expand PHWR deployment:** The **220 MW PHWR model** can be modularised and used widely.
3. **Promote SMRs:** Small reactors can replace **fossil-fuel based captive power plants (90 GW capacity)**.
4. **Industrial adoption:** Sectors like **steel, cement, petrochemicals, and data centres** show growing interest.
5. **Strengthen R&D:** Focus on **molten-salt reactors and thorium-based fuel with HALEU (High Assay Low Enriched Uranium)**.
6. **Reform regulations:** Clear rules needed for **civilian and strategic separation**, tariffs, and safety.
7. **Flexible site norms:** Modify **exclusion zone rules** for small and single-unit reactors.

Conclusion

India's nuclear expansion depends on effective implementation of reforms and strong regulatory clarity. The SHANTI Act creates a new framework, but success needs investment, technology and policy support. Nuclear power can ensure reliable and clean energy, support economic growth, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels if execution remains timely and consistent.

Question for practice:

Discuss the need for expanding nuclear power in India and examine how the SHANTI Act, 2025 aims to transform India's nuclear energy landscape along with its key challenges and way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Elastic rules: On the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environmental pollution and degradation

Introduction:

India's Plastic Waste Management framework has evolved since 2016 to reduce plastic pollution. The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regime set strict collection targets up to **100% by 2024-25**. However, the 2026 amendments introduce flexibility in compliance, such as carry-forward provisions and tradable certificates.

This shift raises concerns about enforcement, accountability, and the actual reduction of plastic waste despite rising recycling mandates.

Evolution of the Regulatory Framework

1. **Continuously evolving regulatory framework:** The Plastic Waste Management Rules are not a single static law. They have been updated since **2016**, with amendments in **2018, 2021, 2022, and 2025–26**, showing constant policy evolution.
2. **Gradual tightening of compliance:** Each amendment has increased obligations, reduced flexibility, and pushed businesses to improve waste management practices.
3. **Introduction of EPR framework (2022):** The Extended Producer Responsibility made producers, importers, and brand owners responsible for managing plastic waste generated from their products.
4. **Phased increase in collection targets:** Targets were raised from **35% (2021–22) to 70% (2022–23) and 100% by 2024–25**, aiming for full waste recovery.
5. **Focus on reducing plastic leakage:** The framework aims to limit plastic dumping in landfills, rivers, and oceans by enforcing collection and recycling.

Key Features of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026

1. **Mandatory recycled content targets:** Producers, importers, and brand owners must use a fixed share of recycled plastic in packaging. Category I (rigid plastic) requires **30% in 2025–26, rising to 60% by 2028–29**.
2. **Category-wise targets for plastics:** Category II (flexible plastic) must meet **10% recycled content, increasing to 20%**, while Category III (multi-layered plastic) must meet **5%, rising to 10%**, reflecting differences in recyclability.
3. **Reuse obligations introduced:** The rules mandate reuse targets for rigid packaging. For 2025–26, reuse includes **10% for small containers (0.9–4.9 litres), 70% for large water packaging, and 10% for large non-water packaging**, with gradual increases.
4. **Carry-forward of compliance targets:** Companies that fail to meet targets in 2025–26 can carry forward the shortfall for **three years (till 2028–29)**, provided at least one-third of the gap is met annually.
5. **Tradable certificate mechanism:** A system of trading certificates allows companies to meet obligations by purchasing credits from those exceeding targets, reducing the need to recycle their own plastic waste.
6. **Exemptions for regulated sectors:** Recycled content requirements do not apply where regulations like food safety standards restrict the use of recycled plastic, especially in food and beverage packaging.
7. **Clear definitions and regulatory clarity:** The amendment defines terms such as **“reuse,” “end-of-life disposal,” and “plastic waste processors”**, reducing ambiguity in implementation.

8. **Quality standards and labelling norms:** Recycled plastic packaging must comply with **Indian Standard IS 14534:2023** and carry labels indicating recycled content.
9. **Digital monitoring and decentralised enforcement:** Implementation involves monitoring through a centralised portal, audits by registered environmental auditors, and enforcement by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and State-level committees.

Key Concerns and Criticisms

1. **Underlying material challenge:** Plastic is cheap, flexible, and widely used, but these same features make its collection and reuse difficult.
2. **Dilution of annual compliance discipline:** The carry-forward provision allows firms to meet **2025–26 targets by 2028–29**, reducing yearly pressure and delaying outcomes.
3. **Mismatch between targets and actual performance:** While targets reached **100% collection by 2024–25**, actual achievement remains only **50–60%**, showing weak enforcement.
4. **Lack of credible data systems:** There is no verified public dataset, and reporting relies mainly on self-declarations.
5. **Shift from enforcement to flexibility:** Focus appears to move from strict collection to use of recycled content, regardless of source.
6. **Risk from tradable certificates:** Companies may meet targets on paper without reducing their own plastic footprint.
7. **Fake certificate problem:** Over **6,00,000 fake certificates** were found, showing serious flaws in monitoring.
8. **Exclusion of key sectors:** Food and beverage packaging may escape regulation due to safety restrictions on recycled plastic.

Implementation Gaps and Ground Reality

1. **Reuse targets lack strong enforcement backing:** Reuse obligations exist but may remain ineffective without proper tracking of collection and recycling.
2. **High plastic waste generation:** Around **4.13 million tonnes of plastic waste** was generated in 2022–23, showing continued pressure.
3. **Recycling progress but incomplete:** About **20.7 million tonnes** of waste has been recycled since 2022, but full coverage is missing.
4. **Weak enforcement of plastic bans:** Around **84% of surveyed locations** still use banned single-use plastics.
5. **Consumer demand as driver:** About **91% vendors report demand for carry bags**, making transition difficult.

6. **Cost and perception issues:** Alternatives are costlier, and consumers see single-use plastics as more hygienic.
7. **Better compliance in formal sector:** Organised retail performs better than informal markets, where enforcement is weaker.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms:** Regular inspections, coordinated action, and strict penalties are needed to ensure compliance.
2. **Improve monitoring systems:** Reliable data systems and independent audits are required to verify actual recycling and collection.
3. **Control supply of banned plastics:** Limiting production and availability is necessary to reduce continued usage.
4. **Support sustainable alternatives:** Improve availability and affordability of eco-friendly substitutes through local production and supply chains.
5. **Promote behaviour change:** Awareness campaigns should address consumer preferences and encourage reusable options.
6. **Assist small vendors:** Financial and policy support is needed to help small businesses shift away from plastic use.
7. **Ensure accountability in EPR:** Clear targets beyond 2025 and strict enforcement of collection obligations are required.

Conclusion

The 2026 amendments introduce flexibility but weaken accountability in plastic waste management. Carry-forward provisions, weak monitoring, and reliance on certificates risk undermining EPR goals. Without strict enforcement, reliable data, and stronger compliance systems, the focus on recycled content may not reduce actual waste. Strengthening implementation is essential to achieve real environmental outcomes.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026 in addressing plastic waste in India, in light of flexible compliance provisions and existing implementation challenges.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Advancing India's Fisheries Sector

Source: The post "Advancing India's Fisheries Sector" has been created, based on "Advancing India's Fisheries Sector" published in "PIB" on 07th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: India is the **second-largest fish-producing country in the world**, contributing nearly **8% of global fish production**. The fisheries sector contributes about **7.43% to Agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA)** and supports the livelihoods of nearly **three crore people**, especially in coastal and rural regions. Over the past decade, the sector has witnessed significant transformation through **policy interventions, infrastructure development, financial inclusion initiatives, and digital governance reforms**.

Growth Trends and Economic Importance

1. India's fish production increased from **95.79 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024-25**, reflecting a growth of about **106%**.
2. India's seafood exports reached **₹62,408 crore in 2024-25**, with frozen shrimp emerging as the dominant export commodity.
3. The fisheries sector plays an important role in ensuring **nutritional security, employment generation, rural diversification, and export competitiveness**.

Role of Institutional Reforms in Fisheries Development

1. Blue Revolution (2015)

- a. The Blue Revolution repositioned fisheries as a **strategic sector for livelihood enhancement and economic growth**.
 - b. It strengthened infrastructure development and promoted modern aquaculture practices across inland and marine fisheries.
- #### 2. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)
- a. PMMSY serves as the **central pillar of fisheries sector development**, with an allocation of **₹2,500 crore in 2026-27**.
 - b. The scheme promotes **production enhancement, infrastructure modernization, value chain strengthening, and traceability systems**.
 - c. It has supported the development of **aquaculture ponds, reservoir cages, fish retail markets, cold storage facilities, and transport infrastructure**.

3. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)

- a. PM-MKSSY promotes **formalisation, insurance coverage, quality assurance, and access to institutional finance**.
- b. The scheme has an outlay of **₹6,000 crore between 2023-27**.
- c. It strengthens market integration and improves income stability of fishers and aquaculture farmers.

4. Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)

- a. FIDF supports the creation of **fishing harbours, landing centres, cold-chain infrastructure, and fish processing units**.
- b. Around **225 infrastructure projects worth ₹6,685 crore** have been approved under the scheme.
- c. These projects have improved landing facilities and generated employment opportunities across the fisheries value chain.

Role of Investment Support

1. The **Union Budget 2026–27** allocated **₹2,761.80 crore**, which is the highest-ever allocation for the fisheries sector.
2. Investments in **Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS)** and **Bio-floc technology** have promoted water-efficient and high-density fish production.
3. Infrastructure development such as **fish landing centres, cold-chain logistics, feed mills, processing facilities, and retail fish markets** has strengthened the fisheries value chain.

Role of Financial Inclusion and Risk Mitigation

1. The extension of the **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** scheme to fisheries has improved access to institutional credit for fishers.
2. The lending limit under the scheme has been increased from **₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh**.
3. The scheme has benefited **4.39 lakh fishers**, thereby improving working capital availability.
4. Insurance coverage has been extended to **3.3 million beneficiaries**, strengthening social security.
5. Livelihood assistance has been provided to **7.44 lakh fisher families during lean fishing periods**.

Role of Digital Governance

1. National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP)

- a. NFDP provides a **single-window digital interface** for accessing institutional credit, insurance services, incentives, and training programmes.
- b. The platform has registered more than **30.60 lakh fisheries stakeholders**.
- c. It strengthens transparency, traceability, and data-driven decision-making in fisheries governance.

2. Marine Fisheries Census 2025

- a. The Marine Fisheries Census 2025 introduced **geo-referenced digital enumeration of fisher households**.
- b. It provides reliable socio-economic data to support targeted welfare delivery and policy formulation.

Role of Institutional Strengthening and Inclusive Development

1. The Government has supported the formation of **2,195 Fisheries Farmer Producer Organisations (FFPOs)** to improve collective bargaining power and market access.
2. Nutritional and livelihood support has been extended to **4.33 lakh fisher families during the fishing ban periods**.
3. Fisheries-related schemes have generated approximately **74.66 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities since 2014–15**.
4. Integration of fisheries with **Amrit Sarovars and inland reservoirs** has supported livelihood diversification and ecosystem restoration.

Challenges in the Fisheries Sector

1. The fisheries sector faces challenges of **overfishing and depletion of marine resources**, particularly in coastal regions.
2. Climate change is affecting **fish breeding cycles, migration patterns, and marine ecosystems**, reducing productivity.

3. There are significant **regional disparities in infrastructure availability**, especially between coastal and inland fisheries.
4. Small-scale and traditional fishers continue to face **limited access to institutional credit, insurance, and modern technology**.
5. The sector remains highly dependent on **shrimp exports**, making it vulnerable to international market fluctuations.
6. Post-harvest losses remain high due to **inadequate cold-chain infrastructure and processing facilities**.
7. There is limited awareness and adoption of **digital platforms like NFDP among grassroots fisher communities**.
8. Inland fisheries potential remains **underutilised despite large reservoir resources**.

Way Forward

1. The Government should promote **climate-resilient fisheries infrastructure and ecosystem-based fisheries management practices**.
2. Greater investment is required in **cold-chain logistics, storage, and fish processing infrastructure** to reduce post-harvest losses.
3. Export diversification should be encouraged to reduce dependence on shrimp exports.
4. Institutional credit coverage should be expanded further to include **small-scale, traditional, and women fishers**.
5. Digital literacy programmes should be strengthened to improve the effective utilisation of platforms like NFDP.
6. Sustainable fishing practices supported by **scientific stock assessments and community participation** should be promoted.
7. Greater participation of **women, cooperatives, startups, and Fisheries Farmer Producer Organisations** should be encouraged to ensure inclusive growth.
8. Inland fisheries development should be accelerated through better utilisation of **reservoirs, Amrit Sarovars, and aquaculture technologies**.

Conclusion: India's fisheries sector is undergoing a structural transformation through **institutional reforms, investment expansion, financial inclusion initiatives, and digital governance mechanisms**. Addressing existing structural challenges while strengthening sustainability and inclusiveness will help India realise the full potential of its fisheries sector and advance the goals of the **blue economy and SDG-14 (Life Below Water)**.

Question: Discuss how institutional reforms, investment support, and digital governance are transforming India's fisheries sector. Also examine the challenges faced by the sector and suggest measures for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Source: [PIB](#)

Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states

Source: The post "**Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states**" has been created, based on "**Finance commission strengthens local bodies, but at the cost of states**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 07th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: The **Sixteenth Finance Commission of India** has recommended fiscal transfers for the period **2026–31**, with a stronger focus on local bodies and performance-linked grants. While strengthening grassroots decentralisation is important, several recommendations have raised concerns regarding the **reduced fiscal autonomy of states and weakening statutory fiscal federalism**.

Positive Contributions of the Sixteenth Finance Commission

1. Strengthening Local Bodies

- a. The Commission recommended nearly **₹7.91 lakh crore** for **panchayats and urban local bodies**, significantly increasing third-tier transfers.
- b. The grants include **80% basic grants and 20% performance-linked grants**, encouraging accountability and service delivery improvements.
- c. Urbanisation-linked incentives support infrastructure development in rapidly growing cities.

2. Promoting Fiscal Discipline and Performance: The introduction of performance-linked grants encourages **efficient utilisation of funds and improved governance outcomes**. This approach aligns fiscal transfers with measurable development indicators.

3. Continuity in Vertical Devolution Share: The Commission retained **41% tax devolution to states**, maintaining continuity with the **Fifteenth Finance Commission of India** framework. This ensured predictability in Centre–State fiscal transfers.

Concerns Regarding Fiscal Federal Balance

1. Decline in Effective Share of States

- a. Although the nominal share remained **41%**, the effective share declined from about **36% to nearly 32%** due to changes in the divisible pool composition.
- b. The increasing reliance on **cesses and surcharges**, which are excluded from the divisible pool, reduces actual transfers to states.

2. Changes in Horizontal Devolution Criteria

- a. Fourteen states, especially **smaller and northeastern states**, received lower shares compared to previous Finance Commission allocations.
- b. This reduction may adversely affect fiscally weaker regions and widen regional disparities.

3. Discontinuation of Revenue Deficit Grants

- a. The discontinuation of **revenue deficit grants** weakens fiscal support for structurally weaker states.
- b. These grants previously ensured minimum resource availability for states with limited fiscal capacity.

4. Removal of Sector-Specific and State-Specific Grants

- a. The discontinuation of grants under **Article 275(1)** reduces targeted support for:
 - tribal welfare
 - special area administration

- backward regions
- b. These grants historically formed the **equity pillar of fiscal federalism**.

5. Shift Toward Discretionary Transfers

- a. The increasing use of grants under **Article 282** expands discretionary transfers instead of statutory transfers.
- b. Discretionary transfers reduce predictability and increase dependence of states on the Union government.

6. Expanding Role of the Third Tier in Fiscal Transfers

- a. The Commission significantly increased allocations to **panchayats and municipalities**, treating them as major stakeholders in fiscal transfers.
- b. However, local bodies remain constitutionally subordinate to states despite recognition under the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act** and **74th Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- c. Excessive central transfers to local bodies may weaken the fiscal authority of states.

7. Inadequate Response to Post-GST Fiscal Realities

- a. The Commission did not sufficiently address challenges arising from the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, such as:
 - IGST settlement issues
 - destination-based taxation effects
 - revenue asymmetries across states
- b. Producer states have particularly faced revenue adjustments after GST implementation.

8. Increasing Central Leverage Through Conditional Transfers

- a. The shift from formula-based statutory transfers to performance-based conditional transfers enhances central discretion.
- b. This weakens cooperative federalism and increases fiscal centralisation.

Constitutional Concerns Raised

1. The Constitution envisages **states as primary fiscal partners** in federal governance under **Part VI**.
2. Local bodies derive authority through state legislatures and are not constitutionally equal fiscal units.
3. Treating the third tier at par with states risks altering the **federal balance envisaged in the Constitution**.

Challenges Emerging from the Recommendations

1. Shrinking divisible pool due to increased reliance on **cesses and surcharges** reduces fiscal space for states.
2. Removal of revenue deficit grants affects **fiscally weaker states disproportionately**.
3. Greater reliance on discretionary transfers increases **uncertainty in fiscal planning**.
4. Reduced horizontal shares for northeastern states may widen **regional inequalities**.

5. Limited alignment with GST realities weakens fiscal equalisation mechanisms.
6. Direct transfers to local bodies may create **administrative overlap and coordination challenges** with states.

Way Forward

1. The divisible pool should be expanded by **bringing cesses and surcharges partially within the devolution framework**.
2. Revenue deficit grants should be redesigned as **equalisation grants based on multiple indicators such as backwardness, tribal population, and infrastructure gaps**.
3. Finance Commission recommendations should better reflect **post-GST fiscal realities**, including destination-based taxation effects.
4. Transfers to local bodies should be routed in coordination with states to preserve the **federal chain of accountability**.
5. A transparent framework should be developed to balance **statutory transfers under Article 275 and discretionary transfers under Article 282**.
6. Strengthening **intergovernmental fiscal institutions such as the GST Council** can improve cooperative fiscal federalism.

Conclusion: The Sixteenth Finance Commission has made important strides in strengthening grassroots decentralisation and performance-linked governance. However, the shift toward discretionary transfers and reduced statutory fiscal support to states raises concerns about the evolving balance of fiscal federalism. A calibrated approach that strengthens **states alongside local bodies** is essential for sustaining India's cooperative and competitive federal structure.

Question: The Sixteenth Finance Commission's recommendations strengthen local bodies but raise concerns about fiscal federal balance. Examine the implications of recent Finance Commission recommendations on Centre-State fiscal relations and cooperative federalism.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Climate Change as a Public Health Emergency

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

Climate change is no longer limited to environmental concerns. It has become a **broad public health crisis**, affecting diseases, nutrition, and human survival. It intensifies existing illnesses and creates new risks. In India, its impact is already visible through changing disease patterns, unsafe water, rising heat stress, and food insecurity. This makes climate change a **present and urgent medical emergency** that affects all aspects of human health.

Emerging Public Health Scenario

1. **Water stress and disease exposure:** Frequent waterlogging in cities like Mumbai contaminates clean water and increases diseases such as **cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A, and leptospirosis**.

2. **Drought and unsafe water use:** Water scarcity forces communities to use unsafe sources, increasing **diarrhoeal diseases and chronic dehydration**.
3. **Shifting disease patterns:** Changing temperature and rainfall disrupt disease cycles, increasing **infections, allergies, and vector-borne diseases**.
4. **Expansion of vector-borne diseases:** Rising temperatures allow mosquitoes to survive longer, leading to **higher dengue cases and spread of malaria into new regions like Himachal Pradesh**.
5. **Air pollution and heat stress rise:** Higher temperatures increase energy use and emissions, raising **PM2.5 levels and heat-related deaths in regions like Odisha, Telangana, and Vidarbha**.

Underlying Drivers of the Crisis

1. **Changing climate patterns:** Irregular rainfall, floods, and droughts disrupt natural systems and increase health risks.
2. **Rising temperatures:** Warmer conditions expand disease zones and increase **heat stress on the human body and livestock**.
3. **Increased energy use and emissions:** Greater use of air conditioning raises greenhouse gases and **fine particulate pollution (PM2.5)**.
4. **Environmental degradation:** Climate stress weakens air, water, and soil quality, affecting **basic determinants of health**.
5. **Weak preparedness of health systems:** New disease regions lack immunity and health systems are **not prepared to respond at scale**.

Public Health Consequences

1. **Multi-organ health impact of pollution:** PM2.5 particles enter the lungs and bloodstream, causing **asthma, COPD, heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage**.
2. **Heat stress and mortality:** Heat forces the body to work harder, increasing **hypertension, heart attacks, and stroke**, especially among outdoor workers.
3. **Loss of recovery time due to night heat:** Rising night temperatures in cities like Delhi-NCR and Mumbai reduce the body's ability to cool down.
4. **Infant and maternal health risks:** Exposure to heat and pollution increases **preterm births and low birth weight**.
5. **Food insecurity and malnutrition:** Extreme weather reduces crop output and quality, causing **micronutrient deficiency and chronic malnutrition**, especially in children.
6. **Decline in milk production:** Heat stress reduces cattle productivity, weakening **child nutrition and immunity**.

7. **Widening inequality and vulnerability:** Poor communities, children, elderly, and labourers face **higher exposure and lower capacity to cope.**
8. **Global scale of health risk:** 3.6 billion people live in **highly vulnerable areas**, and death rates from extreme events are **15 times higher in vulnerable regions.**

Systemic Impact on Health Systems and Society

1. **Threat to health infrastructure and workforce:** Climate stress reduces the ability of systems to provide **universal health coverage (UHC).**
2. **Rising economic burden of healthcare:** Over **930 million people spend at least 10% of income on health**, and **100 million fall into poverty each year** due to health costs.
3. **Disruption of social determinants of health:** Climate change affects **livelihoods, food systems, water access, and social support systems.**
4. **Mental health impacts:** Climate shocks lead to **anxiety, stress, and long-term mental health disorders.**
5. **Threat to development gains:** Climate change risks reversing **decades of progress in health, poverty reduction, and development.**
6. **Inequality and vulnerability:** Poor communities, children, elderly, and migrants face **higher risks despite contributing least to emissions.**

Way Forward

1. **Recognising health as central to climate action:** Climate policy must place **public health at its core.**
2. **Reducing emissions with health co-benefits:** Promote clean energy and reduce pollution to improve **air quality and overall health.**
3. **Building climate-resilient health systems:** Strengthen infrastructure, workforce, and ensure **sustainable and resilient healthcare delivery.**
4. **Improving surveillance and preparedness:** Develop systems to track and respond to **heat stress and infectious diseases.**
5. **Ensuring water, food, and nutrition security:** Strengthen systems that support **safe water and stable food supply.**
6. **Global temperature control:** Limiting warming to **1.5°C is critical** to prevent severe health impacts.
7. **Equity-based approach:** Prioritise vulnerable populations who face **higher risks despite contributing least to emissions.**

Conclusion

Climate change is already a **serious public health emergency** affecting disease patterns, nutrition, and survival. Its impacts are widespread and unequal, hitting vulnerable populations the hardest. Delayed action will increase risks and reverse health gains. Recognising climate change as a health crisis and strengthening systems is essential to protect lives and ensure long-term human well-being.

Question for Practice:

Q. Discuss how climate change has emerged as a public health emergency, highlighting its drivers, health impacts, and required policy responses.

Source - [The Hindu](#)

Reinforcing the Case for a One Health Approach

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

Introduction

The rising frequency of pandemics shows that human, animal, and environmental health are deeply interconnected. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weak coordination across sectors and nations, while also highlighting the importance of **scientific collaboration and data sharing**. Increasing human activities such as land-use change and global travel have accelerated health risks. In this context, the **One Health approach has emerged** as a **critical framework** to address complex challenges and strengthen global preparedness and response.

Understanding One Health

1. **Definition and core idea:** One Health is an integrated approach that aims to balance the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognises that all these domains are interdependent.
2. **Evolution of the concept:**
 - The term was first used during the **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003-04**.
 - It gained momentum with **avian influenza H5N1 and the Manhattan Principles of 2004**.
 - **The Manhattan Principles (2004) are 12 actionable principles for a "One World, One Health" approach**, established by the **Wildlife Conservation Society and partners**.
3. **Multi-sectoral collaboration:** The approach brings together **different sectors, disciplines, and communities** to address health challenges.
4. **Full spectrum of disease control:** It covers the entire chain from **prevention, detection, preparedness, response, to management of diseases**.
5. **Wide applicability:** It can be applied at **community, national, regional, and global levels** through shared governance and coordination.

What are the Drivers of Emerging Health Threats

1. **Human-driven ecological changes:** Most emerging zoonotic diseases originate due to **changes in ecosystems and land use caused by human activities**.
2. **Agricultural and urban expansion:** **Intensification of agriculture and urbanisation** increases contact between humans and animals, raising disease risks.
3. **Global connectivity:** **International travel and trade** help diseases spread rapidly across countries.
4. **Environmental stress factors:** Climate change creates **stress on natural systems**, making disease patterns more unpredictable.
5. **Sudden emergence of pathogens:** New pathogens can appear suddenly and **threaten global stability within a short time**.

Global Recognition and Institutional Frameworks

1. **Impact of COVID-19 pandemic:** The pandemic acted as a turning point by showing the cost of poor coordination and the benefits of global cooperation.
2. **Role of scientific collaboration:** Sharing of SARS-CoV-2 genetic data and research on human susceptibility helped accelerate vaccine development.
3. **WHO Pandemic Agreement 2025:** This legally binding treaty focuses on prevention, preparedness, and response. It promotes equity through pathogen data sharing and fair access to vaccines.
4. **Quadripartite collaboration:** **The World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** lead global One Health efforts. They work together to address interconnected health risks.
5. **One Health Joint Plan of Action 2022:** This plan provides a coordinated framework for countries to strengthen health systems and manage shared risks.

India's Response: Institutional and Policy Measures

1. **National One Health Mission:** India launched this mission to integrate human, animal, and environmental health sectors. It aims to improve surveillance, preparedness, and zoonotic disease control.
2. **Post-COVID policy shift:** The government accelerated collaborative approaches to better handle future health crises.
3. **Recognition of climate-linked risks:** India has acknowledged the impact of **climate change stressors** on natural systems, highlighting the need to address extreme climate events.
4. **State-level initiatives as models:**

- **Odisha Climate Budget:** Tracks **climate-resilient development expenditure**.
- **Kerala Meenangadi plan:** Promotes a **participatory carbon-neutral model**.
- **Tamil Nadu initiatives:** Includes **Green Climate Company and Cool Roof Project in Chennai**.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Slow progress despite acceptance:** Although widely accepted, **implementation of One Health remains slow**.
2. **Conflicts in governance:** Conflicts between departments, government agencies, and even nations often hinder coordinated and synchronous action during health crises.
3. **Rapid and unpredictable threats:** New pathogens can emerge suddenly and spread rapidly, threatening global stability within a very short time.
4. **International coordination gaps:** Conflicts between nations affect **synchronous global action** during health crises.
5. **Weak monitoring systems:** There is a need for stronger **continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**.

Way Forward

1. **Promote scientific collaboration:** Policies should rely on **evidence and shared scientific knowledge** across countries.
2. **Strengthen coordination mechanisms:** Better coordination is needed among **sectors, institutions, and nations**.
3. **Focus on major risk areas:** Attention should be given to **zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food systems, and pollution**.
4. **Encourage global dialogue:** Platforms like international summits can help **exchange ideas and build cooperation**.
5. **Reform institutional frameworks:** Global systems must be **aligned with One Health goals** for better outcomes.

Conclusion

One Health provides a **practical and necessary approach** in an interconnected world. Health risks are shared across humans, animals, and ecosystems. Strong coordination, scientific cooperation, and integrated policies are essential. This approach supports **public health, economic stability, and environmental balance**, making it the most effective path for ensuring global health security.

Question for practice:

Q. Examine the significance of the One Health approach in addressing emerging global health threats and the challenges in its effective implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Missing link in India's natural-birth story: Midwives

Source: The post “Missing link in India’s natural-birth story: Midwives” has been created, based on “Missing link in India’s natural-birth story: Midwives” published in “Indian Express” on 08th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: India has achieved significant progress in maternal healthcare as the Maternal Mortality Ratio declined from **130 per lakh live births in 2014–16 to 93 in 2019–21**. However, the increasing rate of caesarean-section deliveries from **6.4% in 2008–09 to more than 27% in 2024–25** reflects a growing imbalance in childbirth practices. The World Health Organization recommends that caesarean-section rates should ideally remain between **10% and 15%**, which indicates that India is witnessing excessive surgical intervention in childbirth.

Reasons for Rising Caesarean Deliveries in India

1. The rate of caesarean deliveries in private hospitals has reached nearly **47.4%**, which indicates the increasing medicalisation of childbirth.
2. In states such as Telangana, the caesarean-section rate has reached **over 60%**, reflecting regional imbalances.
3. Financial incentives influence delivery practices because caesarean procedures cost significantly more than normal deliveries in private hospitals.
4. Deliveries contribute nearly **70–80% of the earnings of private gynaecologists**, which may indirectly encourage surgical interventions.
5. Cultural preferences among families for selecting auspicious birth dates also contribute to unnecessary surgical deliveries.

Risks Associated with Unnecessary Caesarean Deliveries

1. Caesarean deliveries increase the risk of infection and haemorrhage in mothers.
2. Caesarean procedures may cause adhesions and complications in future pregnancies.
3. Caesarean deliveries may also lead to long-term complications such as scar endometriosis.
4. Children born through caesarean delivery are more likely to develop respiratory infections, asthma, and obesity.
5. Caesarean delivery can disrupt the newborn’s gut microbiota, although exclusive breastfeeding may help restore it partially.

Role of Professional Midwives in Strengthening Maternal Care

1. Professional midwives support natural childbirth by recognising labour as a physiological process rather than a medical emergency.
2. They provide continuous monitoring during labour and reduce unnecessary medical interventions.
3. They help identify complications early and ensure timely referral to obstetricians when required.
4. They also help reduce dependence on surgical deliveries by promoting safe normal deliveries.
5. They improve maternal care both in remote rural areas and urban institutional settings.

Government Initiative to Promote Midwifery in India

1. India launched the **Nurse Practitioner in Midwifery programme** in 2018 to strengthen the midwifery workforce.
2. Around **1,500 trained midwives** have been produced under this programme so far.
3. However, India requires nearly **90,000 professional midwives** to meet the needs of the public healthcare system.

Challenges in Strengthening Midwifery Services in India

1. India faces a shortage of trained professional midwives despite increasing institutional deliveries.
2. The healthcare system remains largely doctor-centric, which limits the role of midwives in childbirth services.
3. Private hospitals often prefer surgical deliveries due to financial incentives.
4. Social perceptions sometimes favour surgical delivery over natural childbirth.
5. There is inadequate integration of midwives into the public health system, especially in rural and tribal regions.

Way Forward

1. The government should expand midwifery training programmes across states.
2. Midwives should be integrated into primary healthcare institutions and maternity care systems.
3. Awareness should be created among families regarding the benefits of normal childbirth.
4. Regulation of unnecessary caesarean deliveries in private hospitals should be strengthened.
5. Strong referral linkages between midwives and obstetricians should be institutionalised.

Conclusion: India's maternal healthcare progress must now focus on ensuring safe, appropriate, and evidence-based childbirth practices rather than only increasing institutional deliveries. Strengthening professional midwifery services can help reduce unnecessary caesarean deliveries and ensure equitable maternal care for women in both rural and urban areas.

Question: The rising rate of caesarean deliveries in India reflects both gaps in access to skilled birth attendants and over-medicalisation of childbirth. Discuss the role of midwives in ensuring safe and appropriate maternal care.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Freebies unplugged

Source: The post "**Freebies unplugged**" has been created, based on "**Freebies unplugged**" published in "**BusinessLine**" on 08th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: Electoral freebies have become a recurring feature of India's political landscape as political parties frequently announce welfare measures such as free electricity, bus rides, consumer goods, and unconditional cash transfers before elections. While such measures aim to provide social support, concerns have emerged regarding their impact on fiscal sustainability and electoral fairness. The Economic Survey 2025-26 has

highlighted the increasing fiscal burden and limited long-term developmental impact of unconditional cash transfer schemes.

What are Electoral Freebies

1. Electoral freebies refer to **unpaid-for welfare measures announced primarily before elections** to influence voter behaviour.
2. These include free electricity, free transport services, distribution of consumer goods, and unconditional cash transfers to women and households.
3. Free ration schemes, transfers to farmers, and electricity subsidies also form part of India's expanding welfare framework.

Economic Impact of Freebies

1. Freebies reduce the fiscal space available for creating durable public assets such as infrastructure and social sector investments.
2. Several states implementing unconditional cash transfer schemes are already operating under revenue deficit conditions.
3. Such transfers account for nearly **0.19% to 1.25% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)** and **0.68% to 8.26% of total state budget expenditure**.
4. The Sixteenth Finance Commission has observed that unconditional cash transfers may account for nearly **20% of total subsidy spending** in some states.
5. Power subsidies also contribute significantly to fiscal stress in states.

Political Impact of Freebies

1. Freebies may create an uneven electoral playing field by giving incumbent governments an advantage during elections.
2. Competitive populism among political parties encourages a culture of escalating welfare promises.
3. The timing of such announcements near elections raises concerns regarding the fairness of electoral competition.

Social Impact of Freebies

Positive impacts

1. Unconditional cash transfers improve consumption levels among vulnerable households.
2. Such transfers enhance food security and provide short-term income stability.
3. Certain schemes such as subsidised food programmes and pensions create lasting welfare benefits.

Limitations

1. Unconditional cash transfers do not consistently improve child nutrition outcomes.
2. Such transfers have limited impact on educational achievement.
3. These schemes do not enable sustained exit from poverty without complementary investments in health and education sectors.

Challenges Associated with Electoral Freebies

1. Electoral freebies place increasing pressure on already stressed state finances.

2. There is inadequate distinction between welfare expenditure and populist expenditure in public debate.
3. Competitive populism reduces incentives for long-term developmental investment.
4. Many states implementing unconditional transfers are already facing revenue deficits.
5. Timing of announcements close to elections raises concerns about ethical governance and electoral neutrality.

Need for Rationalising Welfare Spending

1. Welfare schemes should increasingly shift toward investments in health, nutrition, childcare, and education.
2. Conditional cash transfer models such as Bolsa Família demonstrate better long-term developmental outcomes.
3. India's Midday Meal Scheme is an example of a conditional welfare programme linked to education outcomes.
4. Electoral announcements of welfare schemes should ideally not coincide with election periods.
5. Greater fiscal transparency and accountability in subsidy spending is necessary.

Conclusion: Electoral freebies provide short-term relief to vulnerable populations but may weaken fiscal discipline and distort democratic competition if used excessively. A balanced approach that prioritises targeted and conditional welfare spending alongside investments in long-term human capital development is essential for sustainable and inclusive growth in India.

Question: Electoral freebies have become a persistent feature of India's political economy. Examine their impact on fiscal sustainability and democratic processes. Suggest reforms to rationalise welfare spending.

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

In Delhi's support for Arab Gulf, a return of the Bombay school of thought

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International relation

Introduction

The Gulf has now become a **top strategic priority for India**, especially during the ongoing tensions in the Persian Gulf. It is not a distant region but India's immediate neighbourhood with strong economic and social ties. India's response shows a clear shift in thinking. This shift reflects a return to an older strategic idea, where maritime connections and Gulf relations are central to India's security and growth.

What are "Bombay School of thought" and "Ludhiana School of thought"?

1. Bombay School of thought:

Maritime outlook: It sees India's security starting from the sea and focuses on trade, ports, and naval strength. It treats the Gulf, Persia, and Arabian regions as the outer layer of India's defence.

Policy tools: It uses diplomacy, trade, and naval presence to shape regional politics. Control of sea lanes and influence in coastal regions are seen as key instruments.

2. Ludhiana School of thought:

Continental outlook: It focuses on land borders and sees threats coming through regions like Afghanistan. It gives priority to land-based defence and frontier control.

Policy tools: It relies on military presence, alliances with local forces, and political influence in border regions. Afghanistan is treated as the central buffer for India's security.

Evolution of India's Security Approach

1. **Colonial roots of the debate:** The strategic divide began during the Great Game after external threats exposed India's western vulnerabilities. Two different approaches to defence emerged from this period.
2. **Shift after Anglo-Afghan experience:** The First Anglo-Afghan War showed the risks of deep continental involvement. Yet, land-focused thinking continued to dominate.
3. **Post-independence continental focus:** After 1947, India focused on defending land borders with Pakistan. Trade, ports, and maritime strategy became less important.
4. **Decline of maritime centres:** Major port cities lost importance as Delhi became the main centre of power. Strategic thinking became more land-oriented.
5. **Revival after economic reforms:** The 1990s reforms brought trade and global integration back. This gradually restored attention to maritime strategy and external economic links.
6. **Continued continental pressure:** Despite this revival, persistent land threats kept India's strategic focus largely tied to the continent.

Why is the Gulf suddenly so important?

1. **Geographical proximity:** The Gulf lies very close to India, separated only by a narrow stretch of water. It is part of India's immediate strategic environment, not a distant region.
2. **Economic and social linkages:** India has deep connections with the Gulf through labour, trade, and cultural ties. These links make the region highly important for India's stability.
3. **Diaspora and remittances:** Nearly **9 million Indians live and work in the Gulf**, sending around **\$50 billion annually**. This makes the region vital for India's economy.
4. **Energy and logistics dependence:** India depends heavily on the Gulf for energy and trade routes. This creates a strong strategic need to ensure stability in the region.

Re-emergence of the Bombay School in Present Context

1. **Rise of the Gulf region:** The rapid growth of oil-rich Gulf countries increased their importance for India. The region became central to India's economy and external engagement.

2. **Shift from Iran to Arab Gulf:** After 1979, Iran's confrontational politics limited engagement. Arab Gulf countries steadily became more important for India.
3. **Return of maritime thinking:** India is now focusing on sea routes, trade, and Gulf relations. This reflects a clear revival of Bombay School logic.
4. **Strategic centrality of the Gulf:** The Gulf is now a key part of India's economic and social system. It acts as an extension of India's own space.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Persistent land threats:** India still faces serious challenges from Pakistan along its land borders. These threats cannot be ignored while focusing on maritime strategy.
2. **Need for balance:** India cannot choose only one approach between land and sea. Both maritime and continental strategies are necessary for full security.
3. **Regional instability factors:** Pakistan continues to use proxies and extremist elements. Iran's political system also creates challenges in the region.

Way Forward

1. **Integration of two approaches:** India needs to combine maritime strength with strong land defence. This will ensure balanced and effective security.
2. **Strengthening Gulf engagement:** India should deepen ties with Arab Gulf countries through trade, diplomacy, and security cooperation. This will strengthen its strategic position.
3. **Leveraging positive regional trends:** The Arab Gulf is showing political moderation and economic openness. This creates an opportunity for stable and long-term partnerships.

Conclusion

India's growing support for the Gulf shows a clear return to maritime thinking rooted in the Bombay School. The Gulf has become central to India's economy, security, and external relations. However, India must not ignore land-based threats. The key challenge is to combine both approaches effectively. A balanced strategy will help India secure its interests and maintain stability in a complex regional environment.

Question for Practise:

Discuss how India's growing support for the Arab Gulf reflects a return to the Bombay School of thought, in contrast to the Ludhiana School, and examine its implications for India's strategic priorities.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Systemic reckoning: On the verdict in the Sattankulam murder case

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Governance

Introduction

The custodial deaths of **Jayaraj and Bennix in Sattankulam, Tamil Nadu**, exposed serious failures in policing and judicial processes. Arrested on minor charges, they were subjected to brutal torture in custody, leading to their deaths. The case highlights **misuse of police power, weak safeguards, and low accountability**. At the same time, the conviction shows how **judicial intervention, credible evidence, and public pressure** can ensure justice and challenge institutional impunity.

Background of the Case

1. **Arrest on minor charges:** In Tamil Nadu, **Jayaraj** was picked up for alleged lockdown violations, which did not justify strict legal action or custodial detention.
2. **Escalation of police action:** The situation worsened when his son questioned police behaviour, leading to **further detention and escalation of force**.
3. **Severe custodial torture:** Both were subjected to **third-degree torture, including physical and sexual assault**, causing serious internal injuries.
4. **Fabrication of charges and records:** Police filed **false FIRs and misleading explanations**, claiming the injuries were self-inflicted.
5. **Failure of medical and judicial safeguards:** A doctor declared them “fit for remand”, and the magistrate issued **mechanical remand orders without proper verification**.
6. **Custodial neglect leading to death:** They were shifted despite injuries and died soon after, showing **continuous neglect and brutality in custody**.
7. **Public outrage and pursuit of justice:** The incident triggered **nationwide protests**, and the victims’ family continued a **long legal struggle for accountability**.

Present Verdict and Its Significance

1. **Death penalty and “rarest of rare” classification:** The court awarded **death penalty to nine policemen**, calling it a “**rarest of rare**” case, showing the extreme seriousness of custodial torture and murder.
2. **Accountability of entire police unit:** Almost the **entire police station staff was convicted**, which is unprecedented and shows **collective institutional failure**.
3. **Gross abuse of power:** The court held that those meant to protect citizens became **violators of law and constitutional duties**, highlighting misuse of authority.
4. **Shift in perception of custodial violence:** This verdict signals a **significant shift in national approach**, where multiple officers are held criminally accountable.

5. **Debate on proportional punishment:** The death penalty raises concerns about **reformatory justice**, and uniform punishment may face scrutiny in higher courts.
6. **Strong deterrent message:** The conviction sends a clear signal that **police excesses will not remain unpunished**, breaking the culture of impunity.

Custodial Violence: Nature and Patterns

1. **Definition and forms of custodial violence:** Custodial violence includes **physical torture, mental harassment, and sexual abuse**, used to extract information or assert authority.
2. **Physical and mental torture practices:** Methods include **beatings, deprivation, humiliation, and coercion**, causing severe physical and psychological harm.
3. **Sexual violence as coercion:** Sexual assault is used as a tool of **control and intimidation**, leading to deep social and mental trauma.
4. **Culture of impunity and entitlement:** Police often act with a sense of **unchecked authority**, assuming violence is part of their power.
5. **Institutional complicity:** Failures of **police, doctors, and magistrates together enable custodial violence**, weakening accountability.

Issues in Addressing Custodial Deaths

1. **Low conviction rate:** Between 2011–2022, **only one police officer was convicted** in Tamil Nadu, showing weak accountability.
2. **Rising custodial deaths:** Data shows **490 cases (2019–2020) in Tamil Nadu** and **2,152 judicial + 155 police custody deaths (2021–22)** nationally.
3. **Impact on marginalised groups:** Nearly **38% victims belong to marginalised communities**, indicating social bias.
4. **Weak investigation and prosecution:**
Even when cases are reported, **lack of strong investigation leads to no convictions**.
5. **Structural failure of institutions:** Police, judiciary, and medical systems often fail together, creating **systemic gaps in justice delivery**.

Safeguards Against Custodial Violence in India

1. Constitutional Safeguards

- **Right to life and dignity:** Protection under Article 21
- **Protection against coercion:** Safeguards under Article 20(3)
- **Rights during arrest and detention:** Guarantees under Article 22
- **Access to justice:** Provision of free legal aid under Article 39A

2. Legal and Institutional Safeguards

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- **Penal provisions against abuse:** IPC sections on custodial torture and wrongful confinement
- **Procedural safeguards:** CrPC provision for judicial inquiry in custodial deaths
- **Human rights framework:** Role of NHRC and SHRC under the Protection of Human Rights Act
- **BNS provisions:** Safeguards against hurt and wrongful confinement by public servants

3. Judicial Safeguards and Guidelines

- **Procedural safeguards in arrests:** In *D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal*, the Supreme Court (1997) laid down **clear guidelines for arrest and detention**, including arrest memo, medical checks, and informing relatives.
- **Arrest must be justified:** In *Joginder Kumar vs State of UP* (1994), the Supreme Court held that **arrest should not be routine** and must be based on necessity and valid legal grounds.
- **State accountability:** In *Nilabati Behera vs State of Orissa*, the Supreme Court (1993) recognised **state liability and compensation** for custodial deaths.
- **Surveillance and transparency:** In *Paramvir Singh* case, the Supreme Court (2020) directed **installation of CCTV cameras with audio** in police stations.

Way Forward

1. **Enactment of a Standalone Anti-Torture Law:** India must criminalize custodial torture through a dedicated **Prevention of Torture Bill**, as recommended by the Law Commission of India (2017). This law should align with the UNCAT, prescribing stringent punishments for erring officials and ensuring mandatory compensation for victims.
2. **Strengthening Judicial Oversight:** Custodial deaths and torture cases must be investigated by Judicial Magistrates instead of Executive Magistrates, ensuring unbiased scrutiny, as per the 2024 Supreme Court ruling. Courts should also impose harsher penalties for violations of **D.K. Basu guidelines** and mandate compliance with human rights norms.
3. **Independent Oversight Mechanisms:** Establishing independent oversight bodies at state and national levels, as suggested by the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** (2013), can ensure impartial investigations into custodial violence cases. The NHRC must be given prosecutorial powers to act against offenders rather than merely recommending action.
4. **Police Reforms for Transparency and Accountability:** Full implementation of the Prakash Singh case (2006) police reforms, which advocate separating law enforcement from political influence, can professionalize policing and reduce misuse of power. Additionally, **Model Police Act, 2006** must be enforced uniformly across states to promote accountability.
5. **Mandatory CCTV Surveillance and Audio-Video Interrogation:** Expanding the Supreme Court's directive on CCTV installation in police stations (**Common Cause vs Union of India, 2018**) to include real-time monitoring and external audits can prevent custodial torture. Video recordings of interrogations, as recommended by NHRC, must be made mandatory.
6. **Fast-Track Courts and Compensation Mechanisms:** Special fast-track courts should be established to expedite custodial violence cases, **ensuring strict punishment for perpetrators**. Additionally, NHRC's recommendation for uniform compensation for victims must be institutionalized, with a clear fund allocation mechanism.
7. **Ratification of International Conventions and Global Best Practices:** India must ratify the UNCAT and adopt best practices from countries like the **UK's Independent Office for Police**

Conduct (IOPC) and Norway's Ombudsman Model, which allow for independent oversight and strict accountability of law enforcement officials.

Conclusion

The Sattankulam verdict marks a rare assertion of accountability but also reveals deep structural gaps in policing and justice systems. **Custodial violence continues due to weak enforcement and institutional failures.** Lasting change requires **strict implementation of safeguards, stronger oversight, and a dedicated anti-torture law**, so that constitutional rights are protected and such abuses are effectively prevented.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Sattankulam custodial death case exposes systemic failures in policing and justice mechanisms, and evaluate the role of judicial intervention and safeguards in ensuring accountability in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The thermal cost of India's textile surge

Source: The post "**The thermal cost of India's textile surge**" has been created, based on "**The thermal cost of India's textile surge**" published in "The Hindu" on 09th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India is currently benefiting from global textile trade shifts, but rising heat stress is creating a serious thermodynamic challenge for its industrial workforce. This issue is not only environmental but also affects productivity, labour welfare, and supply chain stability.

Causes of the Crisis

1. Rising temperatures due to climate change have led to factory indoor temperatures frequently exceeding 35–40°C, which is above the safe working threshold of 30°C.
2. Studies show that at 33–34°C, a worker's productive capacity is reduced by nearly half, making extreme heat a physiological limit.
3. The textile industry is highly labour-intensive and employs around 45 million workers, making it particularly vulnerable to heat stress.
4. Many factories lack adequate cooling systems, rest breaks, and health safeguards, especially for informal workers.
5. Global supply chains impose strict deadlines and penalties, forcing factories to continue operations even under unsafe thermal conditions.

Impacts

(1) Impact on Productivity

- a. India lost approximately 259 billion labour hours annually between 2001 and 2020 due to heat stress, indicating a major productivity crisis.
- b. The loss increased to around 247 billion hours in 2024 alone, showing the worsening nature of the problem.

- c. Annual economic losses exceed \$600 billion due to reduced labour efficiency.
- d. Productivity declines by about 2% per degree rise in temperature, and this reduction can reach 4% on extremely hot days.
- e. High temperatures also cause machinery overheating and technical failures, leading to operational disruptions.

(2) Impact on Workers

- a. Workers often lose up to 50% of their wages during extreme heat due to reduced working hours or inability to work.
- b. Heat exposure leads to serious health issues such as heatstroke, dehydration, and increased workplace injuries.
- c. Informal workers lack access to paid leave, cooling breaks, and social security, increasing their vulnerability.

(3) Impact on Supply Chains

- a. Heat stress creates a “thermodynamic bottleneck” where production cannot be sustained beyond physical limits.
- b. Supply chains may collapse abruptly rather than gradually when human tolerance limits are exceeded.
- c. The burden of delays and disruptions is disproportionately shifted onto workers due to their weak bargaining power.

(4) Broader Socio-Economic Impact

- a. The crisis disproportionately affects poor and informal workers, increasing inequality.
- b. By 2030, India is projected to lose 5.8% of total working hours due to extreme heat, equivalent to around 34 million full-time jobs.

Way Forward

1. Policy Measures

- a. The government must recognise heat stress as a critical supply chain risk and integrate it into industrial and trade policies.
- b. Climate projections should be incorporated into long-term industrial planning.

2. Workplace Interventions

- a. Factories should adopt mandatory heat action plans that include enforceable temperature thresholds and regulated working hours.
- b. Adequate cooling systems, rest breaks, and regular health assessments must be ensured.

3. Financial Measures

- a. Banks should include climate risks in their lending assessments to promote resilient industrial practices.
- b. Governments should provide concessional credit and incentives for investment in cooling and heat management technologies.

4. Labour Welfare Measures

- a. Labour laws should be strengthened to explicitly address heat stress and ensure safe working conditions.
- b. Workers must have guaranteed access to clean drinking water, shaded rest areas, and medical support.

5. Technological Measures: Investment in research and development is needed for wearable cooling technologies, heat-resilient cotton, and energy-efficient production systems.

6. Global Supply Chain Responsibility

- a. International buyers should share the cost of climate adaptation through fair pricing and longer delivery timelines.
- b. The global fashion industry must move beyond treating labour costs as static and account for climate realities.

Conclusion: The heat stress crisis shows that industrial growth cannot be sustained without addressing environmental and human limits. A balanced approach that integrates economic growth with climate resilience and worker protection is essential for sustainable development.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Question: Rising heat stress poses a significant challenge to India's labour-intensive textile industry, affecting productivity, worker welfare, and supply chain stability. Discuss the causes and impacts of this crisis. Suggest measures to address it.

The other side of sport — mastering manufacturing

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Sports in India is growing beyond cricket, with athletes like Neeraj Chopra and Lakshya Sen expanding its reach. However, the sports ecosystem is not only about players and viewership. **Sports goods manufacturing is a key but ignored pillar.** Despite strong cultural engagement, India contributes only **0.5% to the \$50 billion global market**, showing deep structural issues.

Structure of India's Sports Goods Industry

1. **Geographical concentration:** Production is mainly located in **Jalandhar and Meerut, contributing over 80% of output**, showing limited regional spread.
2. **MSME dominance and labour intensity:** The sector is driven by MSMEs producing stitched balls, cricket gear, and accessories, making it highly labour-intensive.
3. **Fragmented production system:** Small-scale operations restrict scaling, technology adoption, and development of global brands.

4. **Diversity in manufacturing processes:** Each sport requires different materials and techniques, making policy design complex and often ineffective.

Major issues with India's Sports Goods Industry

1. **Cost disadvantage leading to price gap:** Higher input costs, inefficient logistics, and lack of economies of scale increase production cost by **about 15%**, making Indian products less competitive; for example, a football costs **₹100 in India compared to ₹85–87 in competing countries**.
2. **Limited availability of advanced inputs:** Key materials like specialised polymers, performance fabrics, and carbon composites are not widely produced domestically.
3. **High import duties on inputs and machinery:** Duties increase production costs and discourage investment in technology and diversification.
4. **Logistics and location challenges:** Manufacturing clusters in northern India increase export costs due to long distance from ports.
5. **Infrastructure and compliance issues:** Rising land prices, fragmented infrastructure, and delays due to compliance reduce efficiency.
6. **High certification burden:** Testing costs range from **₹5 lakh to ₹50 lakh per product**, making compliance expensive for MSMEs.
7. **Dependence on foreign testing facilities:** Lack of domestic certification centres forces reliance on European labs, increasing cost and time.
8. **Delay in innovation:** Long certification timelines discourage experimentation and slow product development.
9. **Weak global brand presence:** India lacks strong international sports brands capable of commanding premium prices.
10. **Low demand creation efforts:** Limited marketing, weak global partnerships, and absence of athlete-brand linkages restrict global demand.
11. **Focus on low-value manufacturing:** Firms remain engaged in contract manufacturing instead of moving towards brand ownership.

What should be done

1. **Rationalisation of import duties:** Reduce duties on specialised raw materials and advanced machinery to improve cost competitiveness.
2. **Targeted fiscal support:** Provide export-linked incentives, support certification costs, and promote participation in global trade platforms.
3. **Leverage allied sectors:** Use strengths in technical textiles, footwear, plastics, and light engineering to upgrade production capabilities.

4. **Develop domestic certification ecosystem:** Establish internationally recognised testing centres to reduce cost and improve time-to-market.
5. **Strengthen domestic raw material base:** Invest in production of advanced composites and performance fabrics to reduce import dependence.
6. **Promote global brand building:** Encourage domestic firms to move towards original brand ownership through coordinated national campaigns.
7. **Use athlete and institutional support:** Involve athletes, federations, and industry bodies to promote Indian sports goods globally.
8. **Strategic use of international events:** Link procurement with upcoming global sporting events to create demand and visibility for domestic products.

Conclusion

India's sports goods sector remains stuck in low-value global supply chains despite strong potential. **Structural issues, cost disadvantages, and weak branding limit growth.** A shift toward **large-scale manufacturing, domestic innovation, and global brand creation** is essential. With the right strategy and policy support, India can become a major player in the global sports economy.

Question for practice:

Examine the structural challenges and growth potential of India's sports goods manufacturing sector, and suggest measures needed to enhance its global competitiveness.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Why India wants fast breeder reactors

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

The achievement of **criticality in the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** marks an important step in India's nuclear programme. However, criticality is only the beginning of operations. India wants fast breeder reactors because they improve fuel use, generate more fuel than they consume, and support the long-term goal of **energy security and reduced dependence on uranium** under the three-stage nuclear programme.

Understanding Criticality and Its Significance

1. **What is a fast breeder reactor:** A fast breeder reactor uses **plutonium as the main fuel** and fast neutrons to generate energy while also producing more fuel.
2. **Breeding mechanism:** The reactor core is surrounded by **depleted uranium**, which is converted into plutonium when hit by fast neutrons and then reused as fuel.

3. **Difference from PHWRs:** PHWRs use natural uranium and slow neutrons, and only a **small fraction of fuel (~1%) is used**, whereas FBRs use fast neutrons and achieve **around 10% or more fuel use**.
4. **Meaning of criticality:** Criticality is the stage when a **self-sustaining chain reaction** is achieved, where each fission produces neutrons that trigger further fission.
5. **Controlled reactor conditions:** Engineers maintain this state by controlling **fuel composition, neutron access, and reactor temperature**.
6. **Not final stage:** Criticality does not mean electricity generation. The reactor must undergo **low-power testing for months**.

Why India Needs Fast Breeder Reactors

1. **Limited Uranium, Need for Efficiency:** India has only **1-2% of global uranium reserves**, so existing reactors cannot support long-term expansion. Fast breeder reactors help extract **more energy from the same limited fuel**.
2. **Overcoming Inefficiency of Existing Reactors:** Current PHWRs use only about **1% of uranium before it becomes unusable**. FBRs increase fuel utilisation to **around 10% or more**, improving overall efficiency.
3. **Production of More Fuel (Breeding Advantage):** FBRs produce more fissile material than they consume by converting uranium-238 into plutonium. Thus enabling the reactor to **produce more fuel than it consumes**.
4. **Bridge in Three-Stage Nuclear Programme:** FBRs connect the first stage (uranium-based) and third stage (thorium-based). Without FBRs, India cannot move towards **thorium utilisation**.
5. **Unlocking India's Thorium Potential:** India has **over 25% of global thorium reserves**, but thorium cannot be directly used. FBRs produce uranium-233, which enables thorium-based reactors in the future.
6. **Meeting Rising Energy Demand:** India is the **third-largest energy consumer**, and demand will keep increasing. FBRs support expansion of nuclear power beyond current limits.
7. **Reducing Fossil Fuel Dependence:** Dependence on fossil fuels exposes India to global price shocks. Nuclear energy through FBRs offers a more stable and long-term option.
8. **Expansion of Nuclear Energy Capacity:** Nuclear power is only **3% of the energy mix**, but India plans to increase it from **8,180 MW (2024) to 100 GW by 2047**. FBRs are essential for this scale-up.
9. **Reducing Nuclear Waste Burden:** By reusing spent fuel, FBRs reduce the need for large waste disposal facilities and improve sustainability of nuclear energy.

Role in India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme

1. **Stage one function:** PHWRs use natural uranium to produce **plutonium and depleted uranium**.

2. **Stage two role of FBRs:** FBRs use this plutonium to generate **more plutonium and electricity**.
3. **Fuel cycle continuation:** FBRs also produce **uranium-233**, which is used in the next stage.
4. **Stage three objective:** Future reactors will use **thorium and uranium-233** to produce electricity.
5. **Resource-based strategy:** India has **limited uranium but over 25% of global thorium reserves**, making this path necessary.

Major Challenges of Fast Breeder Reactors

1. **Sodium coolant risk:** Liquid sodium improves heat transfer but reacts **violently with air and water**, creating safety challenges.
2. **High engineering demands:** Systems must be **perfectly sealed with strong leak detection** to prevent accidents.
3. **Need for Strong Safety Culture:** FBRs require strict oversight, engineering precision, and strong institutional safety practices.
4. **Fuel Cycle Infrastructure:** Reprocessing spent fuel and making new fuel assemblies need additional infrastructure and regulatory systems.
5. **Economic viability issues:** PFBR costs increased significantly, and electricity from FBRs may be **costlier than alternatives like solar energy**.
6. **Global operational failures:** Reactors like **Monju (Japan)** and **Superphénix (France)** faced shutdown due to technical and cost issues.
7. **Limited global success:** Only **Russia has a commercial fast breeder reactor**, showing limited worldwide adoption.

Way Forward

1. **Step-wise testing approach:** PFBR will operate at low power to study **performance under different conditions**.
2. **Data-driven improvement:** Engineers will use data to refine **safety systems and efficiency**.
3. **Regulatory approval needed:** Approval from the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board** is required for commercial operation.
4. **Fuel cycle infrastructure:** Development of **reprocessing and fuel fabrication facilities** is necessary.
5. **Scaling future reactors:** Expansion depends on PFBR success and progress towards a **closed nuclear fuel cycle**.

6. **Improve Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure clear timelines, cost control, and institutional responsibility.
7. **Strengthen Safety Systems:** Adopt strict monitoring and global best practices for reactor operation.

Conclusion

Fast breeder reactors are important for improving fuel efficiency and supporting India's long-term nuclear strategy. They enable better use of limited uranium and help move towards thorium-based energy. However, issues of cost, safety, and delays remain significant. The success of PFBR will determine whether India can achieve a reliable and self-sustaining nuclear energy system.

Question for practice:

Discuss why India is focusing on fast breeder reactors and how they contribute to its long-term nuclear energy strategy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Nari Shakti: India's Defining Reform for the Next Decade

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- Social empowerment

Introduction

India has shifted women's empowerment from intent to **institutional infrastructure through planned policy design**. Under the **present Indian government**, women are placed at the centre of development. This approach recognises that **women's progress accelerates economic growth**. The focus has moved from welfare to **women-led development**, creating measurable gains in access, participation, and opportunity across sectors, making Nari Shakti a defining reform for the coming decade.

Policy-Driven Structural Transformation in Women Empowerment

1. **Financial inclusion expansion:** More than **57 crore bank accounts** opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, with **over 55% owned by women**, giving first entry into formal banking.
2. **Grassroots economic mobilisation:** Around **10 crore women in 90 lakh self-help groups** are supporting entrepreneurship and local economic resilience.
3. **Clean energy access:** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana reached **10.5 crore households**, reducing health risks and saving time.
4. **Credit access growth:** Nearly **70% of MUDRA loans** are given to women, improving financial independence.
5. **Rising workforce participation:** Female labour force participation increased to **around 37%**, reversing a long decline.

Improvements in Human Development

1. **Integrated nutrition support across lifecycle:** Mission POSHAN 2.0 with ₹1.81 lakh crore (2021–26) targets children, adolescent girls, and mothers through a converged approach.
2. **Technology-driven transparency in delivery:** POSHAN Abhiyaan uses **Poshan Tracker with 99.02% Aadhaar-verified beneficiaries**, ensuring real-time monitoring and better delivery.
3. **Expanded maternal and child healthcare access:** Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram supported **16.60 crore beneficiaries**, while Janani Suraksha Yojana enabled **11.07 crore institutional deliveries**.
4. **Focused maternal risk reduction:** Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan ensures early detection of high-risk pregnancies, improving maternal outcomes.
5. **Improving dignity and reducing vulnerability:** Swachh Bharat Mission built **over 12 crore toilets**, with **93% women reporting improved safety and hygiene**.
6. **Reducing time poverty and physical burden:** Jal Jeevan Mission provided **15.6 crore tap connections**, while Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana reduced dependence on traditional fuels.
7. **Enhancing asset ownership and security:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin delivered **2.75 crore houses**, with **73% owned by women**, strengthening decision-making power.
8. **Promoting education and changing social norms:** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao improved **sex ratio at birth from 918 to 930** and increased girls' enrolment to **78%**.
9. **Securing long-term financial stability:** Sukanya Samridhi Yojana with **4.2 crore accounts** supports financial security of girls.

The Implementation Challenge

1. **Awareness gap persists:** Many eligible women still lack awareness, leading to uneven enrolment.
2. **Dependence on local administration:** Last-mile delivery depends on district capacity, affecting outcomes.
3. **Need for saturation approach:** Focus must shift from scheme announcement to **full coverage of all eligible women**.
4. **Shift from output to outcome:** Measuring success should move from numbers to **real-life impact**.
5. **Accountability at ground level:** Technology helps delivery, but **on-ground accountability remains essential**.

Key Initiatives and Institutional Reforms for Women Empowerment

1. **Constitutional push for political representation:** Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam provides **33% reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**, strengthening women's role in decision-making.

2. **Integrated framework for empowerment and safety:** Mission Shakti combines **Sambal (safety) and Samarthya (empowerment)** for holistic support.
3. **Strengthening institutional support systems:** Mission Shakti includes **819 One Stop Centres assisting 10.98 lakh women** and helplines handling **214.78 lakh calls**, improving access to justice and support.
4. **Expanding access to entrepreneurship and credit:** Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana sanctioned **₹34.11 lakh crore loans**, with **68% benefiting women entrepreneurs**.
5. **Mobilising women for collective economic growth:** Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission organised **10.05 crore women into 90.90 lakh SHGs**, strengthening local economies.
6. **Enhancing income generation capacity:** Lakhpati Didi initiative enabled **1.48 crore women to earn ₹1 lakh annually**, improving financial independence.
7. **Ensuring legal and social empowerment:** Reforms such as **abolition of Triple Talaq and extension of maternity leave to 26 weeks** improved women's rights and participation.
8. **Creating a multiplier effect through representation:** Increased participation in governance can lead to **better policy design, improved delivery, and stronger leadership pipelines**.

The Way Forward

1. **Capacity building for leadership:** Women need **mentorship, policy exposure, and administrative support** to lead effectively.
2. **Institutional support requirement:** Strong systems are needed to convert representation into **effective governance outcomes**.
3. **Simplifying policy delivery:** Programmes should be easier to access and faster to deliver.
4. **Strengthening feedback systems:** Policies must evolve based on **real needs and continuous feedback**.
5. **Outcome-based governance focus:** Success must be measured by **actual improvement in lives, not just coverage**.
6. **Using STEM advantage:** High participation of women in STEM should be used for leadership in key sectors.

Conclusion

India has created a strong base through **expanded access and participation**. The next phase must ensure **saturation, effective implementation, and leadership roles for women**. Proper implementation of **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** can shift empowerment from access to authority. This will strengthen **economic growth, social stability, and institutional effectiveness**, making women central to India's long-term development.

Question for practice:

Examine how policy-driven initiatives in India have transformed women's empowerment from welfare to women-led development, and discuss the challenges in ensuring effective last-mile delivery and leadership participation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Making scholarships integral to India's academic culture

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

Introduction

India aims to achieve a **50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education, as set under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** for 2035. However, the real issue is not only expanding institutions but ensuring who can access and complete education. Despite strong growth, participation remains limited. High costs, risk, and uneven access prevent many capable students from enrolling. This makes scholarships essential as a central pathway in higher education.

Current Status of India's Higher Education

1. **Expansion of institutions:** The number of higher educational institutions increased from **51,534 in 2014-15 to over 70,000 in 2025-26**, showing strong capacity expansion.
2. **GER progress with timeline:** GER increased from **0.4 in 1950-51 to 28.4 in 2021-22 and 29.5 in 2022-23**, showing progress but still below the **50% target under NEP 2020 (by 2035)**.
3. **Dominance of State Public Universities (SPUs):** SPUs serve **over 3.25 crore students** and account for **around 81% of total enrolment**, making them central to access.
4. **Rising inclusion across groups:** Enrolment increased among **OBCs (80.9%), SCs (76.3%), STs (106.8%) between 2011-12 and 2021-22**, along with improved gender parity (**GPI 1.01 in 2021-22**).
5. **Growth in research and rankings:** India's share in global research rose from **3.5% in 2017 to 5.2% in 2024**, with strong improvement in global rankings.
6. **Digital and flexible learning expansion:** Platforms like **SWAYAM (5.15 crore+ enrolments)** and online/distance programmes support wider access and flexibility.

Key Structural Challenges

1. **Access inequality:** Regional gaps and social differences still limit equal participation in higher education.
2. **Affordability burden:** Higher education requires **large financial investment**, which discourages many families.

3. **Quality and outcome gap:** Enrolment does not always ensure **skills, learning, and employability**.
4. **Cost and risk barrier:** Students in smaller towns face **uncertainty about returns**, which reduces participation.
5. **Uneven opportunity distribution:** Talent exists widely, but **opportunities remain concentrated**.
6. **Low research investment:** India spends **only 0.64% of GDP on research**, limiting innovation and quality growth.
7. **Institutional imbalance:** Heavy dependence on SPUs creates pressure on public institutions for quality and access.

Initiative Taken

1. **Government financial support:** The **government provides scholarships, interest subsidies, and credit guarantees** through schemes like the **Central Sector Scheme (82,000 scholarships annually)** and interest subvention mechanisms, reducing financial barriers for students.
2. **National Scholarship Portal:** It acts as a **single digital window** integrating State and central schemes, making scholarship access more transparent and efficient.
3. **Education financing support:** The **Vidya Lakshmi Scheme (2024)** offers **collateral-free loans up to ₹7.5 lakh with 75% credit guarantee** and **3% interest subvention** for eligible families, improving affordability.
4. **Institutional development support:** Under **PM-USHA**, selected universities receive **₹100 crore grants** to strengthen infrastructure, autonomy, research, and inclusion.
5. **Digital learning expansion:** Platforms like **SWAYAM (5.15 crore+ enrolments)**, **Virtual Labs (900+ labs)**, and **National Digital Library of India (NDLI) (8 crore+ resources)** expand access and improve learning quality.
6. **Flexible academic systems:** Reforms like the **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)**, **Multiple Entry and Exit (MEME)**, and **credit transfer (up to 40% via SWAYAM)** improve flexibility and reduce dropouts.
7. **Inclusion-focused measures:** Policies support **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**, **minorities, and persons with disabilities**, with targeted enrolment growth such as **ST enrolment rising by 106.8%**.
8. **Research and innovation initiatives:** The **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (₹50,000 crore)** and **Innovation Councils (16,000+ institutions)** aim to strengthen research and innovation ecosystems.
9. **Skill and industry linkage:** Programmes like **National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) 2.0 (₹489 crore disbursed)** and internship platforms (**54 lakh+ internships**) improve employability and practical exposure.

10. **Private and institutional scholarships:** Corporate foundations and institutions provide **merit-cum-means support**, especially in professional education sectors.
11. **Limitation of initiatives:** Despite wide coverage, most scholarships remain **limited in scale and treated as add-ons**, not fully integrated into academic systems.

Why Scholarships Matter in India's Higher Education

1. **Unlocking hidden talent:** Talent is widely distributed across the country, but many capable students remain excluded due to cost, distance, and uncertainty.
2. **Link between access and participation:** Enrolment rises only when students who qualify are also able to **afford entry and continuation in higher education**.
3. **Barrier of financial risk:** Higher education is seen as a **long-term financial commitment**, which discourages participation from economically weaker families.
4. **Aspiration is not the issue:** The key constraint is not lack of ambition, but the **inability to manage the cost and risk of education**.
5. **Critical role in enrolment:** Scholarships directly influence **who enters higher education and who is able to continue and graduate**.
6. **Supporting student continuity:** Financial support helps students **stay in the system and complete their courses**, improving overall outcomes.
7. **Current limitation:** Most scholarships are **limited in number and treated as add-ons**, which reduces their overall impact on participation.

Learning from Historical and Global Models

1. **Ancient Indian model (Takshashila):** At **Takshashila**, students had multiple options to manage fees, including upfront payment, deferred payment, work-based learning, regional scholarships, and community support, ensuring no capable student was excluded due to lack of money.
2. **Principle of inclusion:** The system followed a clear idea that **ability should not be denied opportunity due to financial constraints**, and institutions must actively support talented students.
3. **Global academic systems:** In countries like the **U.S. and China**, scholarships are treated as a **core part of academic culture**, not as external financial aid.
4. **Alignment with local needs:** Global models link scholarships with **regional and sectoral priorities**, which helps improve enrolment, skills, and employability together.

What Should Be Done

1. **Shift to systemic approach:** Scholarships must become **central to higher education strategy**, not peripheral support.

2. **Multi-year scholarships:** Long-term support can give **certainty and stability** to students.
3. **Region-based targeting:** Focus on **low GER districts and underserved regions** to improve participation.
4. **Programme-linked scholarships:** Link scholarships to sectors like **AI, healthcare, and manufacturing** to improve employability.
5. **Use of data-driven design:** Institutional and enrolment data should guide **targeted interventions**.
6. **Policy incentives:** Provide **tax benefits and matching funds** to attract private and philanthropic investment.
7. **Performance-linked funding:** Reward institutions for **outcomes in equity, merit, and student success**.
8. **Strengthening SPUs:** Improve funding and quality in SPUs to support the majority of students.
9. **Enhancing digital inclusion:** Expand **online learning, credit transfer, and flexible education systems**.
10. **Integration with academic systems:** Scholarships should be part of **admission, learning, and career pathways**.

Conclusion

India has expanded its higher education system, but participation gaps remain. Scholarships can bridge access, affordability, and quality. They support capable students and improve outcomes. By integrating scholarships into the system, India can achieve higher enrolment, better learning, and stronger national development. Moving scholarships to the centre is essential for inclusive and effective higher education growth.

Question for practice:

Discuss how making scholarships integral to India's academic culture can help achieve equitable access, improve enrolment, and enhance outcomes in higher education.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A modest plea for constitutional morality

Source: The post "A modest plea for constitutional morality" has been created, based on "A modest plea for constitutional morality" published in "Indian Express" on 11th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: Constitutional morality refers to the ethical foundations that sustain constitutional governance through values such as liberty, equality, institutional restraint, pluralism, and procedural respect. The concept has recently become central to debates regarding judicial reasoning in India, especially in cases like the Sabarimala dispute before the Supreme Court of India. Although constitutional morality is sometimes criticised

for being vague, it continues to provide an important framework for evaluating the legitimacy of institutional practices and judicial conduct.

Meaning and Nature of Constitutional Morality

- Constitutional morality should be understood not as a strict judicial rule of decision but as a constitutional sensibility guiding interpretation and institutional behaviour.
- It includes values such as judicial self-restraint, respect for pluralism, deference to constitutional procedures, scepticism toward unchecked popular sovereignty, and commitment to open criticism.
- These values strengthen constitutional governance by ensuring that institutions function within the spirit of the Constitution and not merely within its text.

Role of Constitutional Morality in the Sabarimala Case

1. Constitutional morality helps courts frame the correct constitutional questions in disputes involving competing rights and institutional autonomy.
2. In the Sabarimala case, it encourages examination of how liberty and equality can be balanced with the autonomy of religious institutions.
3. It also raises the question of whether exclusionary practices undermine the civic equality and dignity of certain groups.
4. Even when constitutional morality does not provide a definitive answer, it ensures that judicial reasoning remains anchored in constitutional values rather than social prejudices.

Constitutional Morality versus Societal Morality

1. Critics argue that constitutional morality is vague and imposed by courts from above, but societal morality is often even more indeterminate and resistant to rational scrutiny.
2. The invocation of societal morality in constitutional disputes can sometimes function as a device to protect entrenched social practices from constitutional examination.
3. Constitutional morality, by contrast, encourages courts to evaluate practices in light of constitutional commitments to freedom and equality.
4. This approach was evident in cases such as Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India, where constitutional values were used to test discriminatory social norms.

Constitutional Morality as a Standard to Evaluate the Judiciary

1. Constitutional morality also serves as a diagnostic framework for assessing the conduct and consistency of the judiciary itself.
2. It helps identify instances where arbitrariness in judicial processes weakens procedural discipline and predictability in constitutional interpretation.
3. It highlights situations where constitutional protections such as voting rights and freedom of expression appear to receive inconsistent judicial attention.
4. In this way, constitutional morality strengthens accountability within constitutional institutions rather than weakening them.

Concerns Regarding Reactionary Criticism of Constitutional Morality

1. Reactionary criticism of constitutional morality risks weakening constitutional reasoning by dismissing an important normative framework guiding adjudication.

2. Such criticism may create space for insulating social practices from constitutional scrutiny in the name of tradition or majoritarian preference.
3. It may also contribute to uncertainty in constitutional interpretation and undermine the protection of civic equality.
4. Therefore, questioning constitutional morality is legitimate, but rejecting it entirely reflects a misunderstanding of its role in constitutional governance.

Way Forward

1. The judiciary should clarify the scope and limits of constitutional morality so that it is used as a guiding interpretive principle rather than as an undefined substitute for legal reasoning.
2. Courts should ensure that constitutional morality is applied consistently to strengthen predictability and legitimacy in constitutional adjudication.
3. Parliament and constitutional institutions should work to restore a balanced relationship between judicial review and parliamentary sovereignty within the constitutional framework.
4. Legal discourse should focus on strengthening constitutional values such as liberty, equality, and institutional accountability instead of framing constitutional morality as opposed to societal traditions.
5. A principled use of constitutional morality should continue to serve as a safeguard against arbitrariness and as a framework for protecting civic equality in complex constitutional disputes.

Conclusion: Constitutional morality may not always provide direct solutions to constitutional conflicts, but it remains essential as a normative guide for evaluating institutional power and protecting constitutional values. Strengthening its careful and disciplined use can help ensure that constitutional governance remains anchored in liberty, equality, and reason rather than arbitrariness or social prejudice.

Question: Constitutional morality does not always provide direct judicial answers, but it offers a framework to evaluate institutional power and protect civic equality." Discuss with reference to debates around the Sabarimala case.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan

Source: The post "Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan" has been created, based on "Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan" published in "The Hindu" on 11th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International relations

Context: India's foreign policy in West Asia and Eurasia is increasingly shaped by strategic and security considerations arising from shifting geopolitical alignments. Recent diplomatic signalling toward Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects India's effort to respond to emerging regional partnerships affecting its national security environment. These developments indicate a move toward a more calibrated and interest-based engagement strategy in extended neighbourhood diplomacy.

Emerging Strategic Context Behind India's Diplomatic Signalling

1. India's diplomatic posture toward Turkey and Azerbaijan hardened after statements from these countries appeared supportive of Pakistan during recent security tensions involving India.
2. Azerbaijan's growing defence cooperation with Pakistan has raised concerns within India's strategic community.
3. Turkey's expanding military and political engagement with Pakistan has also contributed to India's reassessment of bilateral engagement priorities.
4. These developments suggest that extra-regional alignments are increasingly influencing India's diplomatic behaviour.

Diplomatic Signalling Through Selective Engagement

1. India's engagement patterns with certain countries shifted following their responses to India's security actions against terrorism infrastructure.
2. Public sentiment in India contributed to a visible decline in tourism flows to Turkey and Azerbaijan, reinforcing diplomatic signalling through societal channels.
3. Such developments demonstrate how domestic opinion increasingly interacts with foreign policy positioning in democratic states.

Strategic Importance of Armenia in India's Regional Approach

1. Armenia is emerging as an important partner for India in the Eurasian region due to converging strategic interests.
2. Strengthening ties with Armenia provides India with an opportunity to counterbalance expanding Turkey-Pakistan cooperation.
3. India's engagement with Armenia also reflects diversification of partnerships in sensitive geopolitical theatres.

Implications for India's Foreign Policy

1. These developments indicate that India is increasingly integrating security concerns into diplomatic engagement strategies.
2. India's foreign policy is gradually shifting toward reciprocity-based partnerships rather than purely historical or economic considerations.
3. India is signalling that support for adversarial positions on core security issues may influence the depth of bilateral engagement.
4. India is also attempting to build alternative strategic partnerships in Eurasia to protect its long-term geopolitical interests.

Challenges for India's Foreign Policy

1. India faces the challenge of balancing its engagement with Armenia while maintaining workable diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan.
2. India must carefully manage relations with Turkey, which remains an important regional power with influence across West Asia and Central Asia.
3. India's connectivity ambitions toward Eurasia may be affected if tensions with regional transit partners increase.
4. Excessive diplomatic distancing from certain countries could reduce India's leverage in multilateral regional platforms.

5. India must avoid allowing geopolitical signalling to negatively affect trade, energy cooperation, and diaspora interests in the region.
6. Managing public sentiment while maintaining strategic flexibility remains a major challenge in democratic foreign policy decision-making.

Way Forward

1. India should deepen defence and strategic cooperation with Armenia to strengthen its presence in Eurasian geopolitics.
2. India should continue calibrated diplomatic engagement with Turkey and Azerbaijan while clearly articulating its security concerns.
3. India should strengthen multilateral engagement through regional platforms to maintain balanced regional diplomacy.
4. India should integrate connectivity initiatives with strategic partnerships to secure long-term access to Eurasian markets.
5. India should continue protecting diaspora interests and ensuring safe evacuation corridors through diversified regional partnerships.
6. India should maintain a pragmatic foreign policy that balances strategic signalling with economic and geopolitical engagement.

Conclusion: India's evolving engagement with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects a pragmatic shift toward security-centred diplomacy in its extended neighbourhood. A balanced approach combining strategic partnerships, calibrated signalling, and sustained regional engagement will remain essential for safeguarding India's long-term geopolitical interests.

Question: India's recent diplomatic signalling involving Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects evolving strategic priorities in West Asia and Eurasia. Discuss the implications, challenges, and the way forward for India's foreign policy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Bolstering Deterrence through Submarine Dominance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Security challenges and their management in border areas .

Introduction

The mention of 'Aridhaman' by Rajnath Singh triggered speculation about the commissioning of India's third SSBN. This follows **INS Arihant (2016)** and **INS Arighat (2024)**. The development reflects India's steady effort to **strengthen sea-based nuclear capability**, which is central to enhancing deterrence in a rapidly changing strategic environment and evolving maritime security landscape.

Evolution of India's SSBN Programme

9 PM Compilation April 2026

1. **Early vision and institutional effort:** India began serious work in the late 1970s under Dr Rajaramanna with active involvement of BARC scientists and naval planners to develop nuclear-powered submarines.
2. **Technology learning through leasing:** The leasing of INS Chakra from the Soviet Union in 1988 provided **hands-on training, operational exposure, and a base for indigenous design development.**
3. **Indigenous ATV programme:** The Advance Technology Vessel programme focused on building **indigenous nuclear submarines**, with reactor development at BARC and assembly efforts linked to Kalpakkam, along with Russian design assistance.
4. **Operational progression of SSBNs:** India commissioned **INS Arihant in 2016** and **INS Arighat in 2024**, while **INS Aridhaman is in final trial stages**, and another Arihant-class submarine is expected to be commissioned next.
5. **Upgradation in submarine capability:** INS Aridhaman is a **7000-tonne submarine with higher firepower**, capable of carrying **24 K-15 missiles and 8 K-4/K-5 missiles**, compared to earlier submarines carrying **12 K-15 and 4 K-4 missiles.**

Strengthening Nuclear Triad and Sea-Based Deterrence

1. **Completion of nuclear triad capability:** India now has the ability to launch nuclear weapons from **land, air, and sea**, placing it alongside United States, Russia, China, France, and United Kingdom.
2. **Core principles of nuclear doctrine:** India's doctrine is based on **credibility, survivability, and effectiveness**, ensuring a strong retaliatory capability under its **'no first use' policy.**
3. **Critical importance of sea-based deterrence:** SSBNs provide **high survivability, endurance, flexibility, responsiveness, and connectivity**, making them the most reliable and secure component of deterrence.
4. **Strategic advantage over land-based systems:** Land-based missiles face **infrared detection risks, dependence on road and rail infrastructure, and deployment constraints**, while SSBNs remain hidden and survivable despite higher cost.
5. **Limitations of SSBN platforms:** SSBNs have **limited missile capacity (about 16-18), no immediate reload capability, and reliance on VLF communication systems**, which may be vulnerable but still allow partial connectivity.

Changing Strategic Environment and Multi-Domain Warfare

1. **Rising maritime competition:** Increasing presence of China in the Indian Ocean through research and survey vessels with dual-use capability raises **risks of surveillance and intelligence gathering**, along with concerns from Pakistan.
2. **Transformation of Indian Ocean dynamics:** The region has shifted from **relative dormancy to active strategic contestation**, making maritime deterrence a critical requirement.

3. **Nature of modern warfare:** Conflicts are no longer confined to a single domain and can shift quickly across **land, air, and sea**, requiring integrated deterrence capability.
4. **Global conflict example:** The West Asia conflict shows how air campaigns expanded into maritime tensions, with the **Strait of Hormuz becoming a key strategic point**.
5. **Indian operational experience:** Operation Sindoor demonstrated that even counter-terror responses can have a **potential naval dimension**, highlighting cross-domain interaction.

Self-Reliance and Future Trajectory of Submarine Programme

1. **Boost to defence self-reliance:** The SSBN programme has strengthened India's **indigenous defence production capability and technological base**.
2. **Impact of global conflicts on supply chains:** The Russia-Ukraine war has created **pressure on global defence supply chains**, increasing the need to reduce dependence on Russia.
3. **Future expansion of submarine fleet:** India plans to induct a **fourth Arihant-class submarine** and aims to commission **indigenous SSNs by 2036 and 2038**.
4. **Strategic importance of submarine dominance:** Submarine capability is emerging as a **central pillar of India's deterrence strategy**, and supports the goal of achieving a **blue-water navy and enhanced strategic status**.
5. **Emerging technological and resource challenges:** India must balance **financial resources with expansion needs**, while integrating **Artificial Intelligence and autonomous systems** in submarine design and production, and keeping pace with China's naval growth.

Conclusion

INS Aridhman strengthens India's **credible, survivable, and effective nuclear deterrence capability**. Sea-based deterrence has become essential in a **multi-domain and contested strategic environment**. The continued focus on indigenous development and submarine expansion reflects a clear strategic direction. Going forward, **balancing resources, adopting advanced technologies, ensuring survivable communication, and matching China's capabilities** will be critical for maintaining deterrence and long-term strategic stability.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's SSBN programme, particularly the development of INS Aridhman, strengthens nuclear deterrence and responds to the changing strategic and multi-domain security environment.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tourism Renaissance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

Union Budget 2026–27 marks a **shift from sporadic interventions to a structured, multi-dimensional tourism policy framework** aligned with *Viksit Bharat@2047*. Tourism is now treated as a **civilisational asset and growth engine**, not a peripheral sector. It highlights tourism's role in **employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and expansion of the local economy**, signalling a major transformation in governance.

India's Tourism Potential

1. **Global Standing and Resource Strength:** India ranks **39th globally (WEF 2024)**, improving from **54th in 2021**, and is among the **top 10 in Natural (6th), Cultural (9th), and Non-Leisure Resources (9th)**, showing strong structural advantages.
2. **Economic Contribution:** Tourism contributes **USD 256 billion to the economy**, reflecting its major economic role.
3. **Employment Generation:** It supports **48 million jobs (9.1% of total employment)**, making it a large employment sector.
4. **High Job Multiplier:** Tourism generates **3.5 times more jobs per rupee invested**, making it highly inclusive.
5. **Core Structural Gap:** The main issue is **poor conversion of resources into global tourism outcomes**, not lack of assets.
6. **Policy Recognition:** Tourism is now officially seen as a **"growth engine"**, aligning policy with economic reality.

Experiential & Heritage Transformation

1. **Shift to Experience Economy:** Tourism policy now focuses on **curated and immersive experiences**, where economic value comes from meaningful engagement rather than passive visits.
2. **Archaeological Site Development:** **15 sites such as Lothal, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Sarnath, Hastinapur, and Leh Palace** will be developed into **immersive cultural destinations**, marking a shift in heritage governance.
3. **Buddhist Circuit Expansion:** Development across **six northeastern states** targets a **global Buddhist tourism market**, especially from Japan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and China.
4. **Civilisational Assertion:** Sites like **Rakhigarhi, larger than Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa combined**, position India's heritage as a **global civilisational narrative**.

Ecosystem Strengthening: Human Capital & Diversification

1. **Institutional Capacity Building:** **NCHMCT Noida upgraded into a National Institute of Hospitality**, creating a stronger link between academia, industry, and governance.
2. **Human Interface Improvement:** **10,000 guides trained through IIM partnerships across 20 sites**, improving tourist experience, which depends on direct interaction.

3. **Medical Tourism Development: Five Regional Medical Hubs** combine AYUSH, diagnostics, and PPP models.
4. **Global Market Opportunity:** Medical tourism is a **USD 100 billion global market**, where India has strong advantages.
5. **Sector Diversification:** Promotion of **eco-tourism, wildlife tourism, and nature trails** expands tourism beyond traditional models.

Inclusive & Sustainable Tourism Governance

1. **Sustainability as Market Driver:** Over **70% of global travellers consider sustainability**, making eco-friendly tourism economically important.
2. **Nature and Wildlife Tourism Focus:** Development of **mountain and nature trails across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, J&K, Araku Valley, and Podhigai Malai**, along with the **Global Big Cat Summit 2026 (95 countries)**, strengthens India's global wildlife tourism position.
3. **Biodiversity Advantage:** India hosts **5 of the world's 7 big cat species**, strengthening its tourism appeal.
4. **Inclusive Tourism Measures:** **MUDRA loans for homestays** promote local participation in tourism.
5. **Accessible Tourism Focus:** **Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana** targets a **USD 58 billion global accessible tourism market**.
6. **Regional Decentralisation:** Focus on **Purvodaya States with 4,000 electric buses under East Coast Industrial Corridor** spreads tourism benefits beyond traditional regions.

Way Forward

1. **Need for Coordinated Implementation:** Effective outcomes require **strong multi-ministry coordination**, as tourism involves infrastructure, culture, and environment.
2. **Infrastructure and Accessibility Gaps:** Improving **last-mile connectivity and tourist infrastructure** is essential to convert potential into experience.
3. **Learning from Global Models:** Approaches similar to **Japan's Tourism Vision, Saudi Vision 2030, and Indonesia's "10 Bali's"** show the importance of structured execution and diversification.
4. **Missing Dimension for Better Conversion:** Stronger focus on **digital enablement and global positioning** is needed to fully utilise India's tourism potential.

Conclusion

Budget 2026–27 provides a **coherent and multi-dimensional tourism framework** with allocation rising to **₹2,438.4 crore from ₹1,310 crore**. It integrates **economic growth, cultural identity, sustainability, and inclusion**. The shift from untapped potential to structured execution marks India's transition toward becoming a **global tourism leader and a civilisational destination**.

Question for practice:

Examine how Union Budget 2026–27 marks a tourism renaissance in India by transforming tourism governance into a structured, multi-dimensional policy framework for inclusive growth and global competitiveness.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project

Source: The post “**Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project**” has been created, based on “**Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 13th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The ₹92,000-crore mega-infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island aims to develop the island into a major port-led trade and tourism hub anchored by an International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP). The project is strategically located near the western entrance of the Malacca Strait, which makes it crucial for India’s maritime security, trade competitiveness, and Indo-Pacific strategy. However, the project has generated concerns regarding ecological sustainability and the protection of indigenous tribal rights.

Strategic and Economic Significance of the Project

1. The project will help India capture a greater share of global container transshipment traffic and reduce dependence on foreign ports such as Singapore and Colombo.
2. The development of an International Container Transshipment Port will strengthen India’s logistics competitiveness and enhance its integration into global maritime trade networks.
3. The project will improve India’s strategic presence near one of the world’s busiest shipping routes, thereby strengthening maritime domain awareness and naval preparedness.
4. The project will support India’s Act East Policy by improving connectivity with Southeast Asian economies.
5. The development of tourism infrastructure, such as seaside tourism, biodiversity tourism, and adventure tourism, will generate large-scale employment opportunities in the region.
6. The project will also improve social infrastructure on the island through investments in healthcare, education, transport, and energy facilities.
7. The project is expected to support long-term regional development by accommodating a projected population increase to over 3.36 lakh by 2055.

Ecological and Social Concerns Associated with the Project

1. The project poses risks to the fragile island ecosystem, including tropical forests and coastal biodiversity that are highly sensitive to large-scale infrastructure development.
2. The construction activities associated with ports, airports, and tourism infrastructure may lead to irreversible environmental degradation in an ecologically vulnerable region.
3. The project has raised concerns regarding the displacement and rehabilitation of indigenous communities such as the Nicobarese and the Shompen.
4. The affected tribal communities have expressed concerns that their forest rights have not been fully settled before project clearances.
5. The proposed relocation plans for local communities have created uncertainty because of contradictions between different draft planning documents.

6. The large-scale projected demographic transformation of the island may threaten the cultural identity and traditional lifestyles of indigenous populations.
7. Although the National Green Tribunal has cited strategic importance while addressing environmental concerns, legal challenges to project clearances remain pending before the Calcutta High Court.
8. Some experts have also questioned the long-term commercial viability of the transshipment port given competition from established regional ports.

Way Forward

1. The government should ensure meaningful consultation with indigenous communities in accordance with constitutional safeguards and principles of participatory governance.
2. The implementation of the project should be supported by robust environmental impact assessments and independent ecological monitoring mechanisms.
3. The project should adopt a phased development approach to balance infrastructure expansion with environmental sustainability.
4. The government should ensure clarity and transparency in rehabilitation and relocation plans for affected communities.
5. The development strategy should promote sustainable tourism models that minimise ecological damage while generating employment opportunities.
6. The government should build a wider consensus among stakeholders to ensure that strategic objectives are achieved without compromising environmental integrity and tribal rights.

Conclusion: The Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project offers India an important opportunity to strengthen its maritime trade position and strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the long-term success of the project depends on balancing national strategic interests with ecological sustainability and protection of indigenous communities through consensus-based development.

Question: The Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project represents both a strategic opportunity and an ecological challenge for India. Examine its significance and concerns, and suggest a balanced way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Closing the representation gap

Source: The post “Closing the representation gap” has been created, based on “Closing the representation gap” published in “Indian Express” on 13th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam provides for **one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies**, thereby addressing a long-standing structural gap in political representation. The Act represents a major constitutional step toward achieving **gender equality in democratic decision-making institutions**.

Need for Women’s Reservation in Legislatures

1. India continues to face significant underrepresentation of women in legislatures despite improvements in women’s education, economic participation, and social empowerment.
2. Women constituted only about **13.6% of the Lok Sabha members in 2024**, which reflects a decline from earlier levels and highlights the persistence of gender imbalance.
3. Women account for only about **9% of Members of Legislative Assemblies across States**, indicating a wider representation gap at the sub-national level.

4. India ranks low globally in women's parliamentary representation compared to the global average of around 27%.
5. The mismatch between women's increasing socio-economic contributions and their limited political participation necessitates structural corrective measures.

Significance of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

1. Strengthening political equality

- a. The Act institutionalises gender equality in political representation by ensuring constitutionally guaranteed participation of women in legislative bodies.
- b. It reflects India's transition from welfare-based approaches to **women-led development frameworks**.

2. Building on successful local-level reservation experience

- a. The success of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act demonstrates that reservations have significantly increased women's participation in grassroots governance.
- b. Nearly **46% of elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions are women**, which shows the effectiveness of reservation as a policy instrument.

3. Improving governance outcomes

- a. Studies have shown that women representatives often prioritise sectors such as **healthcare, education, sanitation, and drinking water**, thereby improving social sector outcomes.
- b. Women's leadership has also been associated with greater transparency and reduced corruption at local governance levels.

4. Creating a political leadership pipeline

- a. Reservation at the grassroots level has helped create a pool of experienced women leaders who can gradually move into State and national legislatures.
- b. The Act strengthens this upward mobility pipeline in political leadership.

5. Enhancing democratic legitimacy

- a. Greater representation of women strengthens participatory democracy by ensuring that legislatures better reflect India's demographic composition.
- b. It improves the inclusiveness and responsiveness of policymaking institutions.

Challenges in Implementation

1. Dependence on delimitation exercise: The implementation of the Act is contingent upon completion of the delimitation exercise, which may delay operationalisation of reservations.

2. Rotation of reserved constituencies: The rotation mechanism may discourage long-term constituency development by elected representatives due to uncertainty regarding future electoral eligibility.

3. Proxy representation risks: There remains a possibility that women representatives may initially function as proxies for male family members in some regions.

4. Structural barriers within political parties: Political parties often hesitate to nominate women candidates even where opportunities exist, which reflects persistent institutional biases.

5. Need for capacity building: Newly elected representatives may require institutional training and leadership support to effectively participate in legislative processes.

Way Forward

1. The government should expedite the delimitation process to ensure the timely implementation of reservation provisions.
2. Political parties should voluntarily increase women's candidature beyond the constitutional minimum requirement.
3. Capacity-building programmes should be strengthened through parliamentary training institutions and leadership development initiatives.
4. Greater investment should be made in supporting women's political participation through financial assistance and mentorship networks.
5. Public awareness campaigns should be promoted to encourage acceptance of women's leadership in political institutions.

Conclusion: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam represents a historic constitutional reform aimed at correcting gender imbalance in India's legislative institutions. Its effective implementation will ensure that women are not only participants in India's development journey but also equal partners in shaping national policy and democratic governance.

Question: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam seeks to address the structural underrepresentation of women in legislatures in India. Examine its significance and discuss the challenges in its implementation.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

To ensure food security amid war clouds, government must reform fertiliser policy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Agriculture

Introduction

Global conflicts such as US–Iran–Israel tensions and the Russia–Ukraine war highlight growing uncertainty in global supply chains. **India faces a major risk due to its ~70% dependence on fertiliser imports and rising global prices.** Food security depends directly on fertiliser availability, and disruptions can affect agricultural output. Natural farming cannot meet large-scale demand. **This situation makes fertiliser policy reform essential to ensure stable supply, efficient use, and long-term food security in the country.**

Strategic Importance of Fertilisers in Indian Agriculture

1. **Critical input for crop productivity:** Fertilisers, along with seeds and irrigation, are essential for higher yields and stable food production.
2. **Economic backbone of agriculture:** Agriculture contributes ~16% to GDP and supports ~46% of the population, making fertilisers vital for livelihoods.

3. **Role in food self-reliance:** Increased fertiliser use after the Green Revolution helped India achieve near self-sufficiency in food production.
4. **India's global standing:** India is the second-largest consumer and third-largest producer of fertilisers, showing its large-scale dependence.
5. **Growth in production capacity:** Fertiliser production rose from 385.39 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) to 503.35 LMT, with 76.2 LMT new capacity added, strengthening domestic supply.

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 CO₂** 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.

Impact of Global Conflicts on Prices and Subsidy Burden

1. **Sharp rise in urea prices:** Urea prices increased by 65% from \$482 to \$795/tonne during conflict period. This directly increases import cost.

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2. **Increase in LNG prices:** Gas prices rose by 63% from \$12 to \$19.5/MMBtu, raising production costs. This affects both domestic and imported fertilisers.
3. **Rise in DAP prices:** DAP prices increased by 15% from \$627 to \$720/tonne. This impacts availability of phosphatic fertilisers.
4. **Supply disruptions from key regions:** Limited access from Strait of Hormuz and Gulf countries creates supply uncertainty. This affects timely availability of fertilisers.
5. **Rising subsidy burden:** Fertiliser subsidy increased to ₹1,91,836 crore, creating fiscal pressure. Government absorbs global price shocks.
6. **Price protection for farmers:** Urea price remains fixed at ₹242 per 45 kg bag since 2018. This ensures affordability but increases subsidy burden.

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 Namo 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.

Way Forward

1. **Rationalisation of urea supply:** Reduce supply by 10–15% and allocate based on land records, crop patterns, and recommended doses.
2. **Quantitative rationing mechanism:** Use Essential Commodities Act to ensure controlled and efficient fertiliser distribution.
3. **Direct benefit transfer reform:** Provide subsidy directly to farmers on per-acre basis and include tenants who are currently excluded.
4. **Correction of pricing distortions:** Align fertiliser pricing with efficiency to reduce overuse and diversion.
5. **Shift towards balanced fertilisation:** Promote use of phosphorus through TSP and reduce excess nitrogen usage.
6. **Promote domestic production of alternatives:** Incentivise TSP production and collaborate with phosphatic-rich countries.
7. **Identification of real cultivators:** Accurate identification of landowners and tenants is necessary for effective DBT implementation.

Conclusion

India must treat fertiliser policy as central to food security in an uncertain global environment. **High import dependence, rising prices, and inefficient use create serious risks for agriculture.** Rational pricing, balanced nutrient use, and better targeting of subsidies are essential. **Timely reforms can reduce misuse, improve efficiency, lower fiscal burden, and ensure stable and sustainable food production.**

Question for practice:

Evaluate the need for fertiliser policy reforms in India to ensure food security amid rising global conflicts and supply uncertainties.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Tapping Fisheries in Reservoirs

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Tapping fisheries in reservoirs has emerged as a key strategy in Budget 2026–27, which proposes integrated development of **500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars** to increase fish farmers' income. India is now the **second-largest fish producer globally**, with **197.75 lakh tonnes production**, and **75% coming from inland fisheries**, making reservoirs a critical resource for livelihood, food security, and economic growth.

Current Status of India's Fisheries Sector

- 1. Production growth and global position:** India has become the **second-largest fish and aquaculture producer**, with production rising by **106% since 2013–14 to 197.75 lakh tonnes (2024–25)**.
- 2. Dominance of inland fisheries:** About **75% of total production** comes from inland fisheries including freshwater, brackish, and saline water resources.
- 3. Economic contribution and growth rate:** The sector has recorded an average growth of **7.87% since 2014–15**, with GVA increasing from **₹98,190 crore to ₹3.41 lakh crore**.
- 4. Employment and livelihood support:** Fisheries support nearly **3 crore livelihoods**, including **over 50 lakh coastal community members**.
- 5. Export performance:** Seafood exports have doubled from **₹30,213 crore to ₹62,408 crore**, strengthening India's global presence.

Significance of Reservoir Fisheries

- 1. Large resource base:** Reservoirs cover **31.5 lakh hectares**, producing around **18 lakh tonnes of fish**, showing high untapped potential.
- 2. Regional importance:** These reservoirs are mainly located in **eastern, central, and peninsular regions**, supporting local economies.
- 3. Livelihood support in vulnerable areas:** Reservoir fisheries provide **direct and indirect employment in economically backward and water-scarce regions**.
- 4. State-wise distribution:** **Madhya Pradesh has the largest reservoir area (~6 lakh ha)**, while **Tamil Nadu has over 8,000 reservoirs**.
- 5. Food security and nutrition:** These fisheries contribute to **affordable protein supply** and improve food availability.

Development of India's Fisheries Sector

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1. **Improvement in productivity:** Reservoir productivity increased from **50 kg/ha (2006) to 100 kg/ha**, showing effective technological adoption.
2. **Role of cage culture technology:** Floating or stationary cages allow **natural water flow, better oxygen exchange, and efficient feeding and monitoring.**
3. **Species diversification:** Stocking includes **Indian major carps (Catla, Rohu, Mrigal)** along with **Tilapia and Pangasius** based on need.
4. **Design and efficiency of cages:** Cages made of **synthetic mesh** are anchored or buoyed, ensuring stability and ease of disease management.
5. **Potential for higher productivity:** Studies show productivity can increase up to **300 kg/ha**, indicating scope for further growth.

Government Initiatives

1. **Budgetary support and schemes:** Budget 2026–27 provides **₹2,761.80 crore**, with **₹2,530 crore for schemes**, and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana receiving **₹2,500 crore.**
2. **Integrated reservoir development:** Focus on **500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars** to improve income and strengthen the fisheries value chain.
3. **Mission Amrit Sarovar expansion:** **68,827 ponds developed**, including **1,222 used for fisheries**, each with **minimum 1 acre area and 10,000 m³ capacity.**
4. **Cluster-based approach:** National Fisheries Development Board is implementing clusters like **Halalai and Indra Sagar dams** to improve efficiency and scale.
5. **Value chain strengthening:** Development includes **hatcheries, feed mills, storage, ice plants, auction centres, and transport systems.**
6. **Support to institutions and startups:** Around **200 start-ups supported** and **34 clusters developed**, benefiting nearly **50 lakh people.**
7. **Export promotion measures:** Duty-free fish catch in **EEZ and high seas**, and increase in duty-free import limit from **1% to 3%** for processing inputs.

Challenges Remains

1. **Fragmented governance:** Multiple agencies control fishing rights, creating **data and management challenges.**
2. **Infrastructure gaps:** Lack of **cold storage, transport, and processing facilities** affects value addition.
3. **Limited market access:** Weak linkages reduce **price realisation for fish farmers.**

4. **Need for skill and technology adoption:** Capacity-building and training are required for **efficient use of modern technologies**.
5. **Underutilised productivity potential:** Current productivity is **100 kg/ha**, while potential is **300 kg/ha**, showing a large gap.

Conclusion

Tapping reservoir fisheries offers strong potential for **income generation, food security, and export growth**. With **higher budget allocation, value chain development, and cluster-based strategies**, the sector can achieve higher productivity and efficiency. Strengthening infrastructure, institutions, and market linkages will be key to ensuring **sustainable growth and livelihood security** in line with **Viksit Bharat@2047 vision**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the integrated development of reservoir fisheries, supported by Budget 2026–27 initiatives, can enhance productivity, livelihoods, and value chain efficiency in India's fisheries sector.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)

Source: The post "**National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)**" has been created, based on "**National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)**" published in "**PIB**" on **14th April 2026**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading platform launched in April 2016 to integrate Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis into a unified national agricultural market. The platform aims to improve price discovery, enhance transparency, promote inter-state agricultural trade, and increase farmers' access to competitive markets through digital technology. The initiative represents a major step toward achieving the vision of "One Nation, One Market" in agricultural marketing.

Key Achievements of e-NAM

1. As of March 2026, a total of **1,656 mandis across 23 States and 4 Union Territories** have been integrated with the e-NAM platform.
2. More than **1.80 crore farmers, 2.73 lakh traders, and 4,724 Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs)** have been registered on the platform.
3. The platform has facilitated cumulative trade of **13.25 crore metric tonnes of agricultural produce worth ₹4.84 lakh crore** between 2016 and March 2026.
4. The trade value increased significantly from **₹3.19 lakh crore in 2024 to ₹4.84 lakh crore in 2026**, which reflects deeper market engagement.
5. The mobile application provides price information for **247 commodities**, which helps farmers make informed marketing decisions.
6. The government provides financial assistance of up to **₹75 lakh per mandi** to strengthen digital infrastructure under the platform.

Key Features of e-NAM

1. Digital end-to-end agricultural marketing platform

- a. The e-NAM portal enables digital gate entry, lot creation with unique identifiers, quality assaying, online bidding, price discovery, and direct electronic payment to farmers.
- b. The platform provides real-time dashboards displaying commodity-wise arrivals, mandi-level price trends, and trade flows across states.

2. Promotion of inter-state agricultural trade

- a. The platform enables traders to participate in inter-state bidding through unified licensing systems.
- b. The platform helps farmers access a wider pool of buyers beyond their local mandis.

3. Mobile application support

- a. The e-NAM mobile application allows farmers and traders to access price information and trading services from remote locations.
- b. The application improves accessibility of market information through multilingual interfaces.

4. Platform of Platforms (PoP)

- a. The Platform of Platforms integrates logistics, warehousing, grading, packaging, crop advisory, financial services, insurance services, and weather updates into one digital interface.
- b. The platform strengthens linkages across the agricultural value chain.

5. Digital payment ecosystem

- a. The e-NAM platform supports electronic payment through UPI, NEFT, RTGS, and internet banking.
- b. The platform ensures the timely, secure, and transparent transfer of sale proceeds directly into farmers' bank accounts.

6. Integration with warehouse receipt system

- a. The Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) system enables farmers to store produce in accredited warehouses and sell it later through the e-NAM platform.
- b. The integration reduces post-harvest losses, minimises distress sales, and allows farmers to access institutional credit using warehouse receipts as collateral.

Benefits of e-NAM

1. Improved price discovery: The platform enables transparent price discovery through competitive online bidding across multiple markets. Farmers receive better remuneration due to access to a larger number of buyers.

2. Reduction in role of intermediaries: The platform reduces dependence on middlemen and commission agents in agricultural marketing. Farmers gain stronger bargaining power in price negotiations.

3. Increased transparency in agricultural markets: The platform improves transparency through real-time price information and digital tracking of transactions. The system reduces malpractices and cartelization among traders.

4. Expansion of market access: Farmers gain access to national-level markets beyond their local mandis. Farmer-Producer Organisations benefit from collective marketing opportunities.

5. Promotion of digital payments and financial inclusion: Direct electronic payment improves transaction security and reduces delays. Digital transaction records improve farmers' access to institutional credit.

6. Promotion of quality-based trading: The availability of assaying facilities encourages grading-based pricing of agricultural commodities. Quality-based trading improves trust between buyers and sellers.

7. Reduction in transaction costs: The platform reduces multiple handling charges and market fees through digital integration. Farmers benefit from lower transaction risks and improved efficiency.

Challenges in Implementation of e-NAM

1. Digital literacy constraints

- a. Many farmers lack adequate digital literacy to effectively use registration, lot identification, assaying, and online bidding services.
- b. Small and marginal farmers face difficulties in using smartphones and internet-based platforms.

2. Infrastructure limitations

- a. Poor internet connectivity in rural areas limits effective participation on the platform.
- b. Inadequate grading of laboratories, storage facilities, and rural transport infrastructure reduces operational efficiency.

3. Fragmentation of APMC regulations

- a. Differences in state-level mandi regulations and licensing systems continue to restrict seamless inter-state trade.
- b. Multiple market fees and commissions increase transaction costs.

4. Limited trader participation

- a. In some mandis, participation of traders remains limited, which reduces competition in price discovery.
- b. Cartelization among traders still exists in certain local markets.

5. Lack of awareness among farmers

- a. Many farmers are not fully aware of the benefits and operational features of the platform.
- b. Inadequate extension support and weak advertisement campaigns affect adoption levels.

6. Trust deficit in digital payment systems

- a. Some farmers prefer cash payments to meet immediate consumption needs.
- b. Farmers sometimes fear deduction of loan repayments from bank-transferred sale proceeds.

7. Operational complexity: Farmers often find the registration process and e-auction procedures complex during the initial stages of adoption.

Way Forward

1. Strengthening digital infrastructure

- a. The government should improve rural internet connectivity and ensure access to affordable digital devices for farmers.
- b. Digital service centres should be expanded at the village level to support platform usage.

2. Expanding awareness and training programs

- a. Targeted awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate farmers about registration, assaying, bidding, and payment procedures.
- b. Capacity-building programs should be organised particularly for small and marginal farmers.

3. Reforming APMC regulations

- a. Greater harmonisation of state-level APMC laws is required to enable seamless inter-state agricultural trade.
- b. A unified licensing system should be strengthened further.

4. Improving market infrastructure

- a. The government should expand grading laboratories, warehouses, cold storage facilities, and logistics networks.
- b. Strengthening post-harvest infrastructure will improve the efficiency of digital agricultural trade.

5. Increasing participation of traders and private players

- a. Incentives should be provided to increase trader participation on the platform.
- b. Greater integration with private agri-market platforms and e-commerce players should be promoted.

6. Strengthening the role of Farmer-Producer Organisations

- a. Farmer-Producer Organisations should be encouraged to aggregate produce and participate actively in digital trading.
- b. Institutional support should be provided to enhance their market linkages.

Conclusion: The e-NAM platform represents a transformative reform in agricultural marketing by improving transparency, expanding market access, and promoting digital payments across mandis. Continued investment in infrastructure, digital literacy, institutional reforms, and stakeholder participation will help the platform significantly improve farmers' income and strengthen the agricultural marketing ecosystem in India.

Question: The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a major step toward the digital transformation of agricultural marketing in India. Discuss its achievements, benefits, challenges, and suggest measures to improve its effectiveness.

Source: [PIB](#)

Why do FPIs keep selling?

Source: The post “Why do FPIs keep selling?” has been created, based on “Why do FPIs keep selling?” published in “Business Standard” on 14th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have withdrawn more than **\$45 billion since October 2024**, and their ownership in Indian equities has fallen to a **15-year low**. The reasons are largely structural, valuation-based, and global portfolio allocation-driven.

The reason behind FPIs continuing to sell Indian equities

1. High valuation premium of Indian markets

- a. FPIs believe that Indian equity markets continue to trade at nearly a **50 percent premium compared to emerging market averages**.
- b. Investors question why they should invest in India at **high valuation multiples with moderate earnings growth of 10–15 percent**.
- c. The valuation compression since 2024 indicates declining investor confidence in future growth expectations.

2. Availability of alternative investment destinations globally

- a. Earlier, India was seen as the most attractive emerging market investment destination.
- b. However, investors are now reallocating funds toward markets such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil.
- c. These markets currently offer **lower valuations and stronger sectoral earnings prospects**, especially in the technology and manufacturing sectors.

3. Revival of investment attractiveness in China

- a. Global investors earlier avoided China due to geopolitical risks and regulatory uncertainty.
- b. However, renewed policy stability and leadership in sectors such as **electric vehicles, renewables, robotics, and artificial intelligence** have improved investor confidence.
- c. As a result, portfolio flows have partially shifted back toward China.

4. Concerns regarding moderate earnings growth in India

- a. Many investors believe that India’s corporate earnings growth is structurally limited to **10–15 percent annually**.
- b. Major sectors such as **IT services, private banking, consumer staples, and pharmaceuticals** are not showing strong acceleration in earnings growth.

- c. Investors are therefore questioning the sustainability of India's earlier "high growth premium".

5. Limited presence in sunrise technology sectors

- a. Investors perceive that India does not yet dominate any major global sunrise sector such as **semiconductors, advanced artificial intelligence, or robotics**.
- b. Even traditional strengths such as IT services face disruption risks from artificial intelligence automation.
- c. This weakens India's long-term innovation narrative in global portfolios.

6. Slower-than-expected progress in manufacturing expansion

- a. Global investors expected India to benefit strongly from the **China-plus-one strategy**.
- b. However, manufacturing inflows from multinational corporations have grown more slowly than expected.
- c. As a result, foreign direct investment flows have remained relatively stagnant.

7. Regulatory and ease-of-doing-business concerns

- a. Investors continue to perceive India as a complex regulatory environment with tax uncertainties.
- b. These concerns become more important when returns moderate.
- c. FPIs, therefore, prefer markets with simpler regulatory systems.

8. Artificial intelligence risks to India's service-led growth model

- a. India's competitive advantage has historically been based on skilled white-collar labour.
- b. Artificial intelligence threatens the **billable-hours model of IT services exports**.
- c. This creates uncertainty regarding long-term earnings sustainability.

9. Relative underperformance versus emerging markets

- a. Indian equity markets have underperformed emerging market indices by nearly **5,000 basis points**.
- b. Such relative underperformance encourages global investors to rebalance portfolios toward better-performing regions.

10. Portfolio rebalancing after earlier overweight positions

- a. India earlier represented a large share of emerging market allocations because investors had limited alternatives.
- b. As other emerging markets improved their attractiveness, investors reduced their overweight exposure to India.
- c. This adjustment led to sustained FPI outflows.

Reason behind domestic markets remaining stable despite FPI selling

1. Strong participation from domestic institutional investors has supported market stability.
2. Rising retail investor participation through mutual funds and SIPs has offset foreign selling pressures.
3. India's macroeconomic stability continues to provide a cushion against volatility.

Way forward to restore FPI confidence

1. Strengthening the innovation ecosystem

- a. India should increase investment in **research and development and advanced technology sectors**.
- b. Policy support for semiconductor manufacturing and AI industries should be expanded.

2. Accelerating manufacturing competitiveness

- a. Faster implementation of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes can attract multinational companies.
- b. Infrastructure improvements should reduce logistics costs.

3. Improving ease of doing business

- a. Simplifying taxation systems and regulatory compliance will improve investor sentiment.
- b. Faster dispute resolution mechanisms can enhance confidence.

4. Expanding capital market depth

- a. Encouraging the listing of new-age technology companies can diversify market composition.
- b. Deeper corporate bond markets can strengthen financial stability.

5. Maintaining macroeconomic stability: Sustained GDP growth, fiscal discipline, and inflation control remain essential for restoring investor confidence.

Conclusion: FPI selling from India is largely driven by **valuation concerns, global portfolio reallocation, moderate earnings expectations, and technology-sector competitiveness issues**. However, strong domestic participation and India's long-term structural growth potential suggest that the current negative sentiment may be cyclical rather than permanent.

Question: Why have Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) been reducing their investments in India despite strong domestic flows? Examine the reasons and suggest measures to restore investor confidence.

Source: [Business Standards](#)

The Fallout of the West Asia Crisis on India's Economy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the West Asia crisis have disrupted global energy supply chains. A partial blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has affected crude oil, gas and fertilizer flows. Prices have risen sharply. Even after a temporary ceasefire, supply chains may take time to stabilise. India, with nearly **90% import dependence on crude**, faces serious economic risks.

Mechanisms of Transmission of the Crisis to India

1. **Energy price shock:** Global crude prices increased sharply, and this was reflected in the Indian crude basket, which rose by **over 64.5% in March 2026 compared to February**. This shows that India is directly affected by global price movements.
2. **High import dependence:** India imports crude oil from **41 countries**, but its dependence has reached nearly **90%**, making it highly vulnerable to external shocks and supply disruptions.
3. **Supply chain disruptions:** Disruptions in production, storage and transport of crude oil, gas and fertilizers have reduced availability of key inputs, affecting multiple sectors of the economy.
4. **Rising logistics costs:** Transport and storage require large amounts of energy, so higher fuel prices increase logistics costs. This leads to higher prices of final goods across sectors.
5. **Financial transmission pressures:** Global uncertainty has triggered capital outflows and increased demand for dollars, which has weakened the rupee and increased import costs further.

Domestic Economic Implications on Production, Agriculture and Prices

1. **Impact on energy-intensive sectors:** Industries such as textiles, chemicals, fertilizers, cement and tyres depend heavily on energy inputs. Supply disruptions increase their production costs and reduce output.
2. **Cascading effects across industries:** Disruptions in key sectors spread to other industries through supply chains, affecting overall industrial production and economic activity.
3. **Agricultural impact through fertilizers:** Shortage of fertilizers and chemicals may reduce agricultural productivity. This is critical as the **Kharif season begins in June**, making timely availability essential.
4. **Cost-push inflation across sectors:** Higher input and logistics costs increase the prices of goods and services. This leads to inflation, especially in sectors directly linked to energy.

External Sector Implications on Trade, Exchange Rate and Remittances

1. **Export slowdown due to global conditions:** India's exports are affected by disruptions in West Asia and slowdown in major economies like the U.S. and Europe, reducing demand for Indian goods.
2. **High dependence on West Asia markets:** West Asia accounts for **16.4% of India's merchandise exports (2024-25)**, so instability in the region directly affects export performance.
3. **Exchange rate depreciation pressures:** Rising import bills due to high crude prices increase demand for dollars. This puts pressure on the rupee, leading to depreciation.
4. **Capital outflows worsening currency weakness:** Net FPI outflows of **\$13.6 billion in March 2026** reflect investor uncertainty. This further weakens the rupee and affects financial stability.

5. **Declining remittances from Gulf countries:** Many Indians work in Gulf countries, and economic slowdown there may reduce remittance inflows. This adds pressure on India's external balance.

Macroeconomic Implications on Growth, Inflation, Fiscal Balance and Current Account

1. **Widening current account deficit:** Rising import bills and falling export earnings increase the current account deficit. This weakens the overall external position of the economy.
2. **Rising inflationary pressures:** Increase in prices of petroleum products, fertilizers and other inputs leads to cost-push inflation. If liquidity increases, inflationary pressure may spread further.
3. **Growth slowdown due to high crude prices:** According to RBI estimates, every **10% rise in crude price reduces GDP growth by about 15 basis points**, indicating a strong negative impact.
4. **Inflation increase due to price pass-through:** The same increase in crude prices raises inflation by **30 basis points**, showing that price shocks directly affect consumers.
5. **Severe macroeconomic impact scenario:** With crude at **\$120.28 per barrel**, GDP growth may fall by about **1 percentage point**, while inflation may rise by **more than 2 percentage points**.
6. **Fiscal stress due to subsidies and revenue loss:** Government may need to increase subsidies for petroleum, fertilizers and food. At the same time, reduced excise duties lower revenue.
7. **Large revenue loss estimates:** The net loss is about **₹5,500 crore per fortnight**, which can lead to an annual loss of **₹1.32 lakh crore** if the crisis continues.
8. **Pressure on state finances:** Lower economic activity reduces tax collections and devolution. States may also need to cut VAT on fuel, increasing fiscal stress.

Way Forward

1. **Allowing fuel price adjustment:** Retail fuel prices should be increased when global crude prices remain high. This helps reduce subsidy burden and fiscal pressure.
2. **Avoiding excess liquidity expansion:** Increasing liquidity in the system may worsen inflation. Hence, monetary discipline is required to control price rise.
3. **Reconsidering tax reductions on fuel:** Reduction in excise duty leads to large revenue losses. It needs to be reviewed carefully based on fiscal needs.
4. **Rising subsidy burden pressure:** Food, fertilizer and petroleum subsidies are expected to exceed budget estimates, increasing fiscal stress.

Conclusion

The West Asia crisis has created **wide-ranging economic challenges** for India through energy shocks, supply disruptions and financial instability. It affects production, inflation, trade and fiscal balance simultaneously. The extent of impact depends on how long the crisis continues. A quick resolution may reduce pressures, but a prolonged crisis can significantly slow growth and increase inflation in the economy.

Question for practice:

Discuss the economic impact of the West Asia crisis on India through its transmission channels and macroeconomic consequences..

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India Moving Up the Pharma Value Chain

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

India has emerged as the “Pharmacy of the World” through affordable and quality generic medicines. However, biologics, biosimilars, and specialty drugs now account for over 40% of global pharmaceutical revenues. This shift is pushing India to move up the pharma value chain towards innovation and high-value therapeutics. Government policies are now focused on building scientific capacity, strengthening research, and expanding advanced manufacturing, while ensuring affordability and maintaining global leadership in generic drug supply.

Current Status of India’s Pharma Industry

1. **Global leadership in generics and vaccines:** India supplies around 20% of global generic medicines and leads in vaccines like Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DPT), Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG), and measles.
2. **Strong industrial base and scale:** The industry ranks 3rd globally by volume and 11th by value, with over 3,000 companies and 10,500 manufacturing units.
3. **Growing domestic market and turnover:** The domestic market is valued at USD 60 billion and is expected to reach USD 130 billion by 2030, with turnover of ₹4.72 lakh crore in FY25.
4. **Export expansion and global reach:** Pharmaceutical exports reached USD 30.5 billion in 2024-25, with exports to 191 countries, showing strong global demand.
5. **Presence in regulated markets:** Around 50% of exports go to regulated markets like the United States and Europe, reflecting high quality standards.
6. **Diversified export destinations:** Exports are spread across countries like Nigeria, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and France, reducing dependence on limited markets.
7. **Rising foreign investment:** The sector attracts strong Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with inflows of ₹13,193 crore in 2025-26, showing investor confidence.
8. **API manufacturing strength:** India has around 500 Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) manufacturers, contributing nearly 8% of the global API industry.

Transition Towards Innovation and Value Addition

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1. **Shift from generics to innovation:** The industry is moving from generic drug manufacturing to innovation-driven drug discovery and advanced therapies.
2. **Biopharma SHAKTI initiative:** The Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation (SHAKTI) with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore aims to build capacity in biologics and biosimilars.
3. **Strengthening R&D ecosystem:** Schemes like Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP) and BioNEST support research and innovation.
4. **Focus on scientific capability:** Efforts are being made to build deep scientific research capacity and innovation-based enterprises.

Domestic Manufacturing and Research Capacity

1. **Fermentation-based manufacturing push:** India is strengthening fermentation-based manufacturing for antibiotics, vaccines, enzymes, and biologics to reduce long-standing import dependence.
2. **API and KSM localisation:** Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes and Bulk Drug Parks are expanding domestic capacity for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and Key Starting Materials (KSMs).
3. **Clinical trial ecosystem expansion:** The plan to establish 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites will strengthen India's position in global drug development.
4. **Cost advantage and skilled workforce:** India offers low-cost clinical trials and skilled investigators, making it an attractive destination for research.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

1. **PLI schemes for manufacturing growth:** Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have reduced imports by ₹3,591 crore and strengthened domestic manufacturing.
2. **Bulk drug and medical device parks:** Three bulk drug parks and three medical device parks are being developed to improve infrastructure.
3. **PRIP and research promotion:** Under Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP), 7 Centres of Excellence and over 111 research projects support innovation.
4. **Affordable medicine access:** The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) runs over 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras, reducing medicine costs.
5. **Trade agreements boosting exports:** Agreements with the European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK), and New Zealand provide better market access.

Regulatory Strength and Quality Assurance

1. **Strong regulatory institutions:** The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) regulates drugs and clinical trials to ensure safety and quality.
2. **Drug pricing and monitoring:** The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) controls drug prices under the Drugs Prices Control Order (DPCO), 2013.
3. **Standardisation and pharmacopoeia:** The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) sets standards for drug quality and is recognised in 19 countries.
4. **Global confidence in quality:** India has the highest number of United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) approved plants outside the USA.
5. **Regulatory reforms for ease of business:** Digitalisation, faster approvals, and harmonisation improve efficiency and global competitiveness.

Key Challenges

1. **Low R&D investment:** Investment in research and development is still low, affecting innovation capacity.
2. **Need for stronger collaboration:** More public-private partnerships are required to sustain innovation and research.
3. **Import dependence in key areas:** Some segments like fermentation-based products still rely on imports.
4. **Balancing innovation with affordability:** Advanced therapies may increase costs, so ensuring affordable access remains important.

Conclusion

India's pharmaceutical sector is steadily moving up the value chain from generics to innovation-driven growth. Strong policy support, expanding research capacity, and rising global integration are enabling this transition. With focus on advanced therapeutics, domestic manufacturing, and affordability, India is well positioned to emerge as a global leader in biopharma innovation while sustaining its role as a reliable supplier of essential medicines.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India is moving up the pharmaceutical value chain towards innovation-driven growth.

Source: [Businessline](#) and [PIB](#)

Mapping the Legislative Vacuum in India's Heat Crisis

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Disaster management

Introduction

India's heat crisis has shifted from a seasonal issue to a **systemic national emergency**, now affecting over **57% of districts**. Heatwaves have expanded beyond traditional regions and now impact diverse geographies. However, the burden is unequal, falling heavily on informal workers. Despite strong scientific evidence, governance remains weak. The real crisis lies in a **legislative, administrative, and fiscal vacuum** that fails to ensure protection and justice.

Nature of the Nationwide Heat Crisis

1. **Geographic expansion of heatwaves:** Heatwaves, once confined to the northwest and central plains, now extend to humid coastal and temperate regions, showing a clear nationwide spread of extreme heat conditions.
2. **Rising intensity and frequency of heat:** The last two years have recorded unprecedented temperatures, indicating that heat is no longer seasonal but a recurring and structural challenge.
3. **Scale of exposure across districts:** More than 57% of Indian districts are classified as heat-prone, which shows that a majority of regions are now under regular heat stress.

Impacts of the Nationwide Heat Crisis

1. **Thermal inequality across society:** While heat covers the entire country, its impact is unequal, as the affluent manage it through cooling systems, whereas 400–490 million informal workers face severe exposure and risk to life.
2. **Lack of cooling autonomy among workers:** Workers such as construction labourers, street vendors, and delivery agents have no control over their work conditions, which makes them continuously exposed to extreme heat.
3. **Decline in productivity and income:** Studies show that even a small rise in temperature causes a significant fall in productivity and earnings, forcing workers to choose between health and livelihood.
4. **Sector-specific occupational vulnerabilities:** Construction workers face heat from physical labour and materials, while gig workers face algorithm-driven pressure that discourages rest even during heat alerts.
5. **Climate-caste nexus in exposure:** Sanitation workers and waste pickers work in micro-climates up to 5% hotter, which shows that socially marginalised groups face higher heat risks.

The Core Issue: Legislative and Policy Vacuum

9 PM Compilation April 2026

1. **Outdated labour law coverage:** The Factories Act, 1948 protects only indoor workers, excluding those most exposed to heat.
2. **Weak provisions in OSHWC Code, 2020:** Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHWC) Code, 2020, section 23 allows the government to notify heat standards, but does not make them mandatory, resulting in absence of enforceable safety norms.
3. **Exclusion of heatwaves from disaster list:** Heatwaves are not included in the Notified Disaster list, which restricts access to national-level funding and coordinated response.
4. **Fiscal limitation through '10% trap':** States can use only 10% of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for heat-related relief, which is inadequate for addressing a large-scale crisis.
5. **Dependence on advisory-based governance:** Most policies remain non-binding advisories, which lack accountability and fail to ensure implementation on the ground.
6. **Exclusion of informal and gig workers:** Informal workers and gig workers remain outside formal legal protections, which increases their vulnerability during extreme heat.

Policy and Legal Reforms

1. **Inclusion in Notified Disaster list:** Heatwaves should be included in the Notified National Disaster list for the 2026–31 period, as recommended by the Finance Commission. This will allow States to access National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) support and remove current funding limits, while also making heat alerts legally binding for administrative action instead of simple advisories.
2. **Adoption of Heat Index as standard:** Using Heat Index (temperature and humidity) will provide a more accurate measure of risk, especially for coastal and humid regions.
3. **Mandatory labour safety rules:** Binding rules like work-rest cycles and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision must be enforced under OSHWC Code.
4. **Recognition of 'Right to Cool':** Declaring it as a fundamental right under Article 21 will ensure access to cooling shelters and public water facilities.
5. **Protection for high-risk occupations:** Special directives are required for sanitation workers and mining workers, as they face combined risks of heat and toxic exposure.
6. **Regulation of gig economy platforms:** Platforms should not impose penalties during heat alerts, ensuring worker safety.
7. **Provision for income compensation:** Workers must receive financial support for heat-induced work loss.
8. **Adoption of insurance-based models:** Parametric heat insurance schemes provide a **practical model for compensating heat-related losses.**

Governance Gaps and Implementation Failures

1. **Ineffective Heat Action Plans:** Heat Action Plans exist but lack **enforcement mechanisms and accountability**, reducing them to weak policy tools.
2. **Absence of vulnerability mapping:** Most plans fail to identify high-risk groups and regions, which leads to poor targeting of interventions.
3. **Failure in last-mile communication:** Heat alerts often do not reach workers on time, especially in rural areas, limiting their ability to take preventive action.
4. **Lack of trained local response systems:** Local workers like ASHA and panchayat officials lack training and defined roles, weakening response systems.
5. **Unaddressed economic losses:** A 1°C rise reduces income by 16%, and earnings fall by 40% during peak heat, with no compensation mechanisms in place.

Way Forward

1. **Reframing heat as workplace risk:** Heat must be treated as an occupational safety issue, not only a disaster event.
2. **Forced survival dilemma for workers:** Workers must choose between health survival and economic survival, showing systemic injustice.
3. **Strengthening last-mile communication:** Alerts must reach workers before work begins, especially during red-alert conditions.
4. **Ensuring institutional accountability:** Clear responsibilities must be defined across administrative levels.
5. **Integrating scientific tools in policy:** Heat Index must be used in public communication and decision-making.
6. **Expanding disaster finance access:** Full use of SDRF and NDRF is needed for effective response.
7. **Adopting worker-centric governance:** Policies must prioritise most exposed and vulnerable workers.

Conclusion

India's heat crisis exposes a deeper **failure of governance and legal protection**, not a lack of scientific understanding. Weak laws, limited funding, and poor implementation leave vulnerable workers unprotected. Addressing this requires closing the legislative vacuum through enforceable rights, adequate financing, and accountable systems, ensuring that thermal safety becomes an essential part of **occupational justice and constitutional protection**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's heat crisis reflects a legislative and governance vacuum, and examine its impact on vulnerable workers.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Obesity Epidemic in India

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

Introduction

India is facing a growing obesity crisis linked with rising metabolic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Nearly **one-fourth of the population is overweight or obese**, with childhood obesity rising rapidly. Alongside lifestyle changes, there is an increasing shift toward pharmaceutical solutions, raising concerns about **medicalisation, market influence, and neglect of root causes** in addressing long-term public health.

What is Obesity?

1. **Meaning:** Obesity is defined as **abnormal or excessive fat accumulation** that increases health risks and leads to diseases like diabetes and heart conditions.
2. **Measurement through BMI:** The most common screening tool is **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, used to classify overweight and obesity levels.
3. **Health risks associated:** It increases the risk of **diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers**, making it a major public health issue.

Rising Burden and Changing Epidemiology

1. **Increasing prevalence in population:** Nearly **25% of Indians are overweight or obese**, showing a sharp rise over recent decades.
2. **Gender-wise increase:** Obesity in women increased from **1.2% (1990) to 9.8% (2022)** with **44 million women affected**, while **26 million men** are also obese.
3. **Childhood obesity surge:** Obese boys increased from **0.2 million to 7.3 million**, and girls from **0.2 million to 5.2 million**, showing a serious trend.
4. **High burden of related diseases:** Around **1 in 10 adults has diabetes** and **1 in 3 has hypertension**, along with fatty liver disease.
5. **Thin-fat phenotype in Indians:** Indians tend to have **higher body fat despite lean appearance**, increasing health risks even at lower BMI.

Underlying Causes of Obesity in India

1. **Unhealthy lifestyle patterns:** Lack of physical activity, poor sleep, and stress have increased due to urban lifestyles and work patterns.
2. **Shift in dietary habits:** People are consuming more **processed, high fat, salt, and sugar foods**, while spending less on nutritious items like cereals and pulses.
3. **Growth of ultra-processed food industry:** The sector grew at around **13% annually (2011–2021)**, increasing unhealthy food consumption.
4. **Urbanisation and income rise:** Higher income and urban living have led to **increased intake of calorie-rich foods and reduced activity levels**.
5. **Low awareness and weak implementation:** Limited awareness of healthy diets and weak enforcement of **FSSAI guidelines** have worsened the situation.
6. **Obesity no longer linked to wealth:** Cheap junk food has made obesity common across all sections, not only among the rich.
7. **Generational dietary impact:** Poor dietary habits of mothers affect children, creating a **cycle of obesity across generations**.
8. **Shift from undernutrition to silent acceptance:** Earlier, excess weight was seen as a sign of prosperity in a society shaped by undernutrition, which delayed recognition of obesity as a serious problem.

Impacts of Obesity in India

1. **Health burden of diseases:** Obesity increases risk of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.
2. **Child development issues:** Obesity leads to **poor physical and cognitive development** in children.
3. **Psychosocial effects:** Individuals face **body image issues and mental stress** due to social stigma.
4. **Economic impact:** Obesity causes **loss of productivity, absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs**.
5. **Pressure on healthcare system:** Rising NCDs increase strain on the already **fragile public health system**.
6. **Social inequality dimension:** Vulnerable groups and women are more affected, leading to **greater health and economic disparities**.

Pharmaceuticalisation of Obesity

1. **Trigger indicating institutional shift:** Recent actions linking employment conditions with BMI show how obesity is being treated as a measurable risk, reinforcing the push toward medical solutions.
2. **Rise of anti-obesity drugs:** Drugs like **tirzepatide and semaglutide** have expanded rapidly, creating a large treatment market.
3. **Shift from lifestyle to medication:** Obesity is increasingly treated through **medicines instead of behavioural changes**.

4. **Commercial expansion of healthcare:** The success of these drugs shows the rise of a **profitable therapeutic industry**.
5. **Surrogate advertising practices:** Companies use **indirect promotions like awareness campaigns, influencers, and sponsored content** to shape demand.
6. **Delayed regulatory response:** Government restrictions on such promotions came **late**, allowing widespread influence.
7. **Blurring science and marketing:** New drugs are presented as breakthroughs, while their uncertainties receive less attention, making it difficult to separate scientific progress from market-driven promotion.

Major Concerns Related to Pharmaceuticalisation of Obesity

1. **Loss of muscle mass (sarcopenia):** Around **25–40% of weight loss is muscle**, which weakens strength and long-term health.
2. **Risk of incomplete treatment:** Appetite suppression without proper diet and exercise can **harm metabolic resilience**.
3. **Cycle of drug dependency:** Use of one drug leads to side effects, which require **new drugs**, creating a continuous cycle.
4. **New markets for side effects:** Drugs for treating sarcopenia are already in development, expanding the **medical market further**.
5. **Rapid changes in clinical guidelines:** Faster inclusion of drugs raises questions about **long-term evidence and neutrality**.
6. **Neglect of root causes:** Growth of ultra-processed foods continues, while **policy measures like warning labels remain delayed**.
7. **Paradox of the system:** One sector promotes unhealthy consumption, another treats the resulting diseases, and a third manages side effects, creating a cycle that is efficient for markets but weak for public health.
8. **Expansion of medicalisation in daily life:** Obesity is increasingly treated through continuous medical intervention, showing how healthcare is moving into everyday lifestyle issues.

Way Forward

1. **Rebalancing health approach:** There is a need to shift focus from quick medical fixes to long-term lifestyle changes and preventive care.
2. **Focus on lifestyle changes:** Healthy diet, physical activity, proper sleep, and stress control must be the **primary approach**.
3. **Use medicines as support only:** Drugs should act as **adjuncts, not substitutes**, for long-term health improvement.

4. **Ensure transparency in treatment:** Risks of new therapies must be **clearly communicated** to patients.
5. **Strengthen regulation:** Stronger control over **surrogate advertising and promotions** is required.
6. **Address food system issues:** Policies must focus on controlling **ultra-processed food growth and improving nutrition awareness**.
7. **Reinforce ethical medical practice:** Medical professionals should ensure **evidence-based and unbiased decisions**.

Conclusion

Obesity in India reflects a shift from lifestyle imbalance to a system shaped by market-driven medicalisation. While medicines offer short-term relief, they risk creating dependency and ignoring root causes. A balanced approach that prioritises prevention, lifestyle change, and ethical medical practice is essential to ensure long-term health and avoid excessive reliance on pharmaceutical solutions.

Question for practice:

Examine how the rising obesity epidemic in India reflects a shift towards pharmaceuticalisation and what concerns it raises for public health.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate

Source: The post “**For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate**” has been created, based on “**For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate**” published in “Indian Express” on 16th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India’s agricultural economy is currently valued at around **\$600 billion** and has the potential to cross **\$1 trillion over the next decade** if value-added processing and market linkages expand. However, recent tensions in the **West Asia conflict** have exposed the fragility of global supply chains on which Indian agriculture depends. Therefore, sustaining agricultural growth in a volatile global environment requires investments beyond the farm gate in processing, logistics, storage, and market integration.

Why India Must Look Beyond the Farm Gate

1. Global supply chain disruptions affect agriculture

- a. India’s agriculture sector depends heavily on imported fertilisers, energy supplies, and freight logistics.
- b. Geopolitical tensions such as disruptions linked to the **Strait of Hormuz** create volatility in input availability and transportation costs.
- c. These input shocks are likely to recur due to structural global dependencies rather than temporary disturbances.

- d. Therefore, strengthening downstream value chains can reduce vulnerability to such external shocks.

2. Investments in processing and logistics strengthen agricultural resilience

- a. Investments beyond the farm gate in processing, storage, logistics, and market integration strengthen domestic consumption and export competitiveness.
- b. Deeper integration into agri-value chains helps diversify market linkages and reduces dependence on unstable input supply routes.
- c. Such investments enable agriculture to transition from production-led growth to value-led growth.

3. Trade agreements promote value-led agricultural transformation

- a. The **India-EU Free Trade Agreement** signals a shift towards a value-driven growth model rather than tariff-based export expansion.
- b. European markets are shaped more by regulatory compliance requirements than tariff reductions.
- c. Market access increasingly depends on food safety audits, residue limits, sustainability disclosures, and compliant packaging with proper documentation.
- d. Therefore, future agricultural competitiveness depends on regulatory preparedness and institutional capacity.

4. Export opportunities are expanding beyond Europe

- a. New agricultural export opportunities are emerging across West Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa.
- b. Trade agreements reduce uncertainty across goods trade and investment flows.
- c. This encourages the development of export-oriented agri-processing infrastructure in India.

Evidence from Successful Agricultural Export Sectors

1. Indian processed foods and beverages have established a modest but growing presence in European markets.
2. Exporters who invested in consistent sourcing systems and audit-ready documentation have built durable export relationships.
3. Tea, coffee, spices, and seafood sectors demonstrate similar success through compliance-based value chain integration.
4. These sectors illustrate how institutional capability supports long-term export competitiveness.

Challenges in Ensuring Inclusive Value-Led Agricultural Growth

1. Weak aggregation among smallholders

- a. Smallholder farmers often lack aggregation platforms that enable participation in export markets.
- b. Many Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs) face governance and capital limitations.

2. Uneven testing and certification infrastructure

- a. Laboratory and testing infrastructure remains uneven across regions.
- b. Limited testing capacity restricts farmers' ability to meet international regulatory standards.

3. Policy instability weakens export confidence

- a. Export bans and abrupt policy reversals reduce the confidence of global buyers.
- b. Policy uncertainty discourages long-term contracts and investments in export supply chains.

Policy Measures Required to Strengthen Value-Chain Integration

1. Expanding infrastructure support

- a. Public investment is required in laboratory networks, certification systems, cold storage, and logistics infrastructure.
- b. Improved testing infrastructure stabilises export relationships and improves compliance capacity.

2. Strengthening the institutional capability of FPOs

- a. Farmer-Producer Organisations must be supported with stronger governance frameworks and better access to capital.
- b. Strengthened FPOs can enable smallholders to participate more effectively in value chains.

3. Ensuring trade policy stability

- a. Stable trade policies help build buyer confidence and encourage long-term export contracts.
- b. Policy predictability incentivises investment in export-oriented agri-processing capacity.

4. Improving Centre–State coordination

- a. Stronger coordination between the Centre and states is required to improve certification systems, logistics infrastructure, and compliance frameworks.
- b. Better coordination helps widen participation in agricultural exports across regions.

Role of Agribusiness in Driving Agricultural Transformation

1. Agribusiness firms must invest in processing infrastructure, cold storage systems, and traceability mechanisms.
2. Long-term buyer engagement and branding credibility are essential for sustained participation in global value chains.
3. Such investments help convert agriculture into a value-creation ecosystem rather than a raw commodity production system.

Conclusion: India's agricultural growth in a volatile global environment depends on scaling investments beyond the farm gate into processing, logistics, testing infrastructure, and export integration. Institutionalising existing successful models and ensuring the participation of smallholder farmers in value creation will be essential for achieving inclusive and resilient agricultural growth.

Question: In a volatile global environment, India's agricultural growth must move beyond the farm gate to value-led integration into global agri-value chains. Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha

Source: The post “**Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha**” has been created, based on “**Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha**” published in “The Hindu” on 16th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Governance

Context: The proposed Constitutional Amendment seeks to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 to 850 seats** and operationalise delimitation after the freeze ends in 2026. The proposal also links the implementation of **women’s reservation** to the delimitation exercise and is expected to significantly affect the composition and functioning of Parliament as well as the federal balance between states.

Key Features of the Proposal

- The Constitutional Amendment Bill proposes to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 seats to 850 seats** to improve representation based on population changes.
- The number of seats allocated to each State in the Lok Sabha will be determined based on its proportion of the population as recorded in the **latest published Census**, which is expected initially to be the **2011 Census**.
- The Bill clarifies that a **one-third reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha will be implemented only **after delimitation is completed**.
- The reservation for women in Parliament will remain valid for a period of **15 years** from the date of implementation.
- The Bill provides Parliament with the flexibility to determine the **periodicity of delimitation and the Census to be used** for the exercise.
- The provisions relating to delimitation and reservation are also extended to the Union Territories with legislatures such as **Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, and Puducherry**.

Implications of Increasing the Size of the Lok Sabha

1. Change in the Federal Balance between States

- a. The redistribution of seats based on population will change the relative representation of States in the Lok Sabha.
- b. States such as **Kerala and Tamil Nadu** are likely to lose relative representation, while States such as **Rajasthan, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh** are expected to gain seats.
- c. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together may account for about **25 percent of total Lok Sabha seats compared to the present 22 percent**, thereby increasing their influence in national policymaking.

2. Reduced Relative Importance of the Rajya Sabha

- a. The strength of the Rajya Sabha will remain unchanged even though the strength of the Lok Sabha will increase significantly.
- b. At present, the Lok Sabha has **543 members compared to 245 members in the Rajya Sabha**, giving it about **2.2 times the voting strength**.
- c. After expansion to around **815 members**, the Lok Sabha would have approximately **3.3 times the voting strength** of the Rajya Sabha.
- d. This change may weaken the relative importance of the Rajya Sabha in resolving legislative disagreements through joint sittings.

3. Greater Ease for the Government in Passing Legislation

- a. A government that enjoys a majority in the Lok Sabha but not in the Rajya Sabha will still be able to pass legislation through a **joint sitting of Parliament** more easily.
- b. This may increase the dominance of the Lok Sabha in the legislative process and alter the bicameral balance.

4. Increase in the Size of the Council of Ministers

- a. The Constitution limits the size of the Council of Ministers to **15 percent of the strength of the Lok Sabha**.
- b. If the strength of the Lok Sabha increases to 815 members, the maximum size of the Council of Ministers may increase from **81 ministers to about 122 ministers**.
- c. This expansion may strengthen the executive branch and increase its influence within Parliament.

5. Impact on Parliamentary Functioning

- a. **Increasing the number of Members of Parliament** may reduce the opportunity available to each MP to participate effectively in debates and deliberations.
- b. Members may get fewer chances to ask questions and raise issues during the **Zero Hour**.
- c. This concern becomes more significant because Parliament currently meets for **fewer than 70 sitting days in a year**.

6. Implications for the Election of the President and Vice-President

- a. Each Member of Parliament has one vote in the election of the **President and Vice-President**.
- b. Increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha will increase its numerical weight in the electoral college for these constitutional offices.

7. Possible Impact on State Legislatures

- a. Although the Bills do not explicitly propose changes in the size of State legislatures, the **Delimitation Commission** may decide to apply similar principles at the State level.
- b. States such as **Uttar Pradesh** could have more than **600 Assembly seats**, while **West Bengal and Maharashtra** could have around **450 seats each**.
- c. Such expansion may create administrative and logistical challenges in legislative functioning at the State level.

8. Implications for Women's Reservation

- a. The reservation of **one-third seats for women** will be implemented only after delimitation is completed.
- b. The effectiveness and timing of women's reservations, therefore, depend directly on the completion of the delimitation exercise.

9. Lessons from Global Parliamentary Practice

- a. Several democracies, such as the **United Kingdom**, have large legislatures like the **House of Commons with 650 members** and compensate through strong committee systems and more frequent sittings.
- b. In contrast, less than **one-fifth of Bills in India are referred to parliamentary committees**, which limits detailed legislative scrutiny.

Concerns Regarding the Reform Process

1. The proposed Bills are being introduced without adequate public discussion and consultation.
2. The proposals require careful deliberation both inside and outside Parliament due to their long-term institutional impact.
3. Referring the Bills to a **Parliamentary Committee** would help incorporate expert opinion and public feedback.

Way Forward

1. The delimitation exercise should be conducted transparently using objective criteria to maintain trust among States and preserve cooperative federalism.
2. The number of **annual parliamentary sittings should be increased** to ensure effective participation by a larger number of Members of Parliament.
3. The role of the **department-related parliamentary committee system should be strengthened** to improve legislative scrutiny.
4. Institutional safeguards should be introduced to maintain the functional balance between the **Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha**.
5. Adequate public consultation and parliamentary debate should be ensured before implementing structural changes to Parliament.
6. The implementation timeline for **women's reservation** should be clearly defined to avoid delays linked to delimitation uncertainties.

Conclusion: Increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha can improve representational equality and strengthen democratic legitimacy. However, it also has important implications for federal balance, bicameral functioning, executive-legislative relations, and parliamentary effectiveness, and therefore must be accompanied by institutional reforms and wider consultation to ensure its successful implementation.

Question: The proposal to increase the size of the Lok Sabha has significant implications for India's federal balance and parliamentary functioning. Examine.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

In workers' protests in Noida and beyond, a test of labour reforms

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Recent strikes by gig workers and protests by factory workers in Uttar Pradesh highlight low wages and poor working conditions. These events show the operational challenges in labour reforms. The four labour codes — **Code on Wages, Code on Social Security, Industrial Relations Code, and Occupational Safety, Health and**

Working Conditions Code — aim to simplify labour laws. Their impact on employment and wages is incremental and varies across sectors, firm sizes, and worker categories.

What are the key issues in India's labour sector?

1. **Low wages and poor working conditions:** Workers face wage suppression and unsafe conditions, which lead to protests and dissatisfaction.
2. **Weak enforcement in informal sector:** Most workers are in the informal sector, where enforcement is weak and regulations are not followed.
3. **Rising "Contractualisation":** To avoid rigid labour regulations, many firms employ contract workers at significantly lower wages (often less than half of permanent payroll) with no long-term security.
4. **Limited reach of social security schemes:** Benefits under **EPF and ESIC** exclude many workers due to outdated thresholds.
5. **Gender Disparity:** Female labour force participation remains low (roughly 33.7%), and women are disproportionately represented in unpaid household work or low-paying "helper" roles in family enterprises.

What reforms have been introduced to address these issues?

1. **Introduction of four labour codes:** The four codes aim to rationalise India's complex labour regulatory system.
2. **Focus on wage correction:** The **Code on Wages** aims to reduce wage inequality at the lower end of the wage distribution through a national floor wage.
3. **Improving productivity conditions:** Labour codes enable better productivity through worker protection, reduced compliance burden, and efficient labour allocation.
4. **Compositional employment changes:** Employment effects are expected through shifts in type and quality of jobs, not immediate job growth.
5. **Nature of employment impact:** Employment effects are largely **compositional**, reflecting shifts in type and quality of jobs rather than immediate job creation.
6. **Productivity impact depends on implementation:** Productivity gains are expected to be **moderately positive**, but they depend critically on the quality of implementation.

What are the challenges in implementing these labour reforms?

1. **Heterogeneous outcomes across sectors:** Impact varies across sectors, firm sizes, and worker categories, making outcomes uneven.
2. **Higher compliance burden on SMEs:** Small firms face disproportionate costs, which can offset productivity gains, unlike large firms that benefit from stability and lower turnover.

3. **Weak enforcement reduces effectiveness:** Minimum wages remain non-binding, and safety rules are not followed due to poor enforcement.
4. **Threshold-based distortions in firms:** Firms avoid scaling up or split operations to escape regulatory thresholds.
5. **Gig and Platform Worker Coverage:** Defining employer-employee relationships for gig workers and guaranteeing them social security remains complex.
6. **Delayed Rule Notification:** Many states have not yet finalized rules under all four codes, leading to a transitional overlap of old and new laws.

What should be done to ensure effective labour reforms?

1. **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms:** Use **digital wage payments, electronic employment records, and data-driven inspection systems.** Targeted inspections based on risk profiling can reduce rent-seeking.
2. **Build administrative capacity:** Strong capacity at central and state levels is needed for consistent enforcement.
3. **Targeted inspection system:** Inspections based on risk profiling can improve efficiency and reduce opportunities for rent-seeking.
4. **Calibrate national floor wage properly:** The wage should be binding but sustainable, considering regional cost of living and productivity differences. Regular revision should be linked to inflation and productivity.
5. **Support SMEs for transition:** Provide compliance subsidies, tax incentives, simplified reporting, affordable credit, and access to technology.
6. **Expand social security coverage:** Revise **EPF and ESIC thresholds**, index them to inflation, and operationalise provisions for gig and platform workers.
7. **Address threshold distortions:** Introduce smoother and graduated frameworks to encourage firm expansion.
8. **Invest in skill development:** Expand vocational training, strengthen industry-academia links, and promote continuous skill upgrading.
9. **Ensure policy coordination:** Align labour reforms with industrial policy, trade liberalisation, infrastructure, and investment promotion.
10. **Improve administrative integration:** Develop a single-window system and improve coordination between central and state governments.
11. **Leverage digital architecture:** Build integrated labour databases, real-time monitoring systems, and public data on workplace safety and employment conditions.

Conclusion

Labour codes are an important step to modernise labour regulation and improve efficiency, formalisation, and productivity. However, outcomes depend on effective enforcement, institutional capacity, and supportive policies. Without proper implementation, benefits will remain uneven, and labour distress will continue despite reforms.

Question for practice:

Examine how recent workers' protests in Noida and beyond reflect the challenges in implementing labour reforms in India, and discuss the measures needed to ensure their effective outcomes.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Placing Women at the Core of Democracy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- Social empowerment And **Gs Paper 2-** laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Introduction

For decades, women were viewed as recipients of welfare rather than active participants in shaping democracy. This understanding is now changing with the enactment of the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**, which provides **33% reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures**. The reform goes beyond representation and equality. It aims to improve institutional design, incorporate diverse lived experiences, and strengthen democratic functioning. By expanding participation and decision-making capacity, it seeks to make governance more inclusive, responsive, and rooted in real social realities.

Initiative to Place Women at the Core

1. **Legislative Quotas:** India's Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (106th Amendment Act) is a landmark reform aiming to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.
2. **Beyond Representation:** The reform focuses on **institutional innovation**, not just inclusion, aiming to strengthen democratic capacity and resilience.
3. **Grassroots Impact:** The 73rd and 74th Amendments already reserve one-third of seats in local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities), transforming local leadership and prioritizing issues like **sanitation, water, and education**.

Democratic Transformation

1. **Expansion of Democratic Base:** The Act expands the **social and perceptive base of democracy**, making representation broader and more inclusive.
2. **Shift in Political Recruitment:** It challenges dominance of **dynasty, caste, and masculinised networks**, pushing parties to nurture real talent.

3. **From Procedural to Deliberative Democracy:** The reform shifts democracy from a focus on **procedures and institutional outcomes** to a focus on **quality of debate, reasoning, and competing arguments**.
4. **Epistemic Diversity:** Inclusion of women brings **new perspectives and lived experiences**, enriching decision-making processes.

Benefits of Women-Centric Democracy

1. **Improved Legislative Quality:** More women will expand the **content, tone, and ethical depth of debates**, making discussions more balanced.
2. **Better Governance Outcomes:** Policies will reflect **multiple lived experiences**, leading to more effective and inclusive governance.
3. **Recognition of Real Issues:** Concerns like **domestic violence, childcare, sanitation, and access to services** will gain central importance.
4. **Stronger Policy Feedback Loop:** When decision-makers face real consequences, the **gap between state and citizens reduces**, improving responsiveness.
5. **Grounded Political Economy:** Women's role in **informal sectors like agriculture, SHGs, and domestic work** will inform better policy design.
6. **Policy Based on Real Lives:** Policy-making shifts from **statistics alone to real-life experiences**, improving responsiveness.

What are the Challenges

1. **Institutional Dependency:** Implementation of the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** depends on timely completion of **Census and delimitation**, requiring strong administrative preparedness..
2. **Resistance from Social Structures:** Deep-rooted **social hierarchies and traditional mindsets** may slow or distort reform outcomes.
3. **Political Party Constraints:** Parties may fail to **genuinely include women at all levels**, treating them as symbolic figures.
4. **Risk of Elite Capture:** Existing **political oligarchies** may dominate, limiting representation of diverse voices.
5. **Behavioural and Cultural Barriers:** Women still face limits on **mobility, time, and autonomy**, restricting effective participation.
6. **Constraints Faced by Women:** Women face restrictions due to **social norms, limited mobility, time constraints, and reduced autonomy**.
7. **Societal Attitude Gap:** Lack of **space, dignity, and respect in society** may hinder meaningful participation of women.

Way Forward

1. **Administrative Preparedness:** Ensure timely completion of **Census and delimitation** to operationalise the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**.
2. **Reform of Party Structures:** Political parties must ensure **real inclusion of women as equal actors**, not placeholders.
3. **Inclusive Representation:** Voices of both **marginalised and mainstream women** must be actively included.
4. **Social Attitude Transformation:** Society must provide **space, dignity, and respect**, enabling women's full participation.
5. **Encouraging Women's Agency:** Women need to overcome **social constraints** and assert their role in public life.

Conclusion

Placing women at the core of democracy is not limited to reservation but reflects a deeper process of democratic refinement. It requires institutional readiness, political restructuring, and social transformation. By incorporating diverse perspectives and lived experiences, decision-making becomes more inclusive and intelligent. This reform strengthens the link between citizens and the state and improves governance outcomes. Over time, it will help build a more responsive, balanced, and resilient democratic system rooted in real societal needs.

Question for practice:

Discuss how placing women at the core of democracy through the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam can transform democratic functioning, and examine the key benefits and challenges associated with its implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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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

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 CO₂** 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.
 - o Around 62.4% were not eligible for paid leave.
 - o Nearly 59.2% lacked access to social security benefits.
 - o 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

9 PM Compilation April 2026

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

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

2. Highest number of doping positives across sports globally

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

3. Inadequate scale of testing compared to major countries

- The National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) collected **7,113 urine and blood samples in 2024**.
- China conducted **24,214 tests**, which resulted in only **43 positive cases**.
- Germany conducted **15,081 tests**, which resulted in **54 positive cases**.
- France conducted **11,744 tests**, which resulted in **91 positive cases**.
- Russia conducted **10,514 tests**, which resulted in **76 positive cases**.
- Italy conducted **9,304 tests**, which resulted in **85 positive cases**.
- The United Kingdom conducted **8,273 tests**, which resulted in **30 positive cases**.
- 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

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

- 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.”**
- 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.
- 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.
- Spread and affected regions:** LWE spread across states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, mainly in forest and tribal areas.
- 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.
- 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

- 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](#)

High heat: On India and warming

Source: The post “**High heat: On India and warming**” has been created, based on “**High heat: On India and warming**” published in “The Hindu” on 24th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Environment

Context: India is experiencing unusually early and intense heatwaves, with temperatures crossing 40°C in several regions as early as April. This shift indicates a deeper structural vulnerability to extreme heat rather than a temporary climatic variation.

Causes of Increasing Heatwaves

1. The early arrival of extreme heat this year reflects changing climatic patterns linked to global warming.
2. The absence of western disturbances and thunderstorms has reduced natural cooling effects across large parts of the country.
3. Lower convective activity in the atmosphere has contributed to sustained high temperatures.
4. The lingering impact of the previous El Niño event has further intensified heat conditions.
5. Urban heat island effects have aggravated local temperatures, particularly in cities.
6. Coastal regions are facing compounded heat stress due to high humidity, which increases discomfort and health risks.

Impacts of Extreme Heat

1. Extreme heat is increasing the risk of mortality, particularly due to cardiovascular complications.
2. Warmer nights are preventing adequate physiological recovery, thereby increasing the health burden.
3. The economic cost is significant, with approximately 247 billion work hours lost in 2024 due to heat stress.

4. Workers in sectors such as construction and agriculture are disproportionately affected due to prolonged outdoor exposure.
5. Heat stress during the rabi harvest is creating serious challenges for farmers.
6. High temperatures are accelerating crop maturity, which threatens agricultural productivity and food security.
7. These agricultural impacts may contribute to inflationary pressures in the economy.
8. Extreme heat is also affecting democratic participation, as seen when voters faced difficulties during elections conducted in high temperatures.

Limitations of Existing Response (Heat Action Plans - HAPs)

1. Heat Action Plans in India are largely focused on emergency response rather than long-term adaptation.
2. There is insufficient funding for structural interventions such as urban greening and climate-resilient infrastructure.
3. Measures to protect informal sector workers from heat exposure remain weak or poorly enforced.
4. Current strategies fail to address underlying vulnerabilities such as poor housing, lack of cooling access, and income insecurity.
5. Administrative responses tend to be reactive, such as extending polling hours, rather than preventive.
6. Public health systems are not adequately equipped to provide widespread and proactive heat-related services.

Way Forward

1. India must transition from short-term emergency responses to long-term climate adaptation strategies.
2. There should be increased investment in urban planning measures such as green cover, cool roofs, and heat-resilient infrastructure.
3. Heat Action Plans should be strengthened with dedicated funding and institutional accountability.
4. The government should enforce mandatory heat safety standards, especially for vulnerable workers in the informal sector.
5. Public health systems should be expanded to ensure timely and doorstep delivery of essential services during heatwaves.
6. India should leverage international platforms to access greater climate adaptation finance.
7. Community awareness and local-level preparedness should be enhanced to reduce the impact of extreme heat.

Conclusion: The growing intensity and frequency of heatwaves in India highlight a structural crisis that demands urgent attention. Addressing underlying vulnerabilities through sustained policy action, investment, and institutional strengthening will be critical to building long-term resilience.

Question: Heatwaves in India are no longer seasonal anomalies but structural challenges.” Discuss the causes, impacts, and limitations of India’s response to extreme heat. Suggest a way forward.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India notifies online gaming rules

Source: The post “**India notifies online gaming rules**” has been created, based on “**India notifies online gaming rules**” published in “The Hindu” on 24th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: India’s online gaming market has witnessed exponential growth, with millions of users and increasing monetisation through real-money formats. However, rising concerns over addiction, fraud, and regulatory arbitrage due to differing state laws prompted the Union government to introduce a unified national framework through the Online Gaming Rules, 2026.

Key Features of the Rules

1. The rules operationalise the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act and provide a comprehensive legal framework for the sector.
2. The government has established the **Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI)** as a dedicated sectoral regulator under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
3. The regulatory model follows a **digital-first approach**, focusing on oversight of online platforms rather than physical enforcement.
4. The rules clarify that **most online social games will not require mandatory registration or prior classification**, thereby reducing regulatory burden on non-risk categories.
5. The framework significantly **expands the compliance perimeter by including financial institutions**, ensuring better monitoring of monetary transactions in gaming.
6. The rules aim to curb issues such as **fraud, user exploitation, addiction, and regulatory loopholes** arising from state-level inconsistencies.
7. The provisions are scheduled to **come into force from May 1, 2026**, marking the beginning of a formalised regulatory regime.
8. The rules follow the earlier legislative action that had effectively **restricted the real-money gaming ecosystem**, impacting several major gaming platforms.

Significance of the Rules

1. The rules bring **uniformity and clarity** by replacing fragmented and inconsistent state regulations with a central framework.
2. The establishment of OGAI ensures **institutionalised oversight**, which enhances accountability in the sector.
3. By bringing financial intermediaries into the framework, the rules strengthen **financial transparency and reduce fraud risks**.
4. The exemption for most social games supports **ease of doing business and innovation** in the non-gambling gaming segment.
5. The framework enhances **consumer protection**, particularly for vulnerable users exposed to addictive or manipulative gaming practices.
6. The rules contribute to the **formalisation and regulation of a fast-growing digital industry**, which has significant economic potential.

Challenges in Implementation

1. The rules may face difficulties in effectively addressing **gaming addiction**, as behavioural monitoring is complex.
2. The inclusion of financial institutions increases compliance requirements, which may pose **operational challenges**.
3. The earlier restrictions on real-money gaming could lead to **revenue losses and uncertainty for startups and investors**.
4. The framework may give rise to **federal tensions**, as betting and gambling fall under the State List.
5. The dynamic and evolving nature of digital gaming platforms creates **regulatory challenges in keeping pace with innovation**.
6. Ensuring effective coordination between multiple stakeholders, including regulators, platforms, and financial entities, may be complex.

Way Forward

1. The government should strengthen **technological oversight mechanisms**, including AI-based monitoring of gaming behaviour and transactions.
2. There should be a focus on **responsible gaming policies**, including age-gating, spending limits, and user awareness campaigns.
3. The Centre and States should work collaboratively to ensure **harmonised implementation** and reduce jurisdictional conflicts.
4. The regulatory framework should remain **flexible and adaptive** to emerging technologies and new gaming models.
5. Capacity building within OGAI and associated institutions should be prioritised to ensure **efficient enforcement and grievance redressal**.
6. Stakeholder consultation, including industry players and civil society, should be encouraged for **balanced regulation**.

Conclusion: The Online Gaming Rules, 2026 mark a significant policy shift towards regulating India's rapidly expanding gaming ecosystem. While the rules aim to balance growth with accountability and user protection, their long-term success will depend on effective implementation, institutional capacity, and cooperative federalism.

Question: India has notified the Online Gaming Rules, 2026 to regulate its rapidly growing gaming sector. Discuss the key features of the rules and examine their significance, challenges, and the way forward.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Scaling Climate Adaptation from Policy to Grassroots

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3-Environment

Introduction

India is the **ninth most climate-vulnerable country**, facing **430 extreme weather events (1995–2024)** that caused **\$170 billion losses** and affected **1.3 billion people**. The updated **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2031–35** recognise these risks and stress **mainstreaming climate adaptation into development planning**. The key challenge lies in scaling adaptation efforts from policy frameworks to

effective grassroots implementation through strong institutions, financing systems, and community participation.

Policy Framework for Climate Adaptation

1. **Recognition of Climate Risks in NDCs:** The NDCs (2031–35) emphasise integrating **climate resilience and adaptation into development strategy**.
2. **Sectoral Focus of Adaptation:** Key areas include **coastal resilience, infrastructure, disaster preparedness, heat mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods**.
3. **Global Alignment of Adaptation Goals:** The framework aligns with global efforts to **increase adaptation finance three times by 2035** and to adopt **Belém Adaptation Indicators at COP30 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, which aim to **track and measure progress in climate adaptation**.

Existing Adaptation Initiatives and Best Practices in India

1. **NICRA Programme by ICAR:** The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** runs **National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)**, covering **448 villages across 151 climate-vulnerable hotspots** and mapping risks in **651 districts**, focusing on **climate-smart agriculture and farmer capacity-building**.
2. **Tamil Nadu CRV Programme under TNCCM:** Recognised in the **Economic Survey 2025–26**, the **Climate Resilient Villages (CRV)** operates under the **Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission (TNCCM)** with support from **World Resources Institute (WRI) India** across **11 vulnerable districts**.
3. **Integrated and Community-Based Approach:** The CRV model includes **water management, flood and drought mitigation, waste management, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, alternate livelihoods, and climate information**, with local consultation and participation.

Challenges related to Climate Adaptation in India

1. Structural and Implementation Challenges

- **Fragmented Implementation:** Adaptation efforts remain **scattered**, which makes scaling and coordination difficult.
- **Weak State-Level Planning:** While most States prepared initial **State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs)**, **only a few updated them in line with NDC targets till 2030**.

2. Financial Challenges

- **Budgetary Imbalance:** Although **adaptation and resilience spending was estimated at 5.6% of India GDP in FY22**, the **Union Budget 2026–27 remains skewed toward mitigation**, indicating a continued imbalance in prioritising adaptation.

- **Large Global Financing Gap:** Developing countries face an annual gap of **\$284–\$339 billion till 2035**, as per the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report, 2025**.
- **Weak Public Finance Tracking:** Adaptation spending is not systematically tracked in **State budgets**, limiting transparency and effectiveness.

3. Policy and Framework Gaps

- **Lack of Clear Adaptation Finance Framework:** India's **Draft Framework of Climate Finance Taxonomy (2025)** is **mitigation-focused**, covering **emission avoidance, emission intensity reduction, and transition in hard-to-abate sectors**, with only possible adaptation co-benefits.
- **Need for Clear Typology of Finance:** There is a need to **prioritise sectors and assess resource requirements for each vulnerable sector**.

4. Institutional and Data Gaps

- **Institutional Gaps in Planning Systems:** There is a lack of **regular climate vulnerability assessments at State, district, and block levels**, along with weak **data systems, methodologies, and monitoring frameworks**.

5. Economic and Outcome Measurement Gaps

- **Importance of Benefit Quantification:** Adaptation benefits such as **avoidable losses, socio-economic and environmental gains, and mitigation co-benefits** need proper measurement; a **WRI study estimates ten-fold returns on adaptation investment**.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthening Adaptation Finance Systems:** Mobilise **domestic resources** and leverage **private and international investment**, supported by **state-level adaptation facilities to identify bankable projects**.
2. **Climate Budgeting and Financial Integration:** Track adaptation in State budgets and mandate **climate budgeting through State Finance Departments**, integrated into **annual budget processes through budget circulars**.
3. **Institutionalising Planning Frameworks:** Operationalise NDCs through a **National Adaptation Plan, national missions, and updated SAPCCs**, with **time-bound prioritisation and monitoring frameworks**.
4. **Improving Data and Assessment Systems:** Ensure **regular vulnerability assessments**, updated data, **standardised monitoring**, and **periodic reviews with continuous data collection**.
5. **Expanding Scope of Adaptation Strategies:** Include **skill development, alternative livelihoods, and rehabilitation guidelines** beyond infrastructure-focused approaches.

6. **Strengthening Administrative Mechanisms:** Use or create **State and district climate change cells with dedicated workforce** and establish **clear reporting channels for cross-learning and timely interventions**.
7. **Promoting Locally Led Adaptation (LLA):** Extend mechanisms to **urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions**, with **community-led planning, implementation, and ownership of interventions**, as emphasised at COP30.
8. **Scaling Context-Specific Models:** Expand models like **CRV (Climate Resilient Villages)** to different regions using **place-based and context-specific approaches** to build awareness and participation.

Conclusion

Climate adaptation in India must move from **policy recognition to grounded implementation**. This requires **balanced financing, strong institutional systems, and locally driven action**. Aligning national commitments with grassroots execution through a **whole-of-systems approach** is essential to build resilience. Without such integration, adaptation efforts will remain uneven and insufficient to address increasing climate risks effectively.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India is scaling climate adaptation from policy to grassroots, highlighting key initiatives, challenges, and measures required to strengthen financing and institutional mechanisms.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Information Warfare

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Introduction

Information warfare has become a key feature of modern conflicts. The first sign of a crisis now appears on a phone screen through forwarded videos and online content. Public opinion forms quickly as emotion before official clarification arrives. The battle begins with attention and first impressions. The side that captures this early space shapes media debates, public perception, and diplomatic responses in the later stages of the crisis.

What is Information Warfare

1. **Definition:** Information warfare refers to the collection, distribution, modification, disruption, interference, and degradation of information to gain advantage over an adversary.
2. **Purpose:** Its purpose is to shape perception and influence how people understand an issue or event.
3. **Focus on perception control:** It uses information as a tool to alter the target's thinking. The goal is not just to inform but to create a desired reaction or outcome.

4. **Speed as a defining element:** Information warfare operates in real time, where rapid spread of content shapes early perception before verification or official clarification.
5. **Narrative-driven conflict:** Conflicts are now fought over perception along with physical space. First impressions influence television debates, newspaper framing, and diplomatic discussions.

Features of Information Warfare

1. **Low entry cost:** Information warfare does not need large financial resources or state support. Basic technical skills and access to networks are enough to participate.
2. **Blurred boundaries:** The difference between public and private actors, and between war and crime, becomes unclear. Digital platforms mix these roles.
3. **Power of perception management:** Control over images and narratives increases the role of deception. It becomes harder for governments to build political support.
4. **Strategic intelligence challenge:** Traditional intelligence systems struggle to identify targets and threats in this domain. A new form of analysis is required.
5. **Warning and detection problems:** It is difficult to distinguish attacks from normal digital activity. There is no clear warning system for such threats.
6. **Coalition vulnerability:** Shared digital systems increase risks for all partners. An attack on one actor can affect many others.

Methods Used for Information Warfare

1. **Use of engaging digital content:** Memes, short videos, AI-generated visuals, humour, and images of civilian suffering are used to capture attention and spread messages quickly.
2. **Audience-specific messaging:** Different narratives are created for different audiences. One message highlights victimhood, another highlights resistance, and another focuses on moral injury.
3. **Importance of tone and relatability:** Audiences do not follow official messages alone. They respond to language that matches their mood, so humour, emotion, and simple language become more effective than formal communication.
4. **Use of internet culture:** Irony, satire, and informal language are used to connect with younger audiences. This makes content more relatable and shareable.
5. **State and non-state coordination:** Official and unofficial actors reinforce each other's messages across platforms. This creates repetition and wider reach.
6. **Cross-platform amplification:** Online content quickly moves to television debates, newspapers, and diplomatic discussions. Digital messaging gains a broader political impact.

Challenges of Information Warfare

1. **Spread of misinformation:** Exaggeration and false claims are part of campaigns. This reduces trust in available information.
2. **Speed versus accuracy gap:** Fast-moving rumours spread before verified facts. Truth that comes late loses influence over public opinion.
3. **Rigid institutional messaging:** Formal and security-focused communication appears slow and disconnected. It fails to match the pace of digital platforms.
4. **Tone mismatch in crises:** Strong or assertive messaging can backfire in situations involving civilian suffering. It allows opponents to claim emotional and moral advantage.

Implications of Information Warfare

1. **Impact on public perception:** Information spreads faster than facts, so people form opinions before official clarification. This weakens the State's ability to guide understanding.
2. **Spillover into domestic space:** External crises quickly affect politics, markets, diaspora concerns, and social relations within countries.
3. **Pressure on State communication:** Governments must respond quickly. Delayed communication forces them to react instead of shaping the narrative.
4. **Fusion of diplomacy and communication:** Consular work, diplomacy, and public messaging become one task during crises.
5. **Risk of misinterpretation:** Balanced or careful policies may appear weak or unclear if not explained quickly and properly.

Way Forward

1. **Build real-time communication systems:** The State should create systems that release verified updates quickly during crises. This reduces the gap between rumours and official information.
2. **Strengthen digital role of missions:** Missions abroad should actively monitor online trends and respond early. They should act as the first reliable source for citizens during emergencies.
3. **Integrate communication with action:** Every major decision should be explained immediately along with its purpose. This ensures that action and explanation move together.
4. **Use audience-sensitive messaging:** Communication should be adapted to different groups, such as citizens, diaspora, and global audiences. Each group needs clear and relevant information.
5. **Ensure consistency across platforms:** All official channels should carry the same message. This avoids confusion and prevents multiple interpretations of the same event.

Conclusion

Information warfare has transformed how conflicts are perceived and managed. Early control over narratives shapes public opinion and limits policy space. Delayed communication allows misinformation to dominate and weakens State response. Effective crisis management now depends on timely, clear, and coordinated communication. In future conflicts, success will depend not only on action but also on how quickly and effectively it is explained.

Question for practice:

Examine how information warfare shapes public perception during modern conflicts and discuss its implications for State communication and response.

Source: [Hindustan Times](#)

How El Nino could impact the world's weather in 2026/27

Source: The post "How El Nino could impact the world's weather in 2026/27" has been created, based on "How El Nino could impact the world's weather in 2026/27" published in "DD News" on 25th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Environment

Context: El Niño is a climatic phenomenon characterized by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It alters atmospheric circulation and leads to significant changes in global weather patterns.

Forecast for 2026–27

1. Global weather agencies predict that there is around a 60–70% probability of an El Niño developing by mid-2026.
2. The phenomenon is expected to persist through the end of 2026 and may be strong in intensity.

Expected Global Impacts (2026–27)

I. Asia (including India)

- a. Asia is likely to experience hotter and drier weather conditions due to El Niño.
- b. India may witness a below-average monsoon for the first time in three years.
- c. Southeast Asia is also expected to receive reduced rainfall, affecting agriculture.
- d. These conditions may negatively impact the production of crops such as rice, wheat, palm oil, and sugar.

II. Australia

- a. Eastern Australia is expected to receive below-median rainfall during the early growing season.
- b. Temperatures are likely to remain above normal, increasing stress on crops.
- c. These conditions could adversely affect agricultural productivity.

III. Americas

- a. Parts of North and South America are expected to receive increased rainfall.

- b. Excessive rainfall may lead to flooding and disrupt crops such as soybean and corn.
- c. The U.S. Midwest may initially benefit from good growing conditions, but excessive moisture during harvest could create risks.

IV. Global Trends

- a. Global temperatures are expected to remain above normal during the El Niño period.
- b. Rainfall distribution is likely to become uneven, leading to simultaneous droughts and floods in different regions.

Mechanism and Difference from La Niña

1. During El Niño, the weakening or reversal of trade winds allows warm water to move eastward across the Pacific Ocean.
2. This redistribution of heat affects rainfall and temperature patterns across the globe.
3. In contrast, La Niña occurs when trade winds strengthen and push warm water westward, causing cold water upwelling in the eastern Pacific.
4. El Niño and La Niña are opposite phases of the same climate system and produce contrasting weather effects.

Comparison with La Niña Impacts

1. La Niña generally brings above-average rainfall to Australia and parts of Southeast Asia.
2. It has a variable impact on the Indian monsoon and does not always strengthen it.
3. It tends to cause wetter conditions in northern South America and drier conditions in the southern United States.
4. In contrast, El Niño usually causes drier conditions in Asia and wetter conditions in parts of the Americas.

Lessons from Past El Niño Events

1. The strong El Niño of 2015–16 caused severe drought in Australia and Southeast Asia and weakened the Indian monsoon.
2. It also reduced the production of grain, palm oil, and sugar while causing excessive rainfall in South America.
3. The moderate El Niño of 2009–10 led to reduced yields of rice and wheat in India and Southeast Asia.
4. The strongest El Niño of 1997–98 caused drought in parts of Asia and flooding in the Americas, though India received average rainfall.

Implications

1. El Niño can create significant risks to global food security due to reduced agricultural output.
2. It may lead to inflationary pressures due to supply shortages of key commodities.
3. Water stress conditions may worsen in Asian countries.
4. There may be an increased frequency of climate-related disasters such as droughts and floods.

Way Forward

1. Governments should strengthen early warning systems and improve climate forecasting capabilities.

2. There is a need to promote climate-resilient agricultural practices, including drought-resistant crop varieties.
3. Efficient water resource management and storage systems should be developed.
4. International cooperation is required to stabilize food supply chains.
5. Farmers should be supported through insurance schemes and policy interventions.
6. Investment in climate research and data systems should be increased.

Conclusion: A strong El Niño event in 2026–27 has the potential to significantly disrupt global weather systems, agriculture, and economies. Effective preparedness and adaptive strategies are essential to reduce its adverse impacts.

Question: Explain the likely global impacts of a strong El Niño event during 2026–27. How does it differ from La Niña, and what lessons can be drawn from past events?

Source: [DD News](#)

Energy Transition Needs Nuclear

Source: The post “Energy Transition Needs Nuclear” has been created, based on “Energy Transition Needs Nuclear” published in “Economic Times” on 25th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-International Relations

Context: The global energy transition aims to shift from fossil fuels to cleaner energy sources like renewables. However, recent geopolitical tensions, particularly the Iran conflict, have exposed structural limitations in this transition.

How the Iran Conflict Exposes Limits of Energy Transition

1. The conflict has highlighted the continued global dependence on hydrocarbons such as oil and gas.
2. Disruptions in supply chains have forced countries to prioritize energy security over climate goals.
3. Rising risks in key chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz could lead to supply shortages irrespective of price.
4. The situation is considered more severe than past oil shocks due to both price and supply constraints.

Emerging Trends: Shift Back to Conventional Energy

1. Renewed Focus on Oil and Gas

- a. Countries are increasing exploration and production of oil and gas to ensure reliable energy supply.
- b. Policies against hydrocarbons are being reversed even in regions like Europe.
- c. Several countries such as Greece and Italy have resumed or expanded offshore exploration.

2. Slowdown in EV and Clean Energy Targets

- a. Major automobile companies are delaying or scaling back electric vehicle transition plans.
- b. Growth in EV sales has slowed, reflecting market and infrastructure challenges.

3. Structural Challenges in Renewable Energy

- a. Renewable sources like solar and wind suffer from intermittency and cannot provide continuous power.
- b. There is currently no commercially viable large-scale storage solution to address this issue.
- c. Grid infrastructure is inadequate to transmit and utilize renewable energy efficiently.
- d. Renewable energy often remains underutilized due to transmission bottlenecks.

4. High Cost of Alternatives

- a. Technologies like green hydrogen are not yet commercially viable due to high costs.
- b. This limits their adoption, especially in hard-to-abate sectors like heavy industry.

Emerging Energy Priorities

1. Natural Gas as Transition Fuel

- a. Gas is being seen as a relatively cleaner and reliable alternative to coal and oil.
- b. It is likely to remain in the energy mix for a longer period than previously expected.

2. Revival of Nuclear Energy

- a. Nuclear power is gaining importance as a stable and low-carbon energy source.
- b. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are being promoted due to lower costs and scalability.
- c. Countries that earlier opposed nuclear energy, such as Germany and Japan, are reconsidering their stance.

Broader Implications

1. The energy transition is not linear and is influenced by geopolitical realities.
2. Fossil fuels will continue to play a significant role in the medium term.
3. Climate goals may face delays due to competing priorities of energy security and economic stability.

Way Forward

1. Countries should adopt a balanced and diversified energy mix including renewables, gas, and nuclear power.
2. Investment in energy storage technologies should be accelerated to address intermittency issues.
3. Grid infrastructure must be strengthened to efficiently utilize renewable energy.
4. International cooperation is required to ensure stable energy supply chains.
5. Policy frameworks should support a gradual and resilient transition rather than abrupt shifts.

Conclusion: The Iran conflict has demonstrated that energy transition faces practical and geopolitical constraints. A pragmatic approach that balances sustainability with energy security is essential for a stable global energy future.

Question: Geopolitical conflicts are reshaping the global energy transition. Discuss in the context of the Iran conflict.

Source: [Economic Times](#)

Transferring equity to coastal communities

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Environment And Gs Paper 2-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Introduction

India's conservation framework has remained land-centric for decades, while the **7,516-km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** remain under-utilised despite legal provisions. The marine sector operates on an **extraction-only model without benefit-sharing**, creating inequity for coastal communities. This gap leads to **loss of economic sovereignty**, especially as the global bio-economy shifts towards **marine genetic resources and digital value systems**.

Structural Features of India's Marine Sector

1. **Land-centric governance:** India's biodiversity framework mainly focuses on forests, crops, and medicinal plants.
2. **Strong land-based systems:** Well-defined protocols exist for **forest genetics, flora, and inland cultivars**.
3. **Weak marine focus:** Marine biodiversity lacks similar operational systems despite the existence of law.
4. **Under-utilised coastline and EEZ:** The **7,516-km coastline and vast Exclusive Economic Zone remain un-operationalised** in practice.
5. **Policy-implementation gap:** Legal provisions exist, but **effective execution in marine areas is missing**, creating a regulatory gap.

Core Issue with India's Marine Sector

1. **Extraction-only model:** The marine sector operates on **large-scale wild catch extraction without benefit-sharing**.
2. **Export-driven harvesting:** Thousands of tonnes of marine resources are harvested annually to sustain the export industry.
3. **Absence of ABS framework:** The **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) system is missing in the marine aqua sector**.
4. **No returns to fishermen:** Coastal fishermen with knowledge of species like **Yellowfin Tuna and Tiger Prawn** receive **no share in genetic or economic value**.
5. **Unequal treatment:** Forest communities receive compensation even for small resources, but **coastal communities are excluded from benefits**.
6. **Fundamental inequity:** This creates a **clear imbalance between land and marine stakeholders**, despite both being primary conservators.

Legal and Policy Shift (2023–2025 Reforms)

(a) Recognition of Oceans as Strategic Assets:

- **Shift in policy approach:** The **Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023** recognises oceans as **strategic national resources**, not just open-access commodities.

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- **End of regulatory neglect:** It addresses the long-standing gap where **marine biodiversity remained outside active governance systems**.

(b) Extension of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Framework to Marine Sector:

- **Inclusion of marine resources:** The **Revised ABS Regulations, 2025** extend benefit-sharing to **marine biological resources**.
- **Correction of inequity:** It aims to ensure **coastal communities receive a fair share of profits**, similar to forest-based systems.

(c) Alignment with Global Frameworks:

- **Global compliance:** India's **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) framework** aligns with **BBNJ (High Seas) Treaty and COP16 Cali Fund standards** on marine genetic resources.
- **Trade relevance:** It ensures Indian marine products meet **international sustainability and ethical requirements**.

(d) Support for Emerging Genetic Economy:

- **DSI-based governance:** The reforms support regulation of **Digital Sequence Information (DSI)** derived from marine resources.
- **Protection of genetic value:** It ensures that **lab-based use of marine genetic data does not bypass benefit-sharing mechanisms**.

Emerging Importance of Marine Genetic Resources

1. **Shift to Genetic Value Economy:** The marine sector is moving from **physical fish harvest to high-value genetic resources** like deep-sea bacteria and micro-algae.
2. **Rising Role of Genetic Data:** The value now lies in genetic information derived from marine organisms, which is used in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.
3. **Risk of Value Loss without Benefit Sharing:** When global firms use **Digital Sequence Information (DSI)** from Indian marine resources, **royalties may not reach coastal communities**, leading to loss of economic value.

Economic Opportunity and Trade Advantage

1. **Strong Export Base:** India's seafood exports reached ₹62,408 crore, with Andhra Pradesh contributing over 60%, showing high economic potential.
2. **Shift in Global Trade Standards:** Markets like the EU and US now focus on **ethical sourcing and sustainability standards**, not just price.

3. **ABS as Compliance Tool:** A functional Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) system acts as a certification mechanism, helping exporters meet global requirements.
4. **Access to Premium Markets:** Compliance with global standards helps India secure better market access and higher value exports.

Implementation Strategy

1. **Targeting High-Value Industrial Players:** ABS applies to large exporters and processors with turnover above ₹5 crore, focusing on premium wild-caught species, ensuring that economic surplus from high-value trade is captured.
2. **Exemption for Small Fishermen and Aquaculture:** Small and traditional fishermen are fully excluded, and aquaculture like Vannamei shrimp is not covered under ABS, as it is treated as cultivated resources, protecting livelihood security.
3. **Digital Integration for Seamless Compliance:** Systems like SWIFT (Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade), MPEDA (Marine Products Export Development Authority), and ICEGATE (Indian Customs Electronic Gateway) ensure automated and non-burdensome ABS compliance, avoiding manual delays.
4. **Institutional Coordination and Fund Tracking:** State Biodiversity Boards and the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) will monitor collections and ensure every rupee reaches the correct coastal community, strengthening accountability.

Way Forward

1. **Nationwide Expansion of ABS Framework:** A uniform rollout across all coastal states is needed to ensure consistent implementation and wider coverage of marine resources.
2. **Strengthening Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs):** Local institutions must be empowered to manage funds effectively and support coastal development, ensuring direct benefit to primary conservators.
3. **Ensuring Transparent and Traceable Fund Flow:** A system is required to track every rupee collected and return it to source communities, building trust and accountability.
4. **Deeper Integration with Trade and Global Standards:** Stronger linkage with export systems will ensure compliance with international sustainability norms, improving market access and competitiveness.

Conclusion

India must shift from an **extraction-driven marine model to an equity-based framework** where coastal communities share economic value. The **2023 reforms and ABS mechanisms** can ensure fair distribution, protect marine genetic resources, and strengthen export competitiveness. A robust system will secure **economic sovereignty** and transform oceans into drivers of **inclusive, sustainable, and value-based growth**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how extending Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) to India's marine sector can address inequity faced by coastal communities and strengthen economic sovereignty in the evolving bio-economy.

Source: [Businessline](#)

India Can't Go Green If It Runs Short of Critical Minerals

Source: The post "India Can't Go Green If It Runs Short of Critical Minerals" has been created, based on "India Can't Go Green If It Runs Short of Critical Minerals" published in "Mint" on 27th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: India is rapidly advancing towards clean energy through solar expansion, electric vehicles, and green hydrogen initiatives. However, this transition is constrained by the availability of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earth elements. Without reliable access to these materials, the pace and sustainability of India's green transition are at risk.

Rising Demand and Structural Supply Risks

1. Demand for critical minerals is expected to increase sharply due to clean energy technologies.
2. Lithium demand alone may grow fivefold by 2040, while copper demand could rise by around 30 percent.
3. These increases reflect a structural shift in global resource consumption, not temporary fluctuations.

Volatility and Fragility of Global Supply Chains

1. The recent surge in lithium prices highlights how quickly markets can tighten under pressure.
2. Supply disruptions, export restrictions, and geopolitical tensions expose vulnerabilities in mineral supply chains.
3. A few countries dominate production, making global supply highly concentrated and unstable.

Geopolitical Competition and Resource Nationalism

1. Countries are increasingly treating critical minerals as strategic assets rather than mere commodities.
2. Resource nationalism is rising, with nations building strategic reserves and locking in long-term supply agreements.
3. By 2035, the top three producers are expected to dominate most mineral supply chains, increasing concentration risks.

India's High Import Dependence

1. India remains heavily dependent on imports for critical minerals.
2. Reports highlight near-total import dependence for key minerals like lithium and cobalt.
3. This exposes India to external shocks such as price volatility, trade deficits, and currency pressures.

Economic and Industrial Implications

1. Higher mineral prices increase the cost of electric vehicles and renewable technologies.
2. Supply delays can slow manufacturing and disrupt industrial growth.
3. A prolonged supply shock could raise battery costs significantly and widen global inequality in energy transition capabilities.

Constraints Beyond Raw Material Access

1. The challenge is not limited to mining but extends across the entire value chain.
2. Processing and refining capacities are highly concentrated, with certain countries dominating these stages.
3. Without domestic capabilities, India risks replacing fossil fuel dependence with mineral import dependence.

India's Strategic Response So Far

1. India has started securing overseas mineral assets through agreements with countries like Australia, Argentina, and Brazil.
2. It has also expanded engagement with resource-rich regions such as Africa.
3. These steps indicate a shift from passive dependence to active resource diplomacy.

Limitations of Current Approach

1. Current efforts are still at an early stage and insufficient relative to the scale of the challenge.
2. There is a lack of integrated strategy covering mining, refining, and supply chain security.
3. Policy focus remains more on renewable capacity expansion rather than securing material inputs.

Need for End-to-End Value Chain Development

1. India must invest in domestic refining and processing capabilities to reduce external dependence.
2. Building strategic reserves can help manage supply shocks and price volatility.
3. Encouraging private sector participation is essential for scaling mineral acquisition and processing efforts.
4. Shift from Procurement to Strategic Planning:
 - a. India needs to move from a short-term procurement mindset to a long-term strategic approach.
 - b. This includes:
 - Long-term offtake agreements
 - Equity investments in overseas mining projects
 - Coordinated resource diplomacy
 - c. Such measures will ensure sustained and secure access to critical minerals.

Conclusion: The transition to clean energy is also a transition towards dependence on critical minerals. India's ability to secure these resources will determine the success of its energy and industrial transformation. A comprehensive, forward-looking strategy is essential to avoid replacing one form of dependence with another.

Question: "India's energy transition is critically dependent on the availability of critical minerals." Examine the challenges associated with their supply and suggest a strategic way forward.

Source: [Mint](#)

Financial inclusion will depend on stronger rural credit access

Source: The post “Financial inclusion will depend on stronger rural credit access” has been created, based on “Financial inclusion will depend on stronger rural credit access” published in “BusinessLine” on 27th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India has achieved significant progress in financial inclusion through the expansion of bank accounts and digital payments. However, formal inclusion does not guarantee functional access to credit when it is actually needed. The next phase of financial inclusion will depend on whether the system can provide timely and reliable credit.

Nature of Rural Credit: Survival-Oriented Demand

1. In rural areas, credit is primarily used for sustaining everyday economic activities rather than long-term investments.
2. It helps households manage unexpected expenses, continue small businesses, and take advantage of seasonal opportunities.
3. Due to irregular income patterns and limited savings, the timing and reliability of credit are as important as the amount.

Limitations of Traditional Banking Systems

1. Traditional banking systems face difficulties in serving rural borrowers due to small loan sizes and lack of formal documentation.
2. The irregular and unpredictable cash flows of rural households further complicate credit assessment.
3. As a result, many individuals remain excluded from effective credit access despite being part of the formal financial system.

Structural Importance of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs)

1. Microfinance institutions play a crucial role in bridging the last-mile gap in rural credit delivery.
2. They operate with a strong local presence and have a better understanding of borrower behavior and regional conditions.
3. Their lending model is based on trust and repeated interactions, which makes them effective in underserved areas.
4. Even with the growth of digital solutions, the assisted model of MFIs remains essential.

Recent Sectoral Correction and Its Implications

1. The microfinance sector has recently experienced a contraction, with nearly 17 million borrowers exiting the system.
2. This decline has been caused by over-leveraging, broader economic pressures, and increased caution among lenders.
3. In response, the sector has improved borrower discipline, strengthened underwriting practices, and imposed limits on exposure.
4. However, this phase has highlighted that credit access for vulnerable borrowers can shrink quickly when confidence declines.

Liquidity Constraints and Uneven Capital Flow

1. Access to rural credit is closely linked to the availability of capital for NBFC-MFIs.
2. During periods of risk aversion, larger institutions are able to maintain funding, while smaller regional MFIs face tighter constraints.
3. Since these smaller institutions serve deeper rural markets, reduced liquidity directly impacts last-mile credit delivery.
4. This results in an uneven distribution of credit access across regions.

Role of Government Credit Guarantee Support

1. Government credit guarantee schemes help reduce the perceived risk faced by lenders.
2. They encourage the flow of capital into underserved segments by providing a layer of protection.
3. Although the scale of such support may be limited, it plays an important role in restoring confidence in the sector.
4. These measures help create conditions for more consistent credit flow.

Economic Multiplier Effect of Rural Credit

1. Rural credit generates a multiplier effect by stimulating economic activity within local communities.
2. It enables small businesses to function smoothly and supports agricultural production cycles.
3. It also enhances local trade and improves household consumption patterns.
4. Thus, rural credit connects financial inclusion with real economic participation.

Need for Context-Specific Credit Solutions

1. Rural markets are diverse and cannot be addressed through uniform financial solutions.
2. Different regions have varying economic conditions, income patterns, and credit needs.
3. Therefore, credit products and delivery mechanisms must be tailored to local realities.

Way Forward

1. There is a need to shift the focus from merely opening accounts to ensuring access to effective credit.
2. Strengthening the institutional capacity of last-mile lenders is essential for sustainable credit delivery.
3. Ensuring stable funding and promoting responsible lending practices will be crucial.
4. Digital solutions should complement, rather than replace, human-centric assisted models.

Conclusion: Financial inclusion is meaningful only when individuals can effectively manage opportunities and financial shocks. Reliable access to credit is central to achieving this objective. Strengthening rural credit systems is therefore essential for inclusive and sustainable economic development in India.

Question: Financial inclusion in India has progressed significantly, but access to timely rural credit remains a challenge." Discuss in detail the issues, institutional role, and way forward.

Source: [BusinessLine](#)

Summer as a Source of Income Shock for Gig Workers

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

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Introduction

Heatwaves have become a **regular and prolonged feature of Indian summers**, with **significant heat-related mortality recorded in 2022**. While preparedness has improved in health response, the **economic impact remains under-recognised**. Gig and delivery workers, who depend on continuous outdoor work, face direct exposure to extreme heat. As temperatures rise, their ability to work declines, turning heatwaves into a **source of income disruption and economic vulnerability**.

Expanding Gig Economy and Climate Vulnerability

1. **Rapid growth of gig workforce:** India had **7.7 million gig workers in 2020–21**, expected to reach **over 23 million by 2029–30**, showing fast expansion.
2. **Nature of work increases exposure:** Work involves delivery, driving, and logistics, which require constant outdoor movement in urban areas.
3. **High dependence on platform-based income:** Earnings depend on trips, deliveries, and hours logged, making workers sensitive to external conditions.
4. **Least protected workforce:** Workers lack formal labour protections, making them **highly exposed and poorly safeguarded** against climate risks.

Reasons for Increasing Climate Vulnerability on Gig Workers

1. **Income tied to physical activity:** Earnings depend on continuous work, so reduced activity due to heat directly cuts income.
2. **No flexibility in work conditions:** Workers cannot work from home or take paid leave during extreme heat conditions.
3. **Unchanged incentive structures:** Platforms continue fixed targets despite rising temperatures, increasing pressure on workers.
4. **Health risks increase vulnerability:** Heat leads to dehydration, fatigue, and exhaustion, reducing capacity to work.
5. **Inadequate urban support systems:** Facilities like water kiosks and cooling centres exist but are not suited for mobile workers.
6. **Fragmented institutional responsibility:** Different agencies work separately, leading to gaps in addressing heat risks.
7. **Additional burden on women workers:** Women face **health, safety, and unpaid care responsibilities**, increasing vulnerability.

Heatwaves as an Economic and Income Shock for Gig Workers

1. **Direct reduction in earnings:** High temperatures slow movement and reduce productivity, leading to fewer completed tasks.

2. **Immediate income loss on stopping work:** Logging off even briefly leads to **instant loss of income**, unlike salaried jobs.
3. **Forced trade-off between health and income:** Workers must choose between avoiding heat and maintaining earnings.
4. **Long-term health stress affects income:** Continuous exposure increases health risks, affecting future earning capacity.
5. **Income volatility increases:** Extreme heat creates irregular income patterns without any protection mechanisms.
6. **Economic impact beyond health concern:** Heat becomes not just a health issue but a **direct economic shock for workers**.

Gaps in Heat Preparedness and Policy Approach

1. **Focus on health, not income:** Policies mainly treat heat as a medical emergency, ignoring its economic impact.
2. **Unrealistic advisories:** Suggestions like staying indoors do not apply to workers whose income depends on movement.
3. **Limited impact of existing measures:** Cooling centres and water facilities reduce mortality but not income loss.
4. **Lack of worker-specific planning:** Measures are not designed for highly mobile gig workers.
5. **Absence in adaptation discussions:** Gig workers remain largely excluded from climate preparedness strategies.

Way forward

1. **Recognise heat as a labour issue:** Introduce rest norms, shaded waiting areas, and drinking water access as basic safeguards.
2. **Address income loss risks:** Develop systems through labour protection or welfare integration to reduce income shocks.
3. **Include platforms in planning:** Digital platforms should adjust delivery pressure and allow flexible performance during peak heat.
4. **Promote heat-responsive design:** Modify work systems to reduce exposure without stopping services.
5. **Improve institutional coordination:** Ensure collaboration between labour departments, urban bodies, disaster agencies, and regulators.

6. **Use policy window before peak summer:** Take timely action to reduce risks before temperatures rise further.

Conclusion

Gig workers are essential to urban systems but remain **largely unprotected from rising heat risks**. Heatwaves now create **direct income disruption alongside health stress**. Existing measures reduce mortality but fail to secure earnings. Effective resilience requires **safe working conditions and income protection**. Without focused action, extreme heat will continue to deepen economic vulnerability for this growing workforce.

Question for practice:

Examine how increasing heatwaves in India are emerging as a source of income shock for gig and delivery workers, and evaluate the adequacy of existing policy responses.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Information asymmetry in higher education

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education,

Introduction

India's higher education system has expanded rapidly, with enrolment rising from **3.42 crore (2014-15) to 4.33 crore (2021-22)** and improved Gross Enrolment Ratio. The system now offers diverse and multidisciplinary choices. However, students still depend on **limited, uneven, and often unverifiable information**. Institutions know far more about their internal quality. This gap creates **information asymmetry**, which distorts decision-making and makes it difficult to identify real quality.

Information Asymmetry in Higher Education and Its Effects

Unequal access to institutional information: Institutions have detailed data on faculty, teaching processes, infrastructure, and placements, while students rely on brochures, advertisements, and informal advice which are often incomplete.

Distorted decision-making environment: Students make choices based on selective and unverifiable information, which reduces their ability to assess actual institutional quality.

Market for lemons effect: As explained by George Akerlof, a **Nobel Prize-winning economist (2001)**, when sellers know more than buyers, **low-quality providers can imitate high-quality ones**, making it hard to distinguish real quality. In higher education, weaker institutions use **branding, marketing, and selective disclosure** to appear similar to better institutions.

Adverse selection in the system: Good institutions fail to differentiate clearly, while weaker institutions attract students, leading to inefficient outcomes.

Control over information disclosure: Institutions decide what to reveal, allowing them to highlight strengths and hide weaknesses.

Information Overload vs Quality Gap

Abundance of information but weak reliability: Websites, rankings, and portals provide large volumes of data, but this does not ensure accurate or useful information.

Self-reported and promotional data dominance: Much of the data is provided by institutions themselves, which often emphasises positive aspects and lacks verification.

Lack of standard definitions across indicators: Faculty strength, research output, and placement outcomes are defined differently, reducing comparability.

Non-transparent ranking methodologies: Some rankings use unclear methods, which creates confusion and weakens trust in available data.

Dependence on proxy indicators: Students rely on brand name, infrastructure, and fees, which are visible but do not reflect academic quality.

Manipulation of information and signalling: Institutions may exaggerate or selectively present data to improve perception without improving real quality.

Consequences Of Information Asymmetry in Higher Education

Poor institutional choices by students: Students may select institutions that do not meet expectations due to misleading or incomplete information.

Weak graduate outcomes and employability: Poor quality education leads to limited skills and reduced job opportunities.

Erosion of trust in higher education system: Lack of reliable information reduces confidence among students and families.

Distortion of education market outcomes: Quality institutions are not rewarded properly, while weaker ones continue to attract students.

Impact on national goals: It affects progress towards SDG-4 and the goal of Viksit Bharat with a skilled workforce.

Financial risks for families: Students invest significant resources based on unreliable data, leading to long-term consequences.

Role of Public Information Systems

Standardisation through ranking frameworks: National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) uses common indicators like teaching, research, and outcomes.

Structured and comparable data reporting: Institutions disclose data in a fixed format, improving comparability across institutions.

Access to verified institutional information: Centralised data portals provide information on enrolment, accreditation, and faculty strength.

Reduction in reliance on informal sources: Availability of credible data reduces dependence on advertisements and informal advice.

Support for informed decision-making: Standardised information helps students evaluate institutions more objectively.

Limitations of Current Mechanisms

Dependence on self-reported data: Many systems rely on data submitted by institutions without strong verification. This creates scope for inaccurate or biased reporting.

Verification vacuum in the system: There is no strong independent mechanism to verify claims on faculty, research, or placements. This allows false or exaggerated data to continue without detection or penalty.

Incentives for data manipulation: Institutions may inflate faculty numbers, split research funding, or exaggerate performance to improve rankings instead of improving real quality.

Manipulation of placement data: Institutions may report inflated salary packages, include internships or temporary roles as placements, and selectively report only successful cases. This makes placement outcomes difficult to verify.

Commercialisation of ranking ecosystem: A large consultancy industry helps institutions improve rankings through data presentation and strategy, rather than improving teaching and learning quality.

Focus on measurable indicators over real quality: Rankings often prioritise easily measurable factors, while important aspects like classroom experience, mentoring, and practical learning are not captured.

Neglect of qualitative aspects of education: Classroom experience, mentoring, and work-integrated learning are difficult to measure and often ignored.

Misleading interpretation of ranks: Small differences between institutions may appear large due to ranking positions, which can misguide students.

Way Forward

Strengthening independent data verification: There is a need for third-party audits and verification systems to check the accuracy of institutional data, especially for placements and faculty details.

Standardisation of definitions across indicators: Common definitions for faculty strength, research output, and placements should be applied across institutions to improve comparability.

Transparent and accountable ranking methodologies: Ranking systems should clearly explain indicators and weightage, and also ensure accountability for false reporting.

Regulatory oversight and enforcement: Strong monitoring mechanisms and clear penalties for data manipulation are necessary to reduce misuse of information.

Accessible and user-friendly information platforms: Data should be presented in simple formats so that students and families can easily understand and compare institutions.

Improved data presentation and visualisation: Clear and structured formats can help students identify meaningful differences instead of relying on ranks alone.

Focus on real quality improvement: Institutions should prioritise teaching-learning processes, mentoring, and student outcomes instead of only improving their public image.

Conclusion

Information asymmetry remains a major challenge in higher education. Despite more data, lack of verification and standardisation limits its usefulness. Students continue to rely on incomplete signals. Reducing this gap through better information systems, transparency, and accountability is essential to ensure that real quality, not presentation, guides decision-making and strengthens the higher education system.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how information asymmetry affects decision-making in India's higher education system and examine the role and limitations of public information systems in addressing it.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-Plus Cities” Report

Source: The post “**Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-Plus Cities” Report**” has been created, based on “**NITI Aayog releases report on “Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-Plus Cities”**” published in “**PIB**” on 28th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: NITI Aayog released the report “**Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-plus Cities**”. The report highlights that urbanisation is central to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 and building a \$30 trillion economy.

Significance of Urbanisation

1. Cities act as engines of economic growth, innovation, and employment generation.
2. Million-plus cities contribute significantly to national economic output.
3. Effective urban governance is essential for improving service delivery and livability.

Key Challenges in Urban Governance

1. There exist fragmented institutional arrangements which weaken coordination.
2. There is limited devolution of powers to city governments.
3. Municipal bodies suffer from weak financial autonomy.
4. Accountability mechanisms are diffused across multiple agencies.
5. Leadership structures are often weak and lack continuity.
6. Capacity gaps hinder efficient service delivery and urban performance.

Key Recommendations of the Report

1. Strengthening City Leadership

- a. The report recommends the introduction of a directly elected Mayor with a fixed tenure.
- b. It proposes an empowered Mayor-in-Council system for better decision-making and accountability.

2. Integration of Urban Services

- a. The report suggests bringing key services like water supply, sanitation, and public transport under city governments.
- b. This integration will improve coordination and accountability in service delivery.

3. Enhancing Municipal Finances

- a. Municipal bodies should strengthen their own-source revenues.
- b. There is a need for predictable and timely fiscal transfers through robust State Finance Commissions.
- c. Cities should be enabled to access market-based financing such as municipal bonds.

4. Institutional Restructuring

- a. Multiple parastatal agencies should be brought under city government oversight.
- b. Clear role definitions and coordination frameworks must be established.

Implementation Strategy

1. States are required to amend their Municipal Acts to incorporate governance reforms.
2. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs should update the Model Municipal Law.
3. A phased approach is recommended to allow testing, learning, and scalability of reforms.

Conclusion: Strengthening city governments is a strategic imperative for India's development trajectory. Empowered and accountable urban local bodies will enable cities to become drivers of economic growth and improve quality of life. Effective implementation of the recommendations is crucial to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Question: Discuss the key challenges in urban governance in India and examine the recommendations of NITI Aayog for strengthening city governments in million-plus cities.

Source: [PIB](#)

Labour Welfare in Colonial India

Source: The post “Labour Welfare in Colonial India” has been created, based on “How Ambedkar laid the foundations of India’s modern labour legislation” published in “Indian Express” on 28th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: B. R. Ambedkar served as the Labour Member in the Viceroy’s Executive Council from 1942 to 1946 and played a transformative role in labour welfare. His policy interventions laid the foundation for modern labour laws and influenced constitutional provisions related to social and economic justice.

Labour Conditions in Colonial India

1. Industrialisation during the colonial period led to the shift of workers from agrarian to industrial sectors.
2. Labour welfare was largely neglected as economic growth was prioritised over workers’ rights.
3. Workers faced long working hours, poor working conditions, and lack of social security.

Key Contributions to Labour Legislation

1. Reduction in Working Hours: He introduced the **principle of an 8-hour workday**, replacing the earlier system of excessively long working hours. This reform aligned India’s labour standards with international practices.

2. Social Security Measures: He advocated for the introduction of social security provisions such as provident funds and employee insurance. These measures aimed to provide financial stability and protection to workers.

3. Maternity Benefits: He supported the provision of maternity benefits for women workers to ensure their welfare and dignity. This marked an important step towards gender-sensitive labour policies.

4. Leave and Welfare Provisions: He promoted paid leave and better working conditions for labourers. These measures improved the overall quality of work life.

5. Trade Union Rights: He strengthened the legal recognition of trade unions and supported collective bargaining. This empowered workers to safeguard their rights.

6. Employment Exchanges: He initiated the establishment of employment exchanges to address unemployment in an organised manner.

7. Industrial Relations: He worked towards improving relations between employers and employees through legal safeguards and institutional mechanisms.

Reflection in the Indian Constitution

1. Fundamental Rights: The prohibition of forced labour under Article 23 reflects his commitment to protecting worker dignity.

2. Directive Principles of State Policy: Provisions relating to just and humane working conditions, living wages, and social security reflect his vision.

3. Social Justice Framework: His ideas linked labour welfare with broader goals of equality and social justice.

Significance of His Contribution

1. He transformed labour policy from a colonial framework of exploitation to one focused on welfare and rights.
2. He established the principle of state responsibility in ensuring labour welfare.
3. He integrated economic development with social justice objectives.

Challenges

1. Uneven Implementation of Labour Laws

- a. Labour laws inspired by B. R. Ambedkar faced weak enforcement due to administrative inefficiencies and capacity gaps.
- b. Variations across states, weak inspection systems, and judicial delays reduced their effectiveness.

2. Exclusion of Informal Sector Workers

- a. A majority of workers remained in the informal sector, beyond the effective reach of labour laws.
- b. Lack of formal contracts and social security left workers vulnerable to exploitation.

3. Resistance from Industrial Interests

- a. Employers viewed labour regulations as costly and restrictive, leading to partial compliance.
- b. This created a constant tension between labour welfare and economic competitiveness.

Conclusion: B. R. Ambedkar laid the foundation of India's modern labour welfare framework through progressive and inclusive policies. His vision continues to guide labour reforms aimed at ensuring dignity, equity, and justice for all workers.

Question: Examine the contribution of B. R. Ambedkar in laying the foundations of modern labour legislation in India.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

AI-Led Community Governance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- e-Governance

Introduction

India is witnessing rapid adoption of AI across sectors like agriculture, health, finance, and governance. Most tools focus on delivering information, assuming communities lack access to it. However, the deeper issue lies in weak connections between people and local institutions. The AI4WaterPolicy initiative in Rajasthan presents a different approach. It used AI to listen to community experiences. This helped identify real barriers, strengthen participation, and improve coordination between communities and institutions for better local development outcomes.

Concept and Implications: From Information Push to Participatory Development

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1. **Limits of information-push model:** Most AI systems are designed to deliver information, assuming communities mainly lack access to it.
2. **Institutional gap as core issue:** In reality, the key problem lies in weak links between people and local institutions, shaped by caste, gender, and social barriers.
3. **Inadequacy of quantitative data:** Numbers alone cannot explain why plans are not implemented, why people hesitate to speak, or why local actors disengage.
4. **Need for capturing lived experiences:** Effective governance requires continuous collection of qualitative insights from the ground.
5. **Shift towards participatory development:** When AI captures these voices, communities move from passive recipients to active participants in planning and implementation.

Core Principles of AI-led Community Development

1. **Listening-based AI system:** The model is built to collect community experiences through conversations rather than only delivering information.
2. **Qualitative insight at scale:** It processes many conversations and identifies recurring patterns without manual effort.
3. **Adaptive questioning process:** The system adjusts follow-up questions based on each person's responses during the interaction.
4. **Thematic analysis with validation:** Responses are translated, grouped into themes, and then checked by field and research teams.
5. **Human-supported implementation:** The system works with local intermediaries to ensure access and participation. For example, **Centre for Microfinance (CmF)** staff supported engagement and 'Pani Mitras' helped people share views.
6. **Inclusive communication design:** Conversations happen through **WhatsApp using voice notes and text in Hindi and local dialects**, which reduces hesitation.
7. **Feedback-to-action linkage:** Insights are quickly used to change training and programme design within the same cycle.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Digital divide reality:** Gender, caste, and class differences limit access to devices and participation.
2. **Limited institutional capacity:** Systems often lack time and resources to collect and analyse qualitative data.
3. **Social hesitation barriers:** People may hesitate to speak openly in formal settings like Gram Sabhas.

4. **Dependence on human networks:** AI needs strong local relationships to get honest and useful responses.

Initiative: AI4WaterPolicy in Rajasthan

1. **Collaborative implementation:** The project was implemented with Centre for Microfinance (CmF) as field partner and Colectiv as technology partner.
2. **Listening-based AI model:** The project in Sirohi and Pali districts used AI to collect insights instead of pushing information.
3. **Large-scale engagement:** It conducted **352 interviews across 50 villages in six months** using WhatsApp in local languages.
4. **Diverse stakeholders involved:** It interacted with 'Pani Mitras', Panchayat leaders, and frontline staff.
5. **Key insights identified:** It found **community pride in water improvement, double burden on women, and delays in approvals and funding.**
6. **Validation through participation:** 'Pause and Reflect' sessions helped people review findings and share more inputs.
7. **Training redesign based on feedback:** CmF added **Panchayati Raj orientation and workshops with block-level officials from rural development, agriculture, and water departments.**
8. **Real-time adaptive governance:** Changes were made within the same programme cycle due to quick AI-based insights.
9. **Improved community confidence:** Follow-up after **three months** showed more than half of members engaged directly with government officials.
10. **Better administrative response:** Participants reported faster action and improved confidence in scheme application processes.

Way Forward: Strengthening AI for Community Development

1. **Build listening-based systems:** AI should focus on understanding community needs, not only delivering services.
2. **Strengthen human intermediaries:** Volunteers like 'Pani Mitras' should be supported, not replaced.
3. **Ensure inclusive participation:** Use local languages, voice tools, and shared devices to reduce barriers.
4. **Institutionalise feedback loops:** Programmes like Jal Jeevan Mission should use such systems for better last-mile delivery.

5. **Integrate with existing structures:** The approach can work within large programmes that depend on local coordination.

Conclusion

AI4WaterPolicy shows that AI can support community-led development by capturing lived experiences and strengthening feedback systems. It helped bridge gaps between communities and institutions and improved participation in governance processes. The results highlight that AI works best when combined with human support and inclusive access. Future approaches should focus on listening systems, stronger local networks, and continuous feedback to make development more responsive, participatory, and effective.

Question for practice:

Discuss how AI can enable community-led development by shifting from information delivery to active listening, with reference to the AI4WaterPolicy initiative in Rajasthan.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A Tightening of the Fist in India's Digital Public Square

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Introduction

The draft amendments to the IT Rules, 2026, released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, introduce major changes to online speech regulation. Though presented as simple clarifications, they expand executive control over digital platforms and users. The short 15-day consultation period raises concern about limited scrutiny. These changes weaken legal safeguards, increase compliance pressure on intermediaries, and signal a shift toward greater administrative influence over digital expression.

Key Proposals in the Draft Amendments

1. **Expansion of Safe Harbour Conditions:** Rule 3(4) requires platforms to follow government advisories, directions, SOPs, and guidelines to retain protection under Section 79. This makes compliance with informal instruments a legal necessity.
2. **Widening Scope of Oversight to Users:** Rule 8 extends government oversight to intermediaries and even users who post or share news and current affairs content online. This brings ordinary users under regulatory scrutiny.
3. **Strengthening Blocking Mechanism:** The amendments expand the use of Rules 14, 15, and 16, which include blocking directions and emergency powers. These tools allow direct intervention in online content.
4. **Transformation of Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC):** Rule 14 replaces "complaints" with "matters," allowing the IDC to examine any issue referred by the government. This removes the earlier grievance-based limitation.

5. **Expansion of Data Retention Obligations:** Rules 3(1)(g) and 3(1)(h) clarify that data retention duties operate in addition to other laws. This can extend storage of user data beyond 180 days.

Major Concerns Arising from the Amendments

1. **Dilution of Judicial Safeguards:** The amendments weaken the standard set in *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India*, which required a court order or lawful notification for content removal. Informal directives now trigger compliance.
2. **Unchecked Expansion of Executive Power:** Rule 3(4) allows the executive to issue binding instruments without clear statutory backing. This bypasses Parliament and reduces judicial oversight.
3. **Risk of Over-Censorship by Platforms:** Unclear and possibly unpublished directives create fear of liability. Platforms may remove content excessively to avoid losing safe harbour.
4. **Threat to Freedom of Speech:** The expanded oversight raises concerns under Article 19(1)(a). Courts like the Bombay High Court and Madras High Court have already questioned similar frameworks.
5. **Surveillance and Privacy Risks:** Extended data retention increases chances of misuse, data breaches, and unauthorised access. It also changes how users behave online.

Issues in Implementation and Governance

1. **Ambiguity in Key Terms:** The use of the term “matter” in Rule 14 is undefined. This creates wide discretion without clear limits.
2. **Lack of Procedural Safeguards:** There is no guarantee that affected users will be heard before action is taken. This weakens fairness in decision-making.
3. **Possibility of Secret Directives:** Government advisories and directions may not be published. Platforms may still be required to comply, creating opacity.
4. **Overlap with Existing Legal Frameworks:** Data retention obligations may extend beyond limits set under the IT Act. This creates confusion and excessive compliance burden.
5. **Short Consultation Period:** The consultation period lasted only 15 days, ending on April 14. This limits meaningful public debate on major changes.

Broader Implications

1. **Shift Toward Executive-Driven Governance:** The amendments increase reliance on executive directions instead of formal law. This changes the nature of digital regulation.
2. **Expansion from Platforms to Individuals:** Regulation now covers not just intermediaries but also ordinary users sharing content. This widens state reach.

3. **From Grievance Redressal to Preemptive Control:** The IDC moves from handling complaints to actively examining content. This reflects a shift toward proactive control.
4. **Reconstruction of Challenged Frameworks:** The amendments revive oversight mechanisms that were earlier stayed by courts. This raises constitutional concerns.
5. **Growth of Self-Censorship:** Fear of content removal and data tracking may lead users to limit their expression. This reduces openness in digital spaces.

Legal and Constitutional Concerns

1. **Violation of Delegated Legislation Limits:** Rules must remain within the parent law. This principle was affirmed in *Indian Express Newspapers vs Union of India*.
2. **Creation of New Obligations Beyond Law:** The amendments impose duties not clearly provided under Sections 79 or 87 of the IT Act. This raises questions of legality.
3. **Bypassing Ongoing Judicial Review:** Several provisions of the IT Rules are under challenge in courts. The amendments recreate similar structures despite pending cases.

Conclusion

The amendments expand executive control over digital speech and weaken established legal safeguards. They risk over-censorship, increased surveillance, and reduced transparency. By creating obligations beyond the parent law and reviving contested frameworks, they disturb the balance between regulation and freedom. A rights-based approach must ensure accountability, respect judicial limits, and protect open digital participation.

Questions for practice:

Evaluate the impact of the draft amendments to India's Information Technology Rules, 2026, on freedom of speech, platform regulation, and the balance between executive power and constitutional safeguards in the digital public sphere.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

G7 Declaration on Desertification

Source: The post "G7 Declaration on Desertification" has been created, based on "Environment G7 puts desertification at centre of environmental agenda, flags land crisis as global security threat" published in "Down To Earth" on 29th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Environment

Context: The G7 Environment Ministerial Meeting 2026 placed desertification, land degradation and drought at the centre of its agenda, recognising them not only as environmental concerns but also as systemic risks to global stability and development.

Key Highlights of the Declaration

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1. The G7 formally described desertification and drought as **“systemic global challenges” and “security risk multipliers.”**
2. Nearly 40 per cent of global land is already degraded, affecting around 3.2 billion people worldwide.
3. The declaration highlighted that environmental stress is increasingly linked with social and political instability.
4. It noted that more than 40 per cent of intrastate conflicts in the past six decades have been associated with land and water disputes.
5. The ministers emphasised the need to scale up land restoration, drought resilience and sustainable land management efforts.
6. The declaration called for mobilisation of both public and private finance through blended finance models.
7. It identified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification COP17 as a key platform for delivering concrete outcomes.

Why Desertification is a Security Threat

1. Desertification reduces agricultural productivity, which weakens rural economies and threatens food security.
2. It intensifies competition over scarce land and water resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflicts.
3. Land degradation leads to migration and displacement, which creates demographic and economic pressures in urban areas.
4. Environmental stress acts as a risk multiplier by aggravating existing social, economic and political tensions.

Policy Significance of the Shift

1. The shift broadens the issue from an environmental concern to a matter of global peace and security.
2. It promotes integrated policy approaches that link environment, development and security.
3. It elevates land degradation as a priority issue in global governance frameworks.
4. It signals increased focus on financing mechanisms for land restoration and resilience building.

Implications for Global Security

1. Land degradation leads to increased competition over scarce natural resources such as land and water.
2. This competition contributes to social tensions, conflicts, and political instability within countries.
3. Environmental degradation also leads to forced migration and displacement of vulnerable populations.
4. Declining agricultural productivity weakens economic resilience and increases vulnerability in fragile regions.

Implications for India and Developing Countries

1. Developing countries like India are highly vulnerable because a large proportion of their population depends on land-based livelihoods.
2. The declaration opens opportunities for accessing international finance for land restoration and sustainable land management.
3. It supports national efforts related to land degradation neutrality and sustainable agriculture.
4. Improved land management can enhance agricultural productivity and strengthen rural livelihoods.

Concerns

1. There is a significant gap between commitments and actual implementation on the ground.
2. Climate change was deliberately excluded from the formal agenda to maintain consensus within the G7.
3. The exclusion of climate change may weaken a comprehensive approach to land degradation.

Way Forward

1. The UNCCD COP17 2026 must translate commitments into measurable and time-bound actions.
2. Countries should integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation with land restoration strategies.
3. Governments should scale up blended finance mechanisms to support large-scale restoration projects.
4. Local communities should be actively involved in sustainable land management practices.
5. Stronger global cooperation and monitoring mechanisms should be developed to ensure accountability.

Conclusion: The recognition of desertification as a global security threat marks an important policy shift, but its effectiveness will depend on sustained political will, adequate financing and concrete action at both global and local levels.

Question: Desertification has been elevated as a global security threat by the G7. Discuss the implications of this shift and the way forward.

Source: [Down to Earth](#)

The fight to eliminate cervical cancer

Source: The post “**The fight to eliminate cervical cancer**” has been created, based on “**The fight to eliminate cervical cancer**” published in “The Hindu” on 29th March 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Science and technology

Context: Cervical cancer remains a major public health issue caused primarily by persistent infection with the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a global initiative to eliminate cervical cancer, with India as a key participant.

Burden of Cervical Cancer

1. Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women in India, with nearly one lakh new cases annually.
2. It disproportionately affects women in low- and middle-income settings due to a lack of awareness and healthcare access.
3. The disease leads to high morbidity, mortality, and socio-economic burden, especially among younger women.

Role of Screening

1. Screening methods such as Pap smear and visual inspection help detect precancerous stages like Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN).

2. Early detection allows simple and effective treatment without the need for major surgery.
3. Regular screening can significantly reduce incidence and mortality rates.

Role of HPV Vaccination

1. HPV vaccination provides primary prevention by protecting against high-risk virus strains such as HPV 16 and 18.
2. Scientific evidence shows that even a single dose can protect around 85–90 per cent.
3. The vaccine has a strong safety profile with no major adverse effects reported on fertility or overall health.
4. Countries that introduced vaccination early have already seen a decline in pre-cancer and cancer rates.

Global Targets and India's Efforts

1. The World Health Organisation (WHO) aims to achieve elimination through the 90-70-90 targets by 2030.
2. These include vaccinating 90 per cent of girls, screening 70 per cent of women, and treating 90 per cent of detected cases.
3. India has recently launched a national HPV vaccination campaign to expand coverage among adolescent girls.

Challenges in Elimination

1. India faces an inadequate screening infrastructure and a shortage of trained manpower for large-scale implementation.
2. Screening coverage remains low, with less than 5 per cent of eligible women being screened.
3. There are delays in diagnosis and poor follow-up due to weak referral systems and low compliance.
4. Social stigma, lack of awareness, and limited health-seeking behaviour further hinder early detection.

Way Forward

1. There is a need to strengthen primary healthcare systems for widespread screening and vaccination.
2. Public awareness campaigns must be intensified to address stigma and misinformation.
3. Integration of screening with existing health programmes can improve outreach and efficiency.
4. Greater investment in healthcare infrastructure and workforce is essential for achieving targets.

Conclusion: Eliminating cervical cancer is achievable through a combination of effective vaccination, early screening, and timely treatment. With sustained political commitment and public health efforts, India can significantly reduce the burden and move towards a cancer-free future.

Question: Discuss the challenges in eliminating cervical cancer in India and examine the role of HPV vaccination and screening in achieving this goal.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The Hormuz digital chokepoint: How does the Iran war threaten subsea cables?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

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The Strait of Hormuz is now both an energy and digital chokepoint. Several subsea cables pass through this narrow route, linking Asia, the Gulf, and Europe. Iran's warning has highlighted the vulnerability of this critical infrastructure. Ongoing conflict has raised risks of accidental and indirect damage to these cables. Since they support global internet traffic and financial systems, any disruption can slow connectivity, affect transactions, and weaken digital economies dependent on this.

What are Subsea Cables?

1. **Basic meaning and structure:** Subsea cables are optical fibre or electrical cables laid on the seabed to carry data and power across countries.
2. **Physical design and capacity:** These cables are thin like a hose but protected by layers of metal and plastic to carry large data safely.
3. **Role in digital services:** They support **telecom, cloud services, and online communication**, which depend on fast and stable data flow.

Strategic Importance of Subsea Cables

1. **Backbone of global digital economy:** Subsea cables carry **around 99% of global internet traffic** and support communication, finance, and online services across countries.
2. **Support to financial systems:** These cables enable **over \$10 trillion in daily financial transactions**, making them critical for global markets.
3. **Dependence of data centres and cloud systems:** Data centres depend on cable landing stations, and without them, they cannot transmit or process data effectively.
4. **Role in AI and digital infrastructure:** Gulf countries like UAE and Saudi Arabia rely on these cables for **AI systems and large-scale digital infrastructure investments**.
5. **Key global cable networks:** Major systems like **AAE-1, FALCON, Gulf Bridge International, TGN-Gulf, and SEA-ME-WE** connect Asia, the Gulf, Africa, and Europe.
6. **Rising investment and expansion:** New cable projects, including those led by **Ooredoo**, show increasing dependence on these networks for future growth.

Strait of Hormuz as a Dual Chokepoint

1. **Energy and digital significance:** The strait is a critical route for **global oil shipments and internet traffic**, making it highly strategic.
2. **Global connectivity link:** It connects **India, Southeast Asia, West Asia, Africa, and Europe** through multiple cable routes.
3. **High concentration risk:** Many cables pass through this narrow passage, making it a **single vulnerable point for global connectivity**.

4. **Scale of data flow:** A large number of global internet cables pass through this narrow route, making it a critical digital chokepoint.
5. **Support to financial systems:** These cables enable **over \$10 trillion in daily financial transactions**, linking global markets.

Nature of Risks to Subsea Infrastructure

1. **Accidental human activities:** Around **70–80% of cable faults** are caused by fishing and ship anchors, making human activity the main threat.
2. **Natural risks:** Undersea currents, earthquakes, volcanoes, and typhoons can damage cables despite safety measures.
3. **Conflict-related threats:** War increases risks of **sabotage and indirect damage from ships affected by attacks**.
4. **Impact of military operations:** Active conflict raises the chance of **unintentional damage, especially over longer periods**.
5. **Evidence from past events:** In 2024, a drifting vessel damaged cables in the Red Sea, disrupting **about 25% of data traffic**.

Impact of Potential Disruptions

1. **Internet and communication effects:** Damage can cause **slow speeds or outages**, affecting global communication systems.
2. **Economic disruptions:** It can disturb **e-commerce, financial transactions, and cloud services**, leading to wider economic losses.
3. **Impact on data centres:** Data centres become less effective without stable cable connections, reducing service quality.
4. **Regional dependence factor:** The level of impact depends on how much networks rely on these cables and available alternatives.

Challenges in Repair and Restoration

1. **Difficulties in conflict zones:** Repairing cables is risky due to **fighting, mines, and unstable conditions in the region**.
2. **Operational and insurance risks:** Repair ships and insurers may avoid these areas, delaying restoration work.
3. **Permit-related issues:** Access to territorial waters requires permits, which can **take a long time and delay repairs**.

4. **Post-conflict recovery:** After conflict, seabed surveys are needed to **identify safe routes and avoid obstacles like sunken ships.**

Limitations of Alternatives

1. **Land-based systems:** These provide partial backup but cannot fully replace subsea cables in capacity.
2. **Satellite limitations:** Satellites are **costly and cannot handle large data volumes**, making them unsuitable for full replacement.
3. **Functional constraints:** Satellites are better for moving objects like ships and aircraft, not for mass connectivity.
4. **Low-Earth orbit systems:** Networks like **Starlink** are still not scalable for millions of users.

Conclusion

The Strait of Hormuz has emerged as a critical point for both energy and digital flows. Subsea cables passing through it support global communication and financial systems. The ongoing conflict increases risks of accidental damage and disruption. Repair challenges and limited alternatives add to the concern. Strengthening protection and reducing dependence on such narrow routes is important.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as a critical digital chokepoint and assess the risks posed by ongoing conflict to subsea cable infrastructure and global connectivity.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The RTE Act and the Idea of Social Inclusion

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education

Introduction:

The January 2026 judgment of the Supreme Court of India reaffirmed Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009. It mandates **25% reservation in private schools** for disadvantaged children. The provision is not only about access to schooling. It seeks to create **shared classrooms across social groups**. This helps reduce social distance and ensures that **birth conditions do not limit a child's social world or opportunities.**

Legal and Constitutional Basis of the RTE Act

1. **Link to fundamental right under Article 21A:** The Article 21A of the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education. Denial of admission makes this right an empty promise, so enforcement must be strict and immediate.

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- Equality through shared spaces:** Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009 mandates 25% reservation in private unaided schools for disadvantaged children. It creates common classrooms, helping achieve equality of status through daily interaction.
- Judicial reaffirmation of constitutional purpose:** The Supreme Court of India recognised this provision as a constitutional strategy for social integration. It stressed that education must reduce social distance, not just provide access.
- Mandatory and immediate admission rule:** Schools must grant admission without delay once the State forwards the selected list. Even if doubts exist, they cannot wait for clarification before admitting the child.
- No discretion to question State decisions:** Schools cannot act as appellate authorities. They must follow the government selection process and admit students as allotted.
- Obligation on neighbourhood schools:** All neighbourhood schools, including private unaided institutions, are legally bound to implement the 25% reservation. This duty is central to the law.
- National mission and shared responsibility:** Implementation is described as a national mission. The State, schools, institutions, and judiciary are all duty bearers responsible for ensuring effective execution.
- Role of judiciary in enforcement:** Courts must ensure quick and effective remedies for parents. They must actively address denial of admission and remove delays in enforcement.

Addressing Misconceptions

- Not a promotion of private schooling:** Section 12(1)(c) does not aim to expand private education. It includes private schools as **participants in fulfilling the constitutional right to education**, not as a replacement for public schools.
- No outsourcing of State responsibility:** The State cannot shift its duty to private institutions. The Court reaffirmed that **ensuring free and compulsory education under Article 21A of the Constitution of India remains a State obligation**, with private schools sharing a limited role.
- Not a dilution of public education system:** Decline in government school enrolment is linked to **infrastructure, teacher presence, and perceived quality**, not to this provision. The **ASER 2006 data** shows this trend existed earlier.
- Not a discretionary or optional provision:** Private schools cannot treat admissions under this provision as optional. The Court made it clear that **they are legally bound to admit students immediately once selected**.
- Schools cannot act as appellate authorities:** Institutions cannot question or delay admissions based on eligibility doubts. They must **follow government lists and raise concerns separately**, ensuring the child's right is not affected.

6. **Not merely symbolic but enforceable:** This provision is not based on goodwill. It requires **strict implementation and compliance**, as denial can make the right to education ineffective in practice.
7. **Not a zero-sum system:** The provision does not create conflict between public and private schools. It aims to build **integrated learning spaces where social inclusion becomes part of everyday schooling**.

Transformational Impact on Ground

1. **Large scale inclusion with strong retention:** More than five million children have benefited. Retention rates are above 90%, showing stability.
2. **Blended classrooms becoming normal:** In cities like Delhi and Ahmedabad, mixed classrooms are common. Social diversity is now part of daily schooling.
3. **Positive social behaviour outcomes:** Mixed settings lead to **greater generosity, less discrimination, and stronger pro-social behaviour**. Academic performance remains unaffected.
4. **Access to social and institutional capital:** Children gain **peer networks, exposure, and institutional familiarity**. These were earlier out of reach.
5. **Rise in confidence and aspirations:** Students develop higher self-belief and ambition. Their worldview expands beyond earlier limits.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Non-compliance with admission mandate:** Some private schools **refuse or delay admission** even after government selection. This goes against the rule of **immediate admission** and weakens enforcement.
2. **Illegal scrutiny of eligibility by schools:** Schools sometimes try to **question or verify eligibility** on their own. This is not allowed, as they **cannot override State decisions**.
3. **Resistance to full inclusion:** Some schools are not willing to fully integrate students from disadvantaged groups. This affects the goal of **shared classrooms and social inclusion**.
4. **Hidden financial burden on families:** Despite free admission, families often pay for **uniforms, books, and materials**. This reduces real access to education.
5. **Administrative delays and weak systems:** There are delays in **reimbursements, disbursements, and grievance redress**. Implementation remains uneven across States.
6. **Limited access to grievance mechanisms:** Parents face difficulty in getting **quick and effective remedies** when admission is denied or delayed.
7. **Dependence on weak enforcement:** The provision often relies on compliance rather than strict enforcement. It needs **clear rules and strong monitoring** to work properly.

Way Forward

1. **Ensure strict and timely admissions:** Schools must follow rules and provide immediate admission without delay.
2. **Strengthen reimbursement systems:** States must ensure timely and transparent payments to maintain cooperation from schools.
3. **Remove hidden financial barriers:** Extra costs imposed by schools must be eliminated to ensure true free education.
4. **Improve grievance redress mechanisms:** Systems must be simple, fast, and accessible for parents to raise issues.
5. **Expand digital systems for transparency:** State-level online admission systems and MIS platforms should be strengthened. These systems improve accountability and reduce discretion.
6. **Recognise shared responsibility:** Governments, schools, and institutions are duty bearers. Each must act to ensure proper implementation.
7. **Ensure strict enforcement of inclusion norms:** Clear rules and monitoring are required so that **social integration is actually experienced in classrooms**, not just written in law.

Conclusion

Section 12(1)(c) is a key tool to realise the **right to education under Article 21A of the Constitution of India** through social integration. Its success depends on **strict and timely implementation**. Treated as a **national mission**, it can reduce social barriers and ensure that equality is not only promised in law but experienced by children in classrooms.

Question for practice:

Discuss how Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009 promotes social inclusion, and examine the challenges and measures needed for its effective implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Skilling India for a Future-Ready Workforce

Source: The post “**Skilling India for a Future-Ready Workforce**” has been created, based on “**Skilling India for a Future-Ready Workforce**” published in “**PIB**” on 30th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3-Economy

Context: India is at a pivotal demographic stage with one of the youngest workforces in the world, which provides a strong foundation for higher productivity and sustained economic growth. The Economic Survey 2025–26 highlights that employment-focused skilling initiatives are essential for bridging skill gaps, improving productivity, and promoting inclusive labour markets.

Overall Policy Push for Skilling

1. The Union Budget 2026–27 positions skill development as a cross-sectoral priority to align workforce capabilities with evolving industry demands.
2. It focuses on expanding institutional capacity, modernising training infrastructure, and enhancing employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.
3. Labour market trends indicate stability, with a Labour Force Participation Rate of 55.9% in February 2026, along with increased participation of women and declining unemployment rates.

Sector-wise Skilling Initiatives

I. Education

- a. The government has allocated ₹1.39 lakh crore to the education sector, reflecting an 8.27% increase over the previous year.
- b. It proposes the creation of five University Townships near industrial corridors to integrate education, research, and skilling.
- c. The establishment of girls' hostels in every district aims to improve access and retention in STEM education.
- d. The development of four telescope infrastructure facilities is intended to promote skills in astrophysics and astronomy.

II. Textile & Apparel

- a. The textile sector contributes around 2% to GDP and employs over 45 million people, making it a major employment generator.
- b. The National Fibre Scheme aims to promote self-reliance in natural, man-made, and new-age fibres.
- c. The Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme focuses on modernising traditional clusters and improving productivity.
- d. Samarth 2.0 seeks to strengthen industry-academia partnerships for skill development.
- e. Mega Textile Parks are proposed to enhance scale, efficiency, and value addition.

III. Health

- a. The Budget provides ₹980 crore to strengthen allied healthcare education and workforce capacity.
- b. The Biopharma SHAKTI initiative aims to position India as a global biopharma hub with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore.
- c. The government plans to add 100,000 Allied Health Professionals over five years.
- d. It also proposes to train 1.5 lakh caregivers to support the growing care economy.
- e. The development of medical tourism hubs is expected to generate employment opportunities.

IV. AYUSH

- a. An allocation of ₹4,408 crore has been made to strengthen traditional healthcare systems.
- b. The establishment of new institutes and upgradation of laboratories will enhance research and skill development in Ayurveda and related fields.

V. Livestock

- a. With an allocation of ₹6,153 crore, the sector aims to increase rural income and employment.

- b. A new scheme will help create more than 20,000 veterinary professionals through private sector participation.

VI. Creative and Design Economy

- a. AVGC Content Creator Labs will be set up in 15,000 schools and 500 colleges to meet the growing demand for creative professionals.
- b. A new National Institute of Design will be established to strengthen design education and skills.

VII. Tourism and Hospitality

- a. A National Institute of Hospitality will be created to bridge the gap between academia and industry.
- b. A pilot programme will upskill 10,000 tourist guides through structured training.
- c. A Digital Knowledge Grid will create opportunities in research, content creation, and heritage management.

VIII. Sports

- a. Increased allocation to ₹4,479.88 crore reflects the focus on building a strong sports ecosystem.
- b. The Khelo India Mission aims to develop talent, improve coaching, and integrate sports science and infrastructure.

Flagship Skilling Programmes

1. The Skill India Mission continues to provide large-scale skilling through schemes like PMKVY, JSS, NAPS, and CTS.
2. PMKVY 4.0 has trained over 27.24 lakh candidates and introduced future-oriented job roles in emerging sectors such as AI and green jobs.
3. The Jan Shikshan Sansthan scheme promotes community-based skilling for non-literate and disadvantaged groups.
4. The National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme supports “earn while you learn” by providing stipend assistance and industry exposure.
5. The Craftsmen Training Scheme strengthens vocational education through ITIs with industry-aligned courses.

Strengthening ITI Ecosystem

1. The PM-SETU scheme aims to upgrade 1,000 ITIs with modern infrastructure and industry partnerships.
2. The hub-and-spoke model and involvement of industry partners will improve training quality and employability.
3. National Skill Training Institutes are being upgraded as Centres of Excellence with global collaborations.

Challenges

1. There is still a mismatch between industry requirements and the skills imparted in training programmes.

2. The quality of training and infrastructure varies significantly across regions, especially between urban and rural areas.
3. Limited industry participation in curriculum design and training reduces practical relevance.
4. Informal sector workers face difficulties in accessing formal skilling programmes.
5. Gender disparities and social barriers continue to restrict participation in certain sectors.
6. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for skilling outcomes remain inadequate in many schemes.

Way Forward

1. There is a need to strengthen industry-academia collaboration to ensure demand-driven and job-oriented training.
2. The government should focus on improving the quality and standardisation of training infrastructure across all regions.
3. Greater emphasis should be placed on digital and future skills such as AI, robotics, and green technologies.
4. Expanding apprenticeship opportunities and incentivising private sector participation can enhance practical learning.
5. Inclusive policies should be designed to improve access for women, rural populations, and marginalised groups.
6. A robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be developed to track outcomes and ensure accountability.

Conclusion: India's skilling ecosystem is undergoing a structural transformation through coordinated policy efforts and sector-specific initiatives. The integration of education, industry, and technology-driven training is expected to enhance employability and productivity. Addressing existing challenges through targeted reforms will be crucial to fully realise India's demographic dividend and achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Question: Discuss how the Union Budget 2026–27 and recent policy initiatives aim to strengthen India's skilling ecosystem for a future-ready workforce. Also examine the challenges and suggest a way forward.

Source: [PIB](#)

Rise of identity politics threatens social cohesion, governance

Source: The post "Rise of identity politics threatens social cohesion, governance" has been created, based on "Et tu, Kerala? Rise of identity politics threatens social cohesion, governance" published in "Indian Express" on 30th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2-Governance

Context: Kerala has historically been regarded as a model of performance-based politics, characterised by high literacy, strong welfare systems, and accountable governance. However, recent political developments indicate a shift towards identity politics, where caste, religion, and community affiliations are increasingly shaping electoral strategies.

Nature of the Shift in Kerala Politics

1. Political mobilisation is increasingly based on religious and caste identities rather than governance outcomes.
2. Campaign rhetoric is targeting specific communities, leading to consolidation of vote banks.
3. Electoral contests are being framed in terms of communal polarisation, particularly Hindu–Muslim and intra-minority dynamics.
4. Candidate selection is influenced by their ability to mobilise specific identity groups rather than competence alone.

Role of Political Competition

1. The growing presence of the Bharatiya Janata Party has intensified competitive politics in the state.
2. Both the Left Democratic Front and the United Democratic Front are recalibrating strategies by consolidating their respective support bases.
3. Identity-based mobilisation is seen as a more predictable electoral strategy compared to performance-based evaluation.

Role of Social and Community Organisations

1. Organisations such as the Nair Service Society and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam are playing an increasingly active role in influencing voting patterns.
2. Bloc voting based on caste and religion is becoming more visible and accepted in electoral calculations.

Factors Driving Identity Politics

1. The national resurgence of identity politics has influenced Kerala's political landscape.
2. Economic challenges such as unemployment and inflation have created conditions for identity-based appeals.
3. Identity politics provides electoral certainty compared to performance politics, which depends on subjective evaluation.
4. Increasing political competition has incentivised short-term mobilisation strategies.

Implications for Social Cohesion

1. Identity politics risks fragmenting society along communal and caste lines.
2. It undermines Kerala's tradition of social harmony and inclusive development.
3. Increased polarisation can erode trust between communities and weaken collective social capital.

Implications for Governance

1. Policy priorities may shift from universal welfare to community-specific appeasement.
2. There is a risk of policy paralysis as governments balance competing identity demands.
3. Developmental issues such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation may be overshadowed.
4. Governance outcomes may increasingly be judged through communal lenses rather than effectiveness.

Continuity of Performance Politics (Although Limited)

1. Welfare schemes, healthcare, and education reforms continue to influence voter behaviour.
2. However, these issues are increasingly filtered through identity considerations, reducing their universal appeal.

Challenges

1. Balancing identity representation with inclusive governance remains difficult.
2. Preventing communal polarisation while maintaining democratic competition is a key challenge.
3. Ensuring that development issues are not overshadowed by identity narratives.
4. Weakening of issue-based political discourse and public accountability.

Way Forward

1. Political parties should re-emphasise performance-based politics by focusing on measurable governance outcomes.
2. Strengthening civic awareness and voter education can reduce susceptibility to identity-based appeals.
3. Encouraging inclusive policy frameworks that address all communities without bias is essential.
4. Civil society and media should promote issue-based discourse and counter polarisation.
5. Institutional mechanisms should ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

Conclusion: The rise of identity politics in Kerala marks a significant shift from its tradition of performance-driven governance. If unchecked, it can undermine social cohesion and weaken democratic functioning. Reasserting inclusive, welfare-oriented, and performance-based politics is essential for preserving Kerala's distinct political model.

Question: Examine the rise of identity politics in Kerala and analyse its implications for social cohesion and governance. Suggest measures to strengthen performance-based politics.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Increasing Health Insurance Coverage, Growing Distress

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

Introduction

Health insurance coverage has expanded significantly in India, as shown by the National Sample Survey (NSS) 80th round (2025), mainly due to government-financed schemes. However, this increase has not improved healthcare access or reduced financial burden. Hospitalisation rates remain low, dependence on private healthcare has increased, and out-of-pocket expenditure has sharply risen. This reflects a clear mismatch between insurance expansion and actual healthcare outcomes, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the current insurance-led approach.

Current Status of Health Insurance in India

1. **Rapid Expansion of Coverage:** Health insurance now covers **47.4% rural and 44.3% urban households**, mainly due to a **more than 2.5 times increase in government-financed schemes**.
2. **Government Schemes Driving Growth:** This expansion is mainly due to **Government-Financed Health Insurance (GFHI)** schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and State schemes, while **ESIS and CGHS have minimal contribution**.

3. **Rising Role in Household Financial Assets:** The share of insurance and pension funds in household financial assets increased from **28.6% (2018-19) to 29.6% (2024-25)**, showing growing financial participation.
4. **Health Insurance Becoming Dominant Segment:** Health insurance now contributes **41% of non-life premium**, becoming the **leading segment**, surpassing motor insurance.
5. **Coverage Not Translating into Utilisation:** Despite higher coverage, **hospitalisation rates remain below 2014 levels**, with only a marginal rise in rural areas and decline in urban areas, indicating weak utilisation.

Major Concerns Related to Health Insurance in India

1. **Shift Towards Private Healthcare:** There is a clear shift towards **private hospitals for treatment and childbirth**, while the use of public facilities has declined, especially in urban areas. This reflects **reduced reliance on public healthcare services**.
2. **Sharp Rise in Out-of-Pocket Expenditure:** Out-of-pocket expenditure on hospitalisation has **more than doubled between 2017-18 and 2025**. This shows that financial protection from insurance remains weak.
3. **Hidden Costs in Public Healthcare:** Even in public hospitals, patients spend due to **lack of medicines, diagnostic services, and high transport and other non-medical costs**. This reduces the benefit of subsidised care.
4. **High Cost Burden in Private Sector:** Treatment in private hospitals leads to very high expenses, with costs rising by **70% in rural areas and 80% in urban areas**, increasing financial distress.
5. **Inequitable Utilisation of Insurance Schemes:** Although schemes target the poor, **better-off groups benefit more**, and only **13% of urban beneficiaries belong to the poorest class**.
6. **Inclusion of Non-Poor Increasing Burden:** Extending coverage to non-poor households increases utilisation but also **raises fiscal burden and weakens targeting efficiency**.
7. **Rising Fiscal Pressure on States:** States like Haryana and West Bengal spend **around 15% of their health budgets on GFHI (Government-Financed Health Insurance)**, creating financial stress.
8. **Delays and Dependence on Private Providers:** Fiscal pressure leads to **delays in payments to private hospitals**, while the insurance model channels public funds towards private providers.
9. **Profit-Oriented and Weakly Regulated Private Sector:** The private sector works on **profit maximisation with limited regulation**, and patients are often charged extra despite insurance coverage.
10. **Structural Imbalance in Healthcare Approach:** The system reflects an imbalance where schemes appear **“of the rich, for profit, by the poor”**, raising concerns about fairness.

11. **Neglect of Primary Healthcare System:** Ayushman Arogya Mandir has potential for comprehensive care but remains **underfunded**, similar to the National Health Mission, showing a gap between **curative insurance focus and preventive care needs**.

Recent Policy and Regulatory Measures for Health Insurance in India

1. **Vision of "Insurance for All by 2047":** The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India aims to expand insurance coverage to all citizens.
2. **Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment) Act, 2025:** The law amended key insurance Acts to **expand coverage, improve protection, and strengthen the sector**, while supporting ease of doing business.
3. **Legislative Reform to Strengthen Sector:** The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025 increased FDI limit to 100%, simplified compliance, and aligned laws with digital data protection.
4. **GST Exemption on Health Insurance:** From September 2025, 18% GST was removed, making health insurance more affordable and encouraging wider adoption.
5. **Reduced Moratorium Period:** The moratorium period was reduced from 8 years to 5 years, limiting claim rejection after this period except in fraud cases.
6. **30-Day Free-Look Period:** A standard 30-day period allows policyholders to review and exit policies, improving transparency and trust.
7. **Guaranteed Policy Renewal:** Insurers must renew policies and **cannot deny renewal based on past claims**, ensuring continuity of coverage.
8. **Portability and Migration Benefits:** Policyholders can switch insurers or plans while **retaining waiting period credits and no-claim benefits**, increasing flexibility.
9. **No Claim Bonus (NCB):** Policyholders are rewarded with higher coverage or lower premiums if no claim is made, promoting responsible usage.
10. **Performance Monitoring of TPAs:** Insurers monitor Third Party Administrator (TPA), and penalties based on customer feedback ensure better service delivery and accountability.

Major Health Insurance Protection Schemes

1. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** PMJAY is the largest scheme driving coverage expansion, contributing to a **more than 2.5 times increase in insurance coverage between 2017-18 and 2025**, with **43.52 crore Ayushman cards issued**.
2. **Swasthya Saathi (West Bengal):** This State-level scheme has supported the expansion of coverage under **GFHI (Government-Financed Health Insurance)**, especially in West Bengal.

3. **Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIS):** ESIS provides social security and healthcare to workers, but its contribution to recent coverage growth is very limited.
4. **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS):** CGHS mainly covers government employees and has **minimal role in expanding overall insurance coverage.**
5. **State Government Health Insurance Schemes:** Schemes for State government employees are part of GFHI, but their contribution to overall expansion remains limited.
6. **Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM):** AAM focuses on **comprehensive primary healthcare, including non-communicable diseases,** but remains **severely underfunded.**

Conclusion

The expansion of health insurance has not translated into better care or financial protection. Rising out-of-pocket costs, growing dependence on private providers, and unequal access show deep structural problems. Public funds are increasingly supporting private profit, while primary care remains neglected. There is a need to rethink the insurance-led model and prioritise strengthening public healthcare to ensure universal, equitable, and affordable access for all sections.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the increase in health insurance coverage in India has failed to improve healthcare access and financial protection, as reflected in recent data.

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

Decoding RBI's move to curtail rupee speculation

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The Reserve Bank of India has capped banks' foreign exchange exposure to contain rising pressure on the rupee. The currency weakened due to global risk aversion linked to the Iran conflict and strong demand for the US dollar. Banks were actively using arbitrage between onshore and offshore markets. By limiting Net Open Position in Indian Rupee (NOP-INR), the measure aims to curb speculative positions and support the rupee in the short

Understanding NOP-INR and Forex Exposure

1. **Meaning of NOP-INR (Net Open Position in Indian Rupee):** It shows the **total foreign exchange exposure of banks**, measured as the difference between their foreign currency buying (long) and selling (short) positions, mainly in US dollars against the rupee.
2. **How it is calculated:** It includes positions from **spot transactions, forward contracts, and swaps in the over-the-counter market**, along with **Exchange-Traded Currency Derivatives like futures and options.**

3. **Why derivatives are included:** Even though these derivatives are **cash-settled and do not involve actual delivery**, they still add to overall exchange rate risk.
4. **Importance in risk management:** NOP-INR gives a **complete picture of a bank's exposure to currency movements**, helping measure the risk arising from changes in the rupee's value.

RBI's Directive: Key Features

1. **Cap on Net Open Position in INR (NOP-INR):** Banks must keep their **Net Open Position in Indian Rupee (NOP-INR)** within **\$100 million** in the onshore deliverable market at the end of each business day.
2. **Timeline for compliance:** All banks were given time **until April 10, 2026** to bring their positions within the prescribed limit.
3. **Focus on onshore deliverable market:** The rule applies to transactions within India that involve **actual exchange of currency**, such as spot, forward, and swap deals.
4. **Role of Exchange-Traded Currency Derivatives (ETCDs):** **Exchange-Traded Currency Derivatives (ETCDs)** like futures and options are included in NOP calculation, but the main focus is on controlling exposure in deliverable transactions.
5. **Indirect impact on offshore market:** The directive does not directly mention offshore markets, but by limiting domestic exposure, it is expected to **reduce arbitrage activities between domestic and offshore markets**.

Rationale Behind RBI's Move: Role of Arbitrage and Market Dynamics

1. **Pressure on rupee due to global factors:** The rupee weakened because of **global risk aversion linked to the Iran conflict**, which increased demand for the US dollar as a safe asset.
2. **Build-up of long-dollar positions:** Banks created **large long positions in US dollars**, meaning they bought more dollars expecting further rise, which increased pressure on the rupee.
3. **Arbitrage strategy explained:** Banks used **arbitrage**, meaning they earned profit from price differences by **buying dollars in the onshore market and selling them in offshore markets**.
4. **Onshore vs offshore markets clarified:** The onshore market includes **domestic transactions with actual delivery of currency**, while the offshore market uses **Non-Deliverable Forwards (NDF)**, which are contracts settled in US dollars without actual exchange of rupees.
5. **Link between both markets:** Although onshore and offshore markets are separate, they are closely linked through arbitrage. Banks operate in both markets to exploit price differences. This linkage allows movements in one market to influence the other and increases overall speculative pressure on the rupee.
6. **Policy objective of RBI:** By limiting **Net Open Position in Indian Rupee (NOP-INR)**, the Reserve Bank of India aims to **reduce arbitrage trades, force banks to unwind dollar positions, and support the rupee by increasing dollar supply in the market**.

Impact Assessment

1. **Immediate market reaction:** The rupee initially improved but later weakened again, touching a **fresh all-time low of 95.23**, showing strong underlying pressure.
2. **Effect on domestic speculation:** The cap is likely to **reduce speculative activity in the domestic market**, as banks face limits on exposure.
3. **Limited control over offshore markets:** Offshore NDF markets may continue speculation due to **global participation and lack of direct regulation**.
4. **Influence through indirect channels:** RBI can affect offshore markets indirectly through **domestic actions and participation of Indian banks**, improving price alignment.
5. **Constraints from global factors:** Factors like **capital outflows, high crude oil prices above \$100, and widening trade deficit** can keep pressure on the rupee.
6. **Nature of the measure:** The cap is a **short-term or tactical step**, which may prevent further sharp depreciation but does not solve structural issues affecting the currency.

Conclusion

The Net Open Position in Indian Rupee (NOP-INR) cap can reduce speculative activity and limit arbitrage-driven pressure in the short term. However, it does not address key drivers like capital flows, interest rate differences, crude oil prices, and trade imbalance. Sustained stability of the rupee requires favourable global conditions and improvement in these underlying economic factors.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Reserve Bank of India's cap on Net Open Position in Indian Rupee (NOP-INR) aims to curb arbitrage-driven speculation and stabilise the rupee.

Source: [Businessline](#)