

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



4th Week

June. 2026

Features :

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

INDEX

India's patchy industrial climate strategy	2
India's next challenge — from invention to global scale	3
Reconnect Public Health with People's Needs	4
Urban Fire Safety Crisis: Challenges and Solutions	7
Digital agriculture in India: Problems of inclusion	10
FCRA Rules 2025	12
Clearing the Road to Timely Trauma Care in India	16
Sustaining India's Low-Fertility Future	19
Passport and Citizenship Debate	21
Revisiting India's Ultrasound Laws	23
MSMEs: Time to Step Up	26
Population Dynamics and Cooperative Federalism	29
India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership	31
Supreme Court Sought Trauma Care System to Curb Road Deaths	32
The Iran-India Civilizational Relationship	35
The new digital slavery needs constitutional guardrails	39
How schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition	41
Elder Care is Not a Silver Mine	42
Fixing Mis-selling of Market-linked Products	45
Reforms 3.0 — Towards the Bharat Rate of Growth	48
Preparing India for China's Missile Challenge	51
GST at nine: From building the system to strengthening it	54
Caught in the middle: On India and curbing drug abuse	55

India's patchy industrial climate strategy

Source: The post "India's patchy industrial climate strategy" has been created based on "India's patchy industrial climate strategy", published in "Indian Express" on 23rd June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Environment

Context: India has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and has identified industrial decarbonisation as a key component of its climate strategy. However, rapid industrial growth and rising energy demand have created significant challenges for reducing emissions from the industrial sector.

Challenges in Industrial Climate Mitigation

1. **High Contribution of Industry to Emissions:** The industrial sector contributes significantly to India's carbon footprint. Fuel combustion in manufacturing industries accounts for about 13% of total emissions, while industrial processes and product use contribute around 9% of total emissions.
2. **Rising Industrial Energy Demand:** Expanding manufacturing activities and increasing population-driven consumption are leading to a continuous rise in industrial energy demand and emissions.
3. **Limited Coverage of Existing Policies:** Existing mechanisms such as the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme and the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) mainly target selected energy-intensive industries and do not comprehensively cover all industrial emissions.
4. **Focus on Traditional Heavy Industries:** Current policies primarily address sectors such as cement, steel, fertilisers, refineries, and textiles, while several other industrial sources remain outside the direct mitigation framework.
5. **Large Share of 'Non-Specific Industries':** A substantial portion of industrial emissions is classified under the broad category of "non-specific industries," making it difficult to identify major emission sources and formulate targeted interventions.
6. **Lack of Detailed Industrial Classification:** The absence of clear sub-sectoral emission data creates challenges in measuring emissions accurately and designing sector-specific decarbonisation strategies.
7. **Administrative and Regulatory Gaps:** Industrial emissions management remains an administrative grey area because many emitting sectors are not explicitly covered by existing regulatory mechanisms.

Measures for Effective Industrial Decarbonisation

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Industrial Emissions Database:** India should establish detailed sector-wise and sub-sector-wise emissions inventories to accurately identify major emission sources.
2. **Improve Industrial Classification:** The broad category of "non-specific industries" should be disaggregated to enable targeted policy interventions and monitoring.
3. **Expand Policy Coverage:** Existing schemes such as PAT and CCTS should be expanded to cover a wider range of industrial sectors and emission sources.
4. **Strengthen Monitoring and Transparency:** Transparent climate reporting should be enhanced to provide policymakers with reliable information for evidence-based decision-making.
5. **Adopt Sector-Specific Decarbonisation Strategies:** Tailored mitigation plans should be developed for different industries based on their emission profiles and technological requirements.
6. **Promote Energy Efficiency and Clean Technologies:** Industries should be encouraged to adopt energy-efficient technologies, cleaner production methods, and low-carbon energy sources.
7. **Ensure Continuous Policy Evaluation:** Regular assessment of industrial decarbonisation measures should be undertaken to identify gaps and implement corrective actions.

Conclusion: Achieving India's net-zero target requires a transparent, comprehensive, and sector-specific industrial decarbonisation framework. Accurate identification of emission sources, expanded policy coverage,

and improved climate governance will be essential for balancing industrial growth with environmental sustainability.

Question: India's industrial decarbonisation strategy remains fragmented despite ambitious net-zero targets. Examine the challenges in industrial climate mitigation and suggest measures for an effective industrial decarbonisation framework.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India's next challenge — from invention to global scale

Source: The post "India's next challenge — from invention to global scale" has been created based on "India's next challenge — from invention to global scale", published in "Indian Express" on 23rd June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Science & Technology

Context: India has a strong record of technological innovation, ranging from semiconductors and supercomputing to digital public infrastructure. However, technological success is not measured by invention alone but by the ability to scale innovations into globally competitive industries and enterprises.

Reasons for India's Failure to Scale Technological Innovations

1. **Lack of Manufacturing Ecosystems:** India pioneered semiconductor research through Semiconductor Complex Limited (SCL) in the 1970s. However, unlike Taiwan and South Korea, it failed to build a globally competitive manufacturing ecosystem.
2. **Inadequate Capital and Policy Support:** Although India possessed significant scientific capabilities, insufficient capital, inconsistent policy support, and limited long-term vision hindered the commercialization of innovations.
3. **Research-Oriented Rather than Market-Oriented Approach:** Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) focused primarily on strategic and scientific achievements. As a result, innovations remained within research institutions instead of developing into large-scale industries.
4. **Weak Supporting Ecosystem:** India failed to develop supporting ecosystems such as venture capital networks, software platforms, component supply chains, and consumer markets at the scale required for global competitiveness.
5. **Failure to Move Beyond Prototypes:** Projects such as the Simputer demonstrated remarkable technological foresight, but they remained prototypes instead of evolving into globally dominant commercial products.
6. **Absence of Scale-Based Ecosystems:** India often succeeded in creating innovative products, but it failed to create the ecosystems that generate jobs, industries, and sustained global leadership.

Measures Required to Transform Innovation into Global Scale

1. **Build Globally Competitive Technology Enterprises:** India should focus on commercialization alongside invention and actively promote the growth of globally competitive technology enterprises.
2. **Leverage Digital Public Infrastructure:** The success of Aadhaar and UPI demonstrates that technology can create large-scale ecosystems, and similar models should be replicated in emerging sectors.
3. **Promote AI Leadership:** India should develop scalable AI products and platforms. It should also build large AI models and make intelligence affordable, accessible, and widely available.
4. **Invest in Emerging Technologies:** India should strengthen its capabilities in quantum computing, semiconductor manufacturing, AI infrastructure, data centres, and communication networks.

5. **Create Strong Ecosystem Support:** The country should expand venture capital availability, strengthen supply chains, develop software platforms, and improve market access for technology firms.
6. **Adopt a Long-Term Industrial Strategy:** India should continue supporting promising technologies beyond the initial breakthrough stage and avoid abandoning them before they achieve global scale.
7. **Utilize Strengths in Software and Digital Infrastructure:** India should integrate its strengths in software engineering and digital public infrastructure with manufacturing and deep-tech development.

Conclusion: India stands at a crucial technological inflection point with opportunities in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, and space technology. The challenge is no longer merely to invent but to scale. Therefore, India must transform its technological ingenuity into globally competitive industries and enterprises by combining innovation with commercialization and ecosystem development.

Question: India has often been ahead in technological invention but has struggled to achieve global scale in commercialization.” Examine the reasons for this trend. Discuss the measures required for India to transform innovation into globally competitive technology enterprises.

Source: The Hindu

Reconnect Public Health with People's Needs

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

Introduction

Public health policies are crucial for improving population health and helping a country realise the benefits of its demographic dividend. In recent years, **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** has become a key objective of health policy. However, growing emphasis on wellness and digital health initiatives has raised concerns about whether public health policies are improving access to healthcare. This debate has become more important as private healthcare costs rise and public healthcare services continue to face quality challenges.

Evolution of Public Health Policy in India

1. **Population Health as the Core Focus:** Public health traditionally focused on improving population health through preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative services. It also considered access to water, nutrition, emergency care, and maternal and child health services.
2. **Emergence of the Wellness Concept:** Wellness was initially used to indicate the absence of disease and was often treated as similar to health. Over time, it expanded to include mental, spiritual, social and environmental dimensions.
3. **Influence of Positive Well-being:** During the 1950s, the wellness movement promoted the idea that health extends beyond biological conditions. This influenced broader thinking about health and well-being.
4. **WHO's Broader Understanding of Health:** The WHO promoted the idea that health is more than the absence of disease. This encouraged greater attention to positive well-being.

5. **Shift Towards Health Promotion:** Public health later focused on health promotion, which recognised that social, economic and environmental conditions influence health behaviour and outcomes.

Key Government Initiatives Reflecting the Current Approach

1. **Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres:** Introduced in **2018**, these centres were intended to strengthen health infrastructure and improve service delivery at the grassroots level.
2. **Renaming of Existing Institutions:** Health Sub-Centres (SCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and Community Health Centres (CHCs) were given the common “Health and Wellness Centre” prefix. This changed the identity of institutions that had evolved distinct roles within the district health system.
3. **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDHM):** The mission seeks to create a digital repository of health information through the **ABHA card**, a unique health identification system.
4. **Creation of Digital Registries:** ABDHM also maintains registries of health facilities, healthcare professionals, and health insurance-related information.
5. **Large Public Investment in Digital Health:** The mission receives an annual budget of around **₹300 crore**, reflecting a strong policy emphasis on digital health systems.

Current Approach to Public Health

1. **Shift from Population Health to Individual Well-being:** Public health policy increasingly measures success through individual well-being rather than population health outcomes.
2. **Wellness as a Policy Objective:** The health and wellness framework promotes individual well-being as an important goal of healthcare delivery.
3. **Rise of Individual-Centred Health Practices:** Greater emphasis on individual well-being has encouraged health coaching and wellness messages that place responsibility for health largely on personal choices.
4. **Growing Importance of Digital Health:** Public health reforms increasingly rely on digital records, health IDs and information systems to improve healthcare management.

Major Concerns

1. **Ambiguity in Institutional Mandates:** Applying a common “Health and Wellness Centre” identity to SCs, PHCs and CHCs has created confusion regarding their distinct functions and responsibilities.
2. **Difficulty in Measuring Well-being:** There are no universally accepted measures of well-being at the population level. The concept remains highly subjective and individualistic.
3. **Neglect of Structural Determinants:** A wellness-based approach often overlooks social and structural factors that influence health outcomes.
4. **Inadequate Capture of Health Needs:** Excessive focus on well-being may fail to identify unmet needs related to preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative care.

5. **Challenges in Health System Evaluation:** Health systems become difficult to assess when outcomes are based on subjective well-being rather than measurable health indicators.
6. **Digital Information Does Not Ensure Access:** Digital health records and registries cannot by themselves solve problems of healthcare access.
7. **Limited Focus on Healthcare Provisioning:** ABDHM mainly generates information on individuals, facilities and professionals, but provides little guidance on actual healthcare delivery.
8. **Inadequate Access to Healthcare:** Access to healthcare remains limited because private healthcare is unaffordable for many people, while public healthcare facilities often suffer from poor quality and inadequate services.
9. **Fragmented Functioning of Health Systems:** Digital mapping of facilities and professionals does not automatically create an effective institutional mechanism for delivering care.
10. **Neglect of Healthcare Infrastructure:** Recent initiatives focus on wellness and digital systems, while strengthening public healthcare institutions receives limited attention.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Public Healthcare Institutions:** Greater attention should be given to strengthening the three-tier healthcare system comprising SCs, PHCs and CHCs.
2. **Focus on Measurable Health Outcomes:** Public health policies should prioritise outcomes that can be systematically measured and evaluated.
3. **Address Healthcare Affordability:** Improving access requires tackling the high cost of care in the private sector.
4. **Improve Quality of Public Services:** Public healthcare facilities need stronger capacity and better quality services to meet people's needs.
5. **Link Digital Systems with Service Delivery:** Digital health platforms should support healthcare provisioning rather than function mainly as information repositories.
6. **Recognise People's Felt Needs:** Policies should respond to people's immediate healthcare requirements, particularly access to curative care.

Conclusion

Public health policies should focus on improving healthcare access and addressing people's actual health needs. While wellness and digital health initiatives can support the health system, they cannot substitute strong public healthcare institutions. Achieving meaningful health outcomes requires greater attention to healthcare delivery, affordability, quality services, and the strengthening of India's three-tier healthcare system.

Question for practice:

Discuss the changing approach of public health policy in India and examine its implications for healthcare access and public health outcomes.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Urban Fire Safety Crisis: Challenges and Solutions

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

Introduction

Recent fires in coaching institutes, hotels, residential buildings, and commercial establishments have highlighted serious weaknesses in urban fire safety systems. While incidents causing deaths receive public attention, many others remain unnoticed. The problem extends beyond individual accidents and reflects shortcomings in urban planning, building management, safety compliance, and emergency preparedness. Rapid urban growth, increasing pressure on infrastructure, and weak enforcement of safety norms have made fire safety a major urban governance challenge.

Nature and Magnitude of the Crisis

1. **Rising Urban Fire Incidents:** Fire accidents are being reported from coaching centres, hotels, residential buildings, and other establishments across urban areas. The scale of the problem is larger than commonly perceived because many incidents do not result in fatalities.
2. **Unsafe Change in Building Use:** Many buildings approved for residential purposes are being used for commercial activities without meeting the required fire-safety standards. Mixed-use development is permissible when safety norms are followed.
3. **Expansion into High-Risk Areas:** A large number of fire-prone establishments operate in urban villages, unauthorised colonies, and Tier-II and Tier-III cities where infrastructure remains inadequate.
4. **Electrical and LPG-Related Risks:** Electrical short circuits are among the most common causes of urban fires. LPG leaks caused by poor maintenance, defective equipment, and unsafe handling also contribute significantly to residential fire incidents.
5. **Growing Vulnerability of Smaller Buildings:** Fire-safety enforcement has become stricter in large public buildings after the Uphaar Cinema tragedy. Smaller buildings, however, continue to face major safety gaps and weak compliance.

Key Challenges in Ensuring Urban Fire Safety

1. **Congested Settlements and Poor Accessibility:** Many urban areas have narrow roads, often less than six metres wide. Such conditions prevent fire tenders from reaching accident sites quickly.
2. **Lack of Fire-Safety Infrastructure:** Numerous buildings do not have smoke alarms, firefighting equipment, fire staircases, refuge areas, or emergency evacuation systems. Residents often receive no early warning when a fire breaks out.

3. **Weak Enforcement of Safety Norms:** Although detailed fire-safety provisions exist, monitoring and enforcement remain inadequate. Regular safety audits and emergency-response checks are often neglected.
4. **Low Public Awareness and Preparedness:** Owners, residents, visitors, and even officials frequently lack knowledge of basic fire-safety measures. Fire drills and emergency preparedness exercises are rarely conducted.
5. **Governance and Institutional Gaps:** Corruption in building-plan approvals, outdated regulations, political interference, and shortages of trained personnel and equipment weaken fire-safety management.
6. **Housing and Urban Planning Failures:** Rising property prices have pushed many people into unauthorised colonies and urban villages. Planning agencies have failed to ensure adequate infrastructure in these growing settlements.

Consequences of the Crisis

1. **Threat to Human Life:** Fire incidents can lead to deaths, injuries, and long-term trauma for affected individuals and families. The risk becomes higher where emergency preparedness is weak.
2. **Delayed Rescue and Firefighting:** Congested layouts and poor accessibility slow down rescue operations. Delays increase the likelihood of casualties and property damage.
3. **Greater Risk for Vulnerable Communities:** Middle-income, lower-middle-income, and poor households living in inadequately serviced areas face higher exposure to fire hazards.
4. **Economic and Property Losses:** Fires damage homes, workplaces, commercial establishments, and public assets. Lack of awareness regarding building insurance further increases financial losses.
5. **Continuation of Reactive Responses:** Authorities often respond through sealing drives, demolitions, or compensation after accidents. Greater attention is needed on prevention, preparedness, and correction of systemic weaknesses.

Existing Legal and Institutional Framework for Urban Fire Safety

1. **Constitutional Responsibility:** Fire services fall under the State List and the Twelfth Schedule. States and Urban Local Bodies are responsible for fire prevention, safety enforcement, and emergency response.
2. **National Building Code (NBC) 2016:** The NBC provides guidelines on fire prevention, building design, safe exits, smoke management, periodic audits, and firefighting systems. States are expected to incorporate these provisions into local regulations.
3. **Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Act, 2005:** This law provides a legal framework for improving fire prevention measures and ensuring safer building practices across states.

4. **State-Level Fire Safety Laws:** Fire-safety norms become legally enforceable only when adopted through state laws and local bye-laws. Effective implementation therefore depends largely on state governments and local bodies.
5. **Scheme for Expansion and Modernisation of Fire Services (2023–26):** The Central Government launched the scheme after the 15th Finance Commission recommended ₹5,000 crore for strengthening fire services. It focuses on modern equipment, infrastructure upgrades, training, and digital systems.
6. **NDMA Guidelines:** National disaster management guidelines provide safety measures for residential, educational, healthcare, and other public facilities to reduce fire risks.
7. **Fire Safety Week:** A pan-India Fire Safety Week is observed from **21–25 April** to spread awareness about fire prevention, emergency response, and safe practices.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Compliance and Safety Audits:** Regular inspections, fire-safety audits, and strict enforcement of building regulations should be ensured across all categories of buildings.
2. **Improve Public Awareness and Preparedness:** Awareness campaigns, training programmes, and periodic fire drills should be conducted for owners, residents, workers, and visitors.
3. **Ensure Safe Mixed-Use Development:** Buildings used for both residential and commercial purposes should comply with prescribed fire-safety standards and emergency-response requirements.
4. **Strengthen Urban Governance and Regulatory Oversight:** Authorities should ensure transparent approvals, regular monitoring, updated regulations, and effective enforcement of fire-safety norms.
5. **Integrate Fire Safety into Urban Planning:** Planning agencies should anticipate urban growth and provide adequate roads, emergency access routes, and supporting infrastructure for high-footfall activities.
6. **Improve Infrastructure in High-Risk Areas:** Urban villages and unauthorised colonies require better civic infrastructure and safer access rather than purely punitive actions.
7. **Modernise Fire Services and Promote Preventive Governance:** Better equipment, trained personnel, stronger response systems, and continuous risk reduction measures should replace a purely post-disaster approach.

Conclusion

Urban fire incidents reveal deeper gaps in planning, infrastructure, regulation, and public awareness. Addressing the crisis requires more than post-disaster actions such as compensation or demolition drives. Stronger compliance, safer buildings, improved infrastructure, regular preparedness measures, and modern fire services are essential to build a preventive and resilient urban fire-safety framework.

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges contributing to the urban fire safety crisis in India and suggest measures to build safer and more resilient cities.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Digital agriculture in India: Problems of inclusion

Source: The post “Digital agriculture in India: Problems of inclusion” has been created based on “Digital agriculture in India: Problems of inclusion”, published in “Business Line” on 25th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Economics

Context: Digital agriculture refers to the use of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, sensors, drones, online platforms, and digital advisory services across the agricultural value chain. The Government of India has promoted digital agriculture through initiatives such as the Digital Agriculture Mission (2024) and Bharat-Vistaar (2026). However, the success of these initiatives depends on adequate digital infrastructure and digital literacy among farmers.

Challenges of Inclusion in Digital Agriculture

1. Inadequate Digital Infrastructure

- a. Although nearly 80 percent of rural households have internet access, only 8 percent of them have broadband connections.
- b. Most rural households depend on mobile internet, which is often unreliable and inadequate for advanced digital services.
- c. Significant regional disparities continue to exist in rural mobile connectivity across states.

2. Limited Access to Smartphones

- a. Only about 51 percent of rural adults own a smartphone and have access to the internet.
- b. A large section of the farming population is therefore unable to access digital agricultural services and government platforms.

3. Gender-Based Digital Divide

- a. Only 37 percent of rural adult women own smartphones and have internet access.
- b. This digital gap excludes many women farmers from benefiting from digital agricultural schemes and advisory services.

4. Social Inequalities in Digital Access

- a. Ownership of smartphones and internet access is lower among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes than among Other Castes.
- b. These inequalities increase the risk of exclusion of marginalized communities from the benefits of digital agriculture.

5. Low Levels of Digital Literacy

- a. Many rural households have access to digital devices, but they lack the skills required to use them effectively.
- b. Around 27 percent of rural households do not have a single member who can use the internet for informational purposes such as learning, digital payments, or accessing services.
- c. Nearly 39 percent of rural adults can be considered digitally illiterate.

6. Poor Digital Proficiency

- a. Only 55 percent of rural adults can send messages with attachments using smartphones.
- b. Only 40 percent of rural adults can perform online transactions.
- c. Very few rural adults possess the skills required to report cybercrime or use advanced digital services.

7. Exclusion from Government Schemes

- a. Increasing digitization of agricultural services may prevent digitally excluded farmers from accessing benefits and support.
- b. Farmers without smartphones, internet access, or digital skills may be left out of important agricultural programmes.

Government Initiatives

1. Digital Agriculture Mission

- a. The Government of India launched the Digital Agriculture Mission in 2024 to create a farmer-centric digital ecosystem.
- b. The mission was allocated ₹2,817 crore to promote digital transformation in agriculture.

2. Bharat-Vistaar

- a. Bharat-Vistaar was launched in 2026 as an AI-enabled agro-advisory platform.
- b. The initiative received an allocation of ₹150 crore in the Union Budget 2026–27.

3. Digital Bharat Nidhi

- a. The Digital Bharat Nidhi was established to support the expansion of digital and telecommunication infrastructure in rural and remote areas.
- b. However, a large portion of the collected funds remains unutilized.

4. Kerala Model

- a. Kerala recognized internet access as a basic right in 2019.
- b. The state achieved universal digital literacy in 2025.
- c. Kerala also invested heavily in the Kerala Fibre Optic Network (K-FON) to ensure equitable internet access.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Digital Infrastructure

- a. The government should expand broadband and fibre-optic connectivity in rural and remote areas.
- b. Unutilized funds under the Digital Bharat Nidhi should be effectively deployed for this purpose.

2. Improve Digital Literacy

- a. The government should revive and strengthen programmes aimed at improving digital literacy in rural areas.
- b. Special emphasis should be placed on practical digital skills relevant to agriculture and service delivery.

3. Bridge the Gender Divide

- a. Targeted programmes should be implemented to improve smartphone ownership and digital literacy among women farmers.
- b. Women should be encouraged to actively participate in digital agricultural initiatives.

4. Promote Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

- a. Affordable access to smartphones and internet services should be provided to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other disadvantaged groups.
- b. Digital platforms should be designed in local languages to improve accessibility.

5. Build Digital Skills

- a. Farmers should be trained in digital payments, online transactions, cyber safety, and the use of agricultural applications.
- b. Such training will enable them to fully utilize digital agricultural services.

6. Increase Public Investment

- a. The government should invest more in rural digital infrastructure, especially in areas where private investment is unlikely to be profitable.
- b. Public investment is essential to ensure universal and equitable access to digital services.

Conclusion: Digital agriculture has the potential to improve productivity, transparency, and sustainability in Indian agriculture. However, inadequate digital infrastructure, low digital literacy, gender disparities, and social inequalities continue to limit its reach. Therefore, the government must prioritize inclusive digital development to ensure that the benefits of digital agriculture reach all sections of rural India.

Question: Digital agriculture is being promoted as a transformative approach for Indian agriculture. However, issues of digital infrastructure and digital literacy create challenges of inclusion in rural India." Examine. Suggest measures to make digital agriculture more inclusive.

Source: [Business Line](#)

FCRA Rules 2025

Source: The post "FCRA Rules 2025" has been created based on "Why government has tightened FCRA rules, and put religious conversion in focus", published in "Indian Express" on 25th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Economics

Context: The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) regulates the receipt and utilization of foreign contributions by NGOs, associations, and other organizations in India. Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued two notifications that have tightened the regulatory framework governing foreign funding. The amendments aim to improve transparency, accountability, and monitoring of foreign-funded activities.

Key Changes Introduced Under the New FCRA Notifications

1. Purpose-Specific Registration

- a. Every FCRA-registered organization must now specify the exact purposes for which foreign funds will be utilized.
- b. Organizations are required to select their activities from a government-prescribed list of 105 permissible purposes.
- c. Any expansion of activities beyond the approved purposes will require fresh government approval.

2. Geographical Restrictions

- a. Organizations must specify the States and Union Territories where they intend to undertake activities funded through foreign contributions.
- b. Foreign funds cannot be utilized outside the approved geographical areas without prior approval.

- c. This marks a shift from the earlier framework where geography was disclosed but not linked to registration.

3. Broader Definition of Key Functionary

- a. The new rules provide a detailed definition of "key functionary."
- b. Directors, trustees, partners, office bearers, governing body members, and other persons exercising management control are now covered under the definition.
- c. This expands accountability within organizations receiving foreign funds.

4. Restrictions on Foreign Nationals in Management

- a. Organizations having foreign nationals in key management positions will ordinarily not be granted registration or prior permission.
- b. The provision aims to reduce foreign influence in the governance of Indian organizations.

5. Enhanced Disclosure Requirements

- a. Organizations must provide detailed activity reports along with annual returns.
- b. They are required to disclose social media accounts and details of ultimate donors.
- c. The new provisions seek to improve transparency and traceability of foreign funds.

6. Minimum Utilization Requirement

- a. The government has introduced a minimum utilization threshold while considering renewal or cancellation of registration.
- b. The provision seeks to ensure that foreign contributions are actively used for approved purposes.

7. Exclusion of Proselytisation

- a. Religious activities funded through foreign contributions are permitted only if they do not involve proselytisation.
- b. Activities such as religious education, theological studies, preservation of traditions, and religious gatherings remain permissible.
- c. Conversion-oriented activities are explicitly excluded from approved purposes.

Why Has Proselytisation Been Specifically Excluded?

1. Constitutional Basis

- a. Article 25 guarantees the right to profess, practice, and propagate religion.
- b. However, the Supreme Court in the **Rev. Stanislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh (1977)** case held that the right to propagate religion does not include the right to convert another person.
- c. The amendment reflects this judicial interpretation.

2. Government's Concerns

- a. The government has repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the alleged use of foreign funds for religious conversion activities.
- b. Several organizations have faced FCRA-related action on grounds of violations and alleged involvement in conversion activities.
- c. The amendment seeks to ensure that foreign contributions are not used for conversion-oriented work.

Significance of the Revised Penalty Framework

1. Stricter Penalties for Administrative Expense Violations

- a. Spending beyond the statutory 20 percent limit on administrative expenses will attract substantial monetary penalties.
- b. This encourages greater compliance with expenditure norms.

2. Penalties for Speculative Investments

- a. Investment of foreign contributions in speculative activities such as stock market investments will attract penalties.
- b. Any gains earned from such investments will also be recovered.

3. Penalties for Diversion of Funds

- a. Utilization of foreign contributions for purposes other than those approved will attract significant penalties.
- b. The provision seeks to prevent misuse of foreign funds.

4. Penalties for Unauthorized Geographical Use

- a. Organizations using funds outside approved States or Union Territories will face penalties.
- b. This reinforces geographical accountability.

5. Promotion of Compliance

- a. The revised framework increases the cost of non-compliance.
- b. At the same time, it provides a structured compounding mechanism to settle violations without criminal prosecution.

Reasons Behind the Amendments

- 1. The government seeks to strengthen oversight and monitoring of foreign-funded activities.
- 2. The amendments aim to address compliance gaps in the existing framework.
- 3. The government intends to ensure that foreign funds are utilized only for approved purposes and in approved geographical areas.
- 4. The reforms seek to improve transparency regarding donor networks and financial flows.
- 5. The amendments also facilitate better management of assets created using foreign contributions.

Concerns Regarding the Amendments

1. Increased Regulatory Burden

- a. Organizations may face greater administrative and compliance costs.
- b. Frequent approvals may delay project implementation.

2. Reduced Operational Flexibility

- a. Purpose-specific and geography-specific registrations may limit the ability of organizations to respond to emerging needs.
- b. NGOs may find it difficult to quickly expand activities during emergencies.

3. Impact on Civil Society

- a. Stricter regulations may discourage foreign-funded developmental and charitable activities.
- b. Smaller organizations may struggle to comply with complex reporting requirements.

4. Concerns Regarding Associational Freedom

- a. Critics argue that excessive regulation may affect the autonomy and functioning of civil society organizations.
- b. Balancing national security concerns with democratic freedoms remains important.

Way Forward

1. Ensure a Balanced Regulatory Framework

- a. The government should strike a balance between national security concerns and the legitimate functioning of civil society organizations.
- b. Regulations should promote accountability without creating excessive restrictions on genuine developmental activities.

2. Simplify Compliance Procedures

- a. The approval, reporting, and renewal processes should be made more transparent, predictable, and time-bound.
- b. Digital platforms should be strengthened to reduce procedural delays and compliance costs.

3. Adopt a Risk-Based Regulatory Approach

- a. Regulatory scrutiny should be proportionate to the scale of funding and the risk profile of organizations.
- b. Genuine organizations with a strong compliance record should be subjected to simplified monitoring mechanisms.

4. Strengthen Transparency and Accountability

- a. NGOs should maintain robust financial management systems and regularly disclose information regarding the utilization of foreign contributions.
- b. Greater transparency will enhance public trust and reduce concerns regarding misuse of funds.

5. Build Institutional Capacity

- a. The government should strengthen monitoring and audit mechanisms through technology-driven oversight systems.
- b. Capacity-building programmes should be conducted to help organizations understand and comply with FCRA requirements.

6. Promote Stakeholder Consultation

- a. Periodic consultations should be held between the government, civil society organizations, and experts before introducing major regulatory changes.
- b. Such engagement can improve policy design and reduce implementation challenges.

7. Encourage Development-Oriented Partnerships

- a. The regulatory framework should facilitate foreign contributions for education, healthcare, disaster relief, social welfare, and sustainable development activities.
- b. Genuine developmental initiatives should not be adversely affected by compliance-related hurdles.

Conclusion: The new FCRA framework represents a significant shift toward tighter regulation of foreign contributions in India. The amendments seek to improve transparency, accountability, and monitoring of foreign-funded activities while preventing misuse of funds. However, effective implementation should balance regulatory oversight with the need to preserve the legitimate functioning of civil society organizations in a democratic society.

Question: The recent amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) framework reflect the government's attempt to strengthen accountability and transparency in the utilization of foreign funds. Examine the key changes and discuss their implications for civil society organizations in India.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Clearing the Road to Timely Trauma Care in India

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

Introduction

On 26 May 2026, the **Supreme Court of India** recognised the **Right to Trauma Care** as part of the **Right to Life under Article 21**. The judgment aims to build a uniform and enforceable trauma care system across the country. It shifts the focus from isolated hospital treatment to an integrated emergency response that begins at the accident site and continues until definitive medical care, making timely trauma care a constitutional responsibility of the State.

Need for a Robust Trauma Care System

1. **High burden of trauma deaths:** Around **4.67 lakh Indians** die every year due to road crashes, falls, burns, drowning, industrial accidents, fires and disasters. **Road crashes alone cause nearly 1.77 lakh deaths**, while trauma remains the leading cause of death among people aged **18–45 years**.
2. **Many deaths are preventable:** The **Law Commission (201st Report)** estimated that **half of road crash deaths** could be prevented through timely medical care. A **2021 NITI Aayog-AIIMS Emergency and Injury Care Report** found that **at least 30% of deaths** are linked to delays in emergency response.
3. **Existing policies lack effective implementation:** India already has several policies and guidelines on emergency care. However, the country still lacks a **uniform and enforceable trauma care framework** that ensures equal access across all States.
4. **Trauma care is a complete system:** Survival depends on the entire **chain of survival**, including bystanders, emergency calls, ambulances, trained personnel and hospitals. Failure at any stage can reduce the patient's chances of survival.
5. **Emergency care should not depend on chance:** Access to trauma care has often depended on location, ambulance availability and hospital capacity. The judgment makes timely trauma care a constitutional right instead of leaving survival to circumstances.
6. **Benefits extend beyond road accidents:** Trauma care is needed for injuries caused by falls, burns, industrial accidents, disasters and other emergencies. A stronger trauma system improves emergency care for all seriously injured patients.

Supreme Court Recognition of Right to Trauma Care

1. **Trauma care brought under Article 21:** The Supreme Court held that the **Right to Trauma Care** is an integral part of the **Right to Life**. The right extends from the site of injury until the patient receives definitive hospital treatment.
2. **Built upon earlier judgments:** The Court expanded the principles laid down in **Parmanand Katara (1989)**, which recognised the duty of doctors to provide emergency care, and **Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (1996)**, which linked emergency medical care with Article 21.
3. **Positive obligation on the State:** The judgment places a constitutional duty on governments to build and sustain an integrated trauma response system. It makes emergency care a responsibility of the State rather than only a hospital service.
4. **System approach to saving lives:** The Court recognised that even a well-equipped hospital cannot compensate for delayed transport or poor emergency response. Every link in the trauma care system must function together.

Major Directives of the Supreme Court

1. **Integrated emergency communication:** All emergency numbers, including **100, 101, 102, 108, 1033 and 1091**, along with State variants, must be integrated into **helpline 112** within three months. Governments must also create public awareness about the unified helpline.
2. **Protection for Good Samaritans:** Every State must establish physical and digital grievance redress systems for **Good Samaritans**. State and district-level nodal authorities will address complaints and protect citizens who assist accident victims.
3. **Strengthening pre-hospital care:** All public and private ambulances must follow the **National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)**. They should carry GPS linked to **112**, undergo regular audits, and States must adopt the notified **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** curriculum.
4. **Improving hospital preparedness:** States must grade and designate trauma care facilities so that their capabilities remain transparent. The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** will also notify a national medical rescue protocol and a common Trauma Registry format.
5. **Financial support for victims:** States have been directed to operationalise **PM RAHAT**, the Centre's cashless treatment scheme for road crash victims, within eight weeks. Failure to implement it will amount to a violation of the **Motor Vehicles Act**.

Role of Cooperative Federalism

1. **Shared constitutional responsibility:** Public health, hospitals and ambulance services fall under the **State List**. Therefore, building a national trauma care system requires continuous cooperation between the Union and the States.
2. **Union as an enabling authority:** The Court accepted that the Union should act as an enabler while States lead implementation. Both levels of government must work together through sustained and coordinated efforts.

3. **Judicial support to existing initiatives:** The judgment strengthens existing programmes such as **PM RAHAT** (Prime Minister – Road Accident Victims' Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment), **Emergency Response Support System (112)**, the **National Ambulance Code**, the **EMT curriculum**, the **Good Samaritan Rules** and the Health Ministry's trauma care guidelines.
4. **Commitment from States and UTs:** Compliance affidavits submitted by **34 States and Union Territories** showed willingness to adopt national standards and improve trauma care services.

Global Best Practices in Trauma Care

1. **Integrated trauma networks save lives:** Countries such as the **United States** and the **United Kingdom** have developed organised trauma networks that connect ambulances with specialised trauma centres. This has improved survival and patient outcomes.
2. **Strong coordination improves emergency response:** **Australia** has integrated ambulance services, retrieval systems and trauma centres across large geographical areas. **Israel** combines trauma care with disaster preparedness and emergency management.
3. **Common features of successful systems:** Effective trauma systems share common principles such as rapid access to care, coordinated services, trained personnel, data-driven decision-making, accountability and continuous quality improvement. These practices provide useful lessons for India while allowing solutions suited to its own scale and diversity.

Challenges in Implementing Trauma Care Reforms

1. **Uneven capacity across States:** States differ widely in healthcare infrastructure and administrative capacity. This may affect uniform implementation of the Court's directions.
2. **Weak emergency response systems:** Ambulance networks remain uneven and emergency helpline integration has progressed slowly in several regions. These gaps delay timely medical care.
3. **Need for trained emergency workforce:** India requires more **Emergency Medical Technicians, paramedics, trauma nurses, emergency physicians, trauma surgeons, dispatch professionals, trauma coordinators and rehabilitation specialists**. A strong trauma system depends on trained personnel at every level.
4. **Effective monitoring remains essential:** The Court has directed Chief Secretaries to submit **Action Taken Reports**, while the **Attorney General of India** will monitor implementation. States must now demonstrate measurable progress before the Court.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court has transformed timely trauma care **from a policy objective into a constitutional guarantee under Article 21**. The priority now is **effective implementation of the Court's directions** through stronger coordination, accountable emergency response systems and continuous monitoring. Success will depend on ensuring that every injured **person receives timely, accessible and quality trauma care, regardless of where an emergency occurs**.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of the Supreme Court's recognition of the Right to Trauma Care under Article 21 and discuss the measures needed for building an integrated trauma care system in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Sustaining India's Low-Fertility Future

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- population and associated issues

Introduction

India has entered a new demographic phase as its Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1. The country has become a low-fertility nation, but not one demographic economy, as fertility levels vary widely across States and between rural and urban areas. This shift moves India's focus from population growth to ageing and will shape its labour market, economy, healthcare, migration and social security in the coming decades.

Understanding India's Fertility Transition

1. **Declining Fertility Levels:** India's TFR has fallen from 4.3 in 1985 to 1.9 in 2024. The decline has been steady, and current trends suggest it may fall below 1.6 by 2031.
2. **Below Replacement Fertility:** A TFR below replacement means births are no longer enough to replace the parent generation. In India, replacement fertility is estimated at about 2.15–2.2 because of a skewed sex ratio at birth and higher female mortality.
3. **Regional Differences:** Fertility levels differ widely across States. Delhi (1.2), Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal (1.3) have very low fertility, while Bihar (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4) and Rajasthan (2.3) remain above or close to replacement levels.
4. **Rural-Urban Divide:** Rural TFR is around 2.1, while urban TFR has fallen to 1.5. As urbanisation expands, the national fertility rate is likely to decline further.
5. **Changing Family Aspirations:** Couples are increasingly choosing smaller families. The earlier preference for two children is gradually shifting towards one-child or no-child families, especially in urban areas.
6. **Reasons Behind the Decline:** Higher female education, delayed marriage, financial pressures, better access to contraception, urbanisation, and the decline of joint families have reduced fertility across the country.

Key Demographic Trends and Emerging Concerns

1. **Different Demographic Stages Across States:** India has entered low fertility as a country but not as a single demographic economy. Some States are ageing rapidly, while others will continue adding young workers over the next two decades.
2. **Population Momentum:** India's population will continue growing for some time because of a large working-age population and rising life expectancy. However, today's lower fertility will reduce the size of the future workforce.

3. **Growing Elderly Population:** India currently has about **150 million people aged 60 years and above**. This number is projected to reach **347 million by 2050**, nearly **one-fifth of the population**.
4. **Changing Dependency Pattern:** A smaller workforce and a larger elderly population will increase pressure on pensions, healthcare and public finances. The demographic burden will become more visible between **2045 and 2060**.
5. **Migration and Labour Mobility:** Ageing States will increasingly depend on workers from younger States. They should treat migrant workers as **citizens who sustain their economies rather than temporary labour**, while ensuring portable welfare benefits across States.
6. **Global Comparison:** Delhi's TFR is **1.2**, while **Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are at 1.3**. These levels are **lower than the United States (1.6), Finland (1.4) and Japan (1.3)**, showing that some Indian States have already entered very low-fertility levels.

Socio-Economic Challenges of a Low-Fertility India

1. **Weak Fiscal Capacity:** Unlike many developed countries, India is entering population ageing before building a strong tax base, formal workforce and welfare system.
2. **Large Informal Workforce:** Most workers are employed in the informal or semi-formal sector. Since their incomes are uncertain, they cannot regularly contribute to pension schemes meant for formal employment.
3. **Limited Social Security:** Existing pension support remains inadequate for old-age security. The **Atal Pension Yojana** depends on regular contributions, while the **National Social Assistance Programme** provides only **₹200 per month for people aged 60–79 and ₹500 for those above 80**.
4. **Growing Elderly Dependence:** NITI Aayog estimates that **70% of elderly people depend on others and 78% have no pension coverage**. This shows the need for a basic **inflation-indexed minimum pension floor** along with contributory pension systems.
5. **Changing Family Support:** Joint families, co-resident children and unpaid family care have long supported elderly people. Urbanisation, migration, nuclear families and women's educational and work aspirations are weakening this traditional support system, making stronger public care and welfare systems increasingly necessary.
6. **Healthcare Burden of Ageing:** Healthcare needs are shifting towards long-term management of **hypertension, diabetes, dementia, disability and palliative care**. Geriatric care must become part of nursing, primary healthcare and district health planning.
7. **Political and Regional Impact:** States with very low fertility may face **reduced parliamentary representation**, tighter labour supply and higher costs of supporting an ageing population, while younger States will continue adding workers.

Way Forward for a Sustainable Low-Fertility Future

1. **Strengthen Social Security:** Build an **inflation-indexed minimum pension floor** to provide basic income security for elderly people who remain outside formal pension systems.
2. **Expand Geriatric Healthcare:** Continue mission-mode public investment by integrating geriatric care into **primary healthcare, nursing practice and district health planning**.
3. **Invest in Younger States:** Improve **education, healthcare and skill development** so that young workers from high-fertility States can access better employment opportunities.
4. **Ensure Portable Welfare Benefits:** Welfare entitlements should move with migrant workers across State borders. A national labour market cannot depend on benefits linked only to domicile.
5. **Support Productive Employment:** Create productive jobs in younger States while preparing ageing States to absorb migrant workers as equal contributors to their economies.
6. **Encourage Evidence-Based Policy:** Updated demographic data should guide public debate and policymaking as India prepares for long-term demographic change.
7. **Strengthen Public Care Systems:** As family support declines, public welfare, elderly care and social protection systems should gradually take greater responsibility.

Conclusion

India's low-fertility future is now a reality rather than a distant possibility. The country must prepare for aging while using its remaining demographic dividend. Stronger social security, healthcare, skilled employment and portable welfare are essential. As traditional family support weakens, stronger public institutions must gradually take greater responsibility for ensuring a sustainable and inclusive demographic transition.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the implications of India's declining fertility rate for its economy, labour market, healthcare system, and social security, and suggest measures to ensure a sustainable low-fertility future.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Passport and Citizenship Debate

Introduction:

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has recently clarified that an Indian passport is primarily a travel document to facilitate international movement and does not serve as conclusive, legal proof of citizenship. The statement, made during Passport Seva Divas, has sparked public confusion and debate, highlighting a long-standing legal framework regarding Indian identity documents.

What is the legal basis for citizenship in India?

- The legal basis for citizenship in India rests on a dual framework: The Constitution of India and the Citizenship Act of 1955.
- **Constitution of India:**
 - The Constitution outlines who was eligible for citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950.

- It intentionally left the specifics of future citizenship laws to the Indian Parliament. Article 11 granted absolute power to the Parliament to enact laws regulating the acquisition and termination of citizenship.
- **Citizenship Act of 1955:** Acquisition of Indian citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act of 1955 & the Rules made there under. The Citizenship Act, 1955 details exactly how an individual can acquire or lose Indian citizenship. There are five pathways to acquire it - by birth, descent, registration, Naturalization & Incorporation of Territory.

What is the debate over whether a passport can be considered proof of citizenship?

- The debate has arisen because neither the Constitution nor the Citizenship Act recognizes any single document as definitive proof of citizenship. Yet, under the Citizenship Rules, 2003, those seeking Indian citizenship under certain provisions are required to produce copies of their parents' passports as proof that their parents are Indian citizens.
- Passports are governed by the Passports Act, 1967, while citizenship is determined by the Citizenship Act, 1955. A passport is issued because the government is satisfied at that moment that you are a citizen. However, the passport itself does not create or permanently guarantee that status.
- Under Section 20 of the Passports Act, the Central Government holds the power to issue a passport to a non-citizen or stateless person under special humanitarian or public interest circumstances. Because non-citizens can legally hold a passport in rare cases, the document cannot be deemed an absolute, unassailable proof of citizenship.

What have been the Supreme Court's observations on this debate?

- **The SIR Hearings Observation:** A Supreme Court bench observed that passports and birth certificates carry greater evidentiary value than many other documents used for electoral roll verification. However, they are only part of a broader list of acceptable documents and cannot be treated as conclusive proof in every legal situation.
- **State of Andhra Pradesh v. Abdul Khader (1962):** The Supreme Court established that a passport functions as evidence of nationality, but it cannot be accepted blindly. To determine actual citizenship, the court must examine fundamental constitutional criteria, including birth, domicile, and migration history.
- **Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India (2005):** The Supreme Court emphasized that the burden of proof rests entirely on the individual claiming citizenship. Producing a single document like a passport does not automatically satisfy this burden if the underlying qualifications are challenged.
- **The Bombay High Court Ruling (2013):** The court refused to grant relief to individuals accused of being illegal immigrants, even though they produced passports, birth certificates, and Aadhaar cards.

What challenges arise in establishing citizenship through documents in India?

- India does not issue universal citizenship certificates like many other countries. Citizenship certificates are issued only for a limited category of people in India - those who acquire citizenship through registration or naturalization. But the majority of the Indians are citizens by birth.
- India's civil registration system evolved unevenly, and universal birth registration is a relatively recent phenomenon. Consequently, for millions of Indians, citizenship has traditionally been established through a combination of documents and records rather than a single definitive document.

What steps has the government taken to address the issue of documentary proof of citizenship in India?

1. **National Register of Citizens (NRC):** The closest India came to creating a document was through the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The 2003 amendment to the Citizenship Act created a legal mandate for a nationwide NRC. While a pan-India NRC has not been implemented, an NRC was updated for Assam and published in 2018.
2. **Clarifying the Status of Existing Documents:** The government and courts have repeatedly clarified that no single document is conclusive proof of citizenship in India:
 - a. **Aadhaar:** The Supreme Court has explicitly ruled that Aadhaar is proof of identity and residence, not citizenship.
 - b. **Passport:** The Ministry of External Affairs has clarified that a passport is primarily a travel document.

- c. **Voter ID:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) maintains that a Voter ID proves enrollment in the electoral roll, but it is not automatically a standalone legal proof of citizenship.
3. **Documenting the Process for New Citizens:** For individuals born abroad to Indian parents, the government requires a formal online registration of birth to establish citizenship, including a declaration that the minor child holds no other country's passport.

Conclusion: The debate over whether a passport can be used as proof of citizenship ultimately underscores the need for a clear, simple, and universally accepted standard for establishing citizenship, which lies at the core of an individual's rights and obligations within the state.

Mains Question: "The absence of a universally accepted proof of citizenship creates uncertainty for both citizens and the State." Examine in light of the recent debate on passports as proof of citizenship.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Revisiting India's Ultrasound Laws

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

Introduction

India's Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 was enacted to prevent prenatal sex determination and protect the declining child sex ratio. However, advances in portable ultrasound and artificial intelligence (AI) have expanded the medical use of ultrasound beyond obstetrics, particularly for early diagnosis in rural areas. This has raised important questions about whether the existing regulatory framework continues to balance the objectives of gender justice and accessible healthcare.

PCPNDT Act: Background, Objectives and Key Provisions

1. **Historical Need for the Law:** The spread of amniocentesis and ultrasound during the 1970s–1990s enabled prenatal sex determination in a society with a strong preference for sons. This led to widespread sex-selective abortions.
2. **Objectives of the PCPNDT Act:** The Act was enacted in 1994 to prohibit prenatal sex determination and prevent the misuse of diagnostic technologies. It also sought to address gender discrimination and protect the declining child sex ratio while fulfilling India's commitments to gender equality.
3. **Regulation of Ultrasound Services:** The Act requires all genetic clinics, ultrasound centres and laboratories to be registered. It prohibits the disclosure of the foetus's sex and prescribes strict monitoring, record keeping and penalties for violations.
4. **Strict Control over Ultrasound Machines:** Ultrasound machines can only be purchased by registered centres after government approval. Manufacturers must verify buyers, maintain transaction records and ensure that machines remain at their registered locations.
5. **Protection of Gender Equality:** The law recognises that preventing sex selection is essential to protect the dignity and equal worth of girls before birth. At the same time, it is not intended to weaken safe abortion access or women's reproductive rights.

Achievements of the PCPNDT Act

1. **Established a Strong Regulatory Framework:** The Act created a nationwide legal system to regulate ultrasound technology, monitor diagnostic centres and prohibit prenatal sex determination. It made misuse of ultrasound for sex selection a punishable offence.
2. **Improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth:** India's sex ratio at birth has gradually improved after the introduction of the Act. However, available evidence does not conclusively establish that this improvement resulted only from the law, as education, urbanisation and changing social attitudes also played important roles.
3. **Expansion of Monitoring Mechanisms:** The number of registered diagnostic centres increased from 49,544 (March 2014) to 98,595 (June 2025). This reflects a significant expansion of the regulatory system governing ultrasound services.
4. **Reinforced Gender Equality:** The Act recognised that sex-selective abortion is rooted in gender discrimination rather than medical practice alone. It established an important legal safeguard against practices that deny equal value to girls before birth.

Limitations of the Existing Framework

1. **Limited Success in Eliminating Sex Selection:** Illegal prenatal sex determination continues despite decades of prohibition. Crackdowns, including an organised racket uncovered in Karnataka in October 2025, show that such activities continue through informal networks and portable devices.
2. **Enforcement Focuses More on Compliance than Outcomes:** Implementation is largely measured through registrations, inspections, machine seizures and legal cases instead of actual prevention of sex selection. Around 68% of reported violations were procedural, showing that paperwork often receives greater attention than criminal misuse.
3. **Fear among Genuine Healthcare Providers:** Strict penalties, complex documentation and the risk of machine seizure have created fear among doctors and hospitals. Even minor clerical mistakes can result in legal action, discouraging the wider use of ultrasound for legitimate medical care.
4. **Unintended Social Consequences:** Where son preference continues, families with a first-born girl often have more children in the hope of having a son. Studies associate this with a 25% higher child mortality among first-born girls, reduced investment in health and education, and greater pressure on poorer rural households.
5. **Law Alone Cannot Change Social Norms:** Evidence from India and the Indian diaspora in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia shows that son preference can persist despite strict regulation. This highlights that legal restrictions alone cannot eliminate deep-rooted gender bias and must be supported by broader social change.

Technological Advances and the Need for Reform

1. **Changing Nature of Ultrasound Technology:** The Act was framed when ultrasound was mainly used for obstetric imaging. Today, ultrasound is widely used in emergency medicine, trauma care, anaesthesia, cancer diagnosis and other clinical specialties, requiring a more differentiated regulatory approach.
2. **Portable Ultrasound Can Improve Rural Healthcare:** Portable and handheld ultrasound devices now make it possible to provide diagnostic services closer to patients' homes. This can improve early detection of diseases such as breast cancer, especially in rural areas where nearly 70% of India's population lives.
3. **Current Law Has Not Kept Pace with Technology:** The PCPNDT Act treats the movement of ultrasound machines outside registered centres as a serious offence. As a result, portable devices that can safely support community healthcare remain largely unavailable for legitimate medical use.
4. **Same Rules for Different Medical Uses:** Modern high-frequency linear probes used for breast cancer and other superficial conditions cannot determine foetal sex. Yet they are regulated under the same provisions as obstetric ultrasound, limiting access to essential diagnostic services.
5. **Growing Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI-enabled ultrasound systems can assist in image acquisition, interpretation and automated reporting. Such technologies can support purpose-specific diagnosis while reducing the possibility of misuse for prenatal sex determination.
6. **AI Can Strengthen Early Cancer Detection:** A pilot study found that AI-assisted portable ultrasound accurately identified all confirmed breast cancer cases, even when scans were performed by people with limited training. This can help frontline health workers identify suspicious cases and refer patients for timely treatment.
7. **Importance for Rural Cancer Care:** Unlike many Western countries that rely mainly on mammography, India can expand early diagnosis through community-based ultrasound because it requires fewer resources and can improve access in underserved areas.

The Way Forward

1. **Separate Obstetric and Non-Obstetric Ultrasound:** The regulatory framework should distinguish ultrasound used for pregnancy from ultrasound used in emergency care, trauma, anaesthesia, cancer diagnosis and other medical conditions. This will reduce unnecessary restrictions on legitimate healthcare services.
2. **Legalise Community-Based Diagnostic Services:** The Act should permit community-based ultrasound using high-frequency linear probes, as these cannot determine foetal sex. This can improve access to early diagnosis, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
3. **Adopt Risk-Based Regulation:** Portable ultrasound devices should be regulated through training standards, device registration, digital records and random inspections instead of treating machine mobility itself as the main risk. This can improve compliance while supporting wider healthcare access.

4. **Modernise Monitoring Systems:** Paper-based compliance should be replaced with secure digital systems such as encrypted image logs, machine-use records, geotagged scans and tamper-resistant data storage. These measures can improve monitoring without creating unnecessary administrative burdens.
5. **Evaluate the Law Using Better Evidence:** A national assessment should examine how much improvement in the sex ratio is due to the Act and how much results from education, urbanisation, fertility decline and changing social attitudes. Public reporting should focus on convictions, offence types and trial outcomes instead of only inspections and registrations.
6. **Update the Law for Emerging Technologies:** The Act should permit community-based ultrasound using high-frequency linear probes and include provisions for AI-enabled ultrasound systems that are designed to prevent foetal sex determination or disclosure.

Conclusion

The PCPNDT Act remains an essential safeguard against sex-selective practices, but its regulatory framework should evolve with changing medical technologies. India needs a balanced, risk-based approach that continues to prevent misuse while expanding access to safe, affordable and community-based diagnostic services. Such reforms can strengthen both gender justice and public healthcare.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the need to reform India's PCPNDT Act in light of advances in ultrasound technology and changing healthcare needs.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

MSMEs: Time to Step Up

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a major pillar of India's economy and play an important role in employment, manufacturing and exports. Despite their strong contribution, many enterprises remain small and struggle to grow into competitive medium-sized businesses. With **31.1% contribution to GDP**, **35.4% to manufacturing output** and **48.58% to exports**, India's next phase of economic growth depends on helping MSMEs scale, innovate and become sustainable enterprises.

MSMEs as the Pillars of India's Economy

1. **Economic Contribution:** MSMEs play a major role in India's economy by contributing **31.1% of GDP**, **35.4% of manufacturing output** and **48.58% of exports**. Their strong presence makes them an important driver of economic growth.
2. **Employment Generation:** The sector provides employment to **32.8 crore people** and is India's second-largest employer after agriculture. It creates livelihood opportunities across both rural and urban areas.

3. **Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Growth:** MSMEs encourage first-generation entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and youth-led enterprises. They also support artisans, rural enterprises, startups and innovative manufacturers.
4. **Regional Development:** The sector promotes balanced development by creating business opportunities in semi-urban and rural areas. It strengthens local economies through manufacturing, services and traditional industries.
5. **Formalisation and Transformation:** Digitalisation, formalisation and policy support are expanding the reach of MSMEs. These reforms are improving access to finance, technology, markets and government schemes.

Why India's MSMEs Need to Scale Up

1. **Limited Growth Beyond Micro Enterprises:** India has millions of micro enterprises, but only a small number grow into medium-sized businesses. This limits productivity, quality employment and export growth.
2. **Need for Business Support:** Many enterprises struggle during their early years and fail to reach their full potential. Better advisory services, mentoring, formalisation support and growth capital can improve their survival and expansion.
3. **Working Capital Constraints:** Timely liquidity is essential for meeting large orders and managing long payment cycles. Greater focus on seller financing can help enterprises scale in a sustainable manner.
4. **Focus on Long-Term Institutions:** The goal should not only be to increase the number of MSMEs. More enterprises should develop into stable and competitive institutions that can grow over time.
5. **Changing Global Opportunity:** As global supply chains diversify, India has an opportunity to become a stronger manufacturing and export hub. However, this requires MSMEs to become larger, more productive and globally competitive.

Government Initiatives Strengthening the MSME Ecosystem

1. **Improving Formalisation:** The MSME definition was revised from **1 April 2025** by increasing the **investment and annual turnover limits**. This gives enterprises more room to expand while continuing to receive policy support. Registrations under the **Udyam Registration Portal** and **Udyam Assist Platform** crossed **8.7 crore** by **June 2026**, improving access to finance, markets and government schemes.
2. **Expanding Access to Finance:** The **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)** strengthened collateral-free lending by increasing the guarantee limit from **₹5 crore to ₹10 crore**. The **Digital Credit Assessment Model**, enhanced support to the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** and the **Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund** further improved access to institutional finance and equity support.

3. **Promoting Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment:** The **PM Vishwakarma Scheme** supports artisans in **18 traditional trades** through skill training, concessional credit, digital enablement and marketing support. The **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)** promotes self-employment by supporting new micro-enterprises through credit-linked subsidies and has generated employment for **more than 97 lakh people**.
4. **Strengthening Rural Enterprises:** The **A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)** promotes rural entrepreneurship through skill development, incubation and micro-enterprise support.
5. **Improving Competitiveness:** The **MSME Champions Scheme** promotes innovation, design, intellectual property protection, quality manufacturing through **Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED)** certification, and operational efficiency through **Lean Manufacturing (LEAN)** practices. These initiatives help MSMEs become more productive and globally competitive.
6. **Technology, Governance and Market Access:** **Technology, Governance and Market Access:** Technology Centres and Extension Centres support skill development and innovation. The **Samadhaan Portal, CHAMPIONS Portal, Online Dispute Resolution Portal** and **MSME Sambandh Portal** improve grievance redressal, address delayed payments and strengthen market access.
7. **Promoting Inclusive and Regional Growth:** The **National SC-ST Hub (NSSH)**, the **Promotion of MSMEs in North Eastern Region and Sikkim Scheme**, and the **RAMP Scheme** improve market access, infrastructure, capacity building and Centre-State cooperation. Together, these initiatives strengthen enterprise development across different regions and social groups.

Emerging Opportunities for MSMEs

1. **Digital Commerce and Credit:** India's digital public infrastructure has transformed identity and payments. The next step is to strengthen commerce and credit through platforms such as the **Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)**, wider seller financing and specialised **business-to-business (B2B)** ecosystems that improve working capital, transparency and business efficiency.
2. **Artificial Intelligence for Productivity:** AI can improve inventory management, forecasting, customer engagement and compliance without large investments. These technologies should become affordable and available beyond metropolitan cities so that productivity gains reach more enterprises.
3. **Women-led Enterprises:** Women own **more than one-fifth of MSMEs** registered on the Udyam platform. Better access to finance, markets and business networks can increase their contribution to employment and strengthen local economies.
4. **Global Manufacturing and Export Potential:** India contributes only **2.9% of global manufacturing value added** and **1.8% of global merchandise exports**. This provides significant scope for MSMEs to deepen their participation in global value chains and strengthen India's manufacturing base.
5. **Global Cooperation:** India strengthened international cooperation by hosting the **First BRICS MSME Forum** and the **Third SME Working Group Meeting in June 2026**. The discussions focused on access to finance, technology adoption and sustainable MSME growth.

Way Forward

1. **Support Enterprise Scaling:** The focus should shift from creating more MSMEs to helping existing enterprises become sustainable and competitive medium-sized businesses.
2. **Expand Access to Finance:** Greater access to seller financing, working capital, equity support and timely credit can help enterprises manage cash flow and expand their operations.
3. **Strengthen Digital and Technology Adoption:** Digital infrastructure should make commerce easier by improving market linkages and access to capital. Affordable AI and technology should reach enterprises across the country.
4. **Promote Inclusive Growth:** Women entrepreneurs, rural enterprises, artisans and enterprises from the North East and SC/ST communities should receive stronger support to improve participation in markets and employment generation.
5. **Build Competitive MSMEs:** Continued reforms, innovation, skill development, technology support and stronger integration with global value chains can improve productivity and export competitiveness.

Conclusion

MSMEs have become a strong pillar of India's economy through their contribution to **employment, manufacturing, exports and entrepreneurship**. Continued reforms, easier access to finance, wider technology adoption and stronger market linkages can help more enterprises grow, compete globally and contribute to the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, making the next decade a decade of **scale rather than survival**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India's economy and examine the measures needed to help them scale into competitive and sustainable enterprises.

Source: [Businessline](#)

Population Dynamics and Cooperative Federalism

Source: The post “Population Dynamics and Cooperative Federalism” has been created based on “**More children isn’t the answer to delimitation, tax challenges**”, published in “Indian Express” on 27th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS 2-Governance

Context: India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined to **1.9 (SRS 2024)**, indicating steady progress towards population stabilisation. However, wide demographic differences among states have raised concerns regarding **delimitation, political representation and tax devolution**.

Current Population Trends

1. **Population Peak:** India's population is projected to peak at around **170 crore by 2062** before declining.
2. **Slow Progress:** Population stabilisation is gradual, and demographic challenges still persist.
3. **Gender Imbalance:** The **sex ratio at birth is 918**, indicating a continuing “girl deficit”.
4. **State Divergence:** Bihar (TFR 2.9) and Uttar Pradesh (2.6) remain well above the national average of 1.9.

Reasons for Demographic Divergence

1. **Education Gap:** Lower female education levels in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh delay fertility decline.
2. **Women Empowerment:** Limited empowerment reduces women's ability to make reproductive choices.
3. **Low Contraceptive Use:** Contraceptive use remains lower than the national average in high-fertility states.
4. **Healthcare Deficit:** Family welfare and reproductive health services require further strengthening.

Why Raising Fertility is Not the Solution

1. **No Population Shortage:** India is still far from population stabilisation and does not face a population deficit.
2. **Economic Reality:** Lack of population is not the factor restricting economic growth of states.
3. **Limited Impact:** International experience shows that one-time financial incentives rarely increase fertility sustainably.
4. **Resource Burden:** Higher fertility would increase pressure on employment, healthcare, education and public resources.

Implications for Cooperative Federalism

1. **Delimitation Concerns:** States with lower fertility fear losing political representation after delimitation.
2. **Fiscal Equity:** Population-based resource allocation may disadvantage states that successfully controlled population growth.
3. **Political Balance:** Population size should not become the sole determinant of political influence.
4. **Inter-State Trust:** Fair institutional arrangements are essential to maintain cooperative federalism.

Way Forward

1. **Women's Education:** Expand female education and empowerment programmes in high-fertility states.
2. **Family Planning:** Strengthen contraception access and reproductive healthcare services.
3. **Institutional Reforms:** Address delimitation concerns through constitutional and institutional mechanisms rather than population policy.
4. **Balanced Tax Devolution:** Continue using both **population** and **demographic performance** as criteria for Finance Commission devolution.
5. **Human Capital Focus:** Improve population quality through better health, nutrition and education.
6. **Reliable Data:** Conduct the Census at the earliest for evidence-based demographic planning.

Conclusion: India should not encourage higher fertility to address political or fiscal concerns. Instead, **cooperative federalism should be strengthened through institutional reforms**, while population policy should focus on **achieving demographic stability, gender equity and human capital development**.

Question: India's demographic divergence among states has important implications for cooperative federalism, delimitation and fiscal devolution. Discuss. Should population policy be used to address these challenges?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership

Source: The post “India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership” has been created based on “India-New Zealand FTA, a modern trade partnership”, published in “The Hindu” on 27th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Context: The recently proposed India–New Zealand FTA aims to deepen bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation. The agreement focuses not only on tariff reduction but also on trade facilitation, regulatory cooperation and supply-chain integration.

Features of a Modern FTA

1. **Beyond Tariffs:** Emphasises regulatory predictability, customs efficiency and ease of doing business.
2. **Rules of Origin:** Product-specific origin rules ensure genuine preferential treatment and prevent transshipment.
3. **Compliance Focus:** Traceability and documentation have become essential for availing FTA benefits.
4. **Non-Tariff Measures:** Addresses technical barriers and regulatory bottlenecks alongside tariff concessions.

Significance of the India–New Zealand FTA

1. **Duty-Free Access:** New Zealand offers 100% tariff-line duty-free access for Indian exports, enhancing export competitiveness.
2. **Labour-Intensive Boost:** Sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather and handicrafts will gain a pricing advantage.
3. **Services Expansion:** Improved market access will benefit IT, consulting, healthcare, engineering and education services.
4. **Investment Promotion:** The proposed \$20 billion investment over 15 years can strengthen bilateral economic ties.
5. **Trade Facilitation:** Faster customs clearance, digital certification and simplified procedures will reduce transaction costs.
6. **Regulatory Cooperation:** Streamlined approvals will benefit pharmaceuticals, food processing, chemicals and agriculture.
7. **Supply Chain Integration:** The FTA encourages greater integration into global and regional value chains.

Challenges in Implementation

1. **Compliance Burden:** Businesses must meet stringent Rules of Origin and documentation requirements.
2. **MSME Preparedness:** Smaller exporters may face difficulties in adapting to compliance standards.
3. **Sensitive Sectors:** India must continue protecting sectors such as dairy from import competition.
4. **Awareness Gap:** Many exporters underutilise FTAs due to limited knowledge of their provisions.

Way Forward

1. **Capacity Building:** Train exporters, especially MSMEs, on Rules of Origin and FTA compliance.
2. **Digital Ecosystem:** Strengthen digital customs and certification systems for seamless trade.
3. **Export Readiness:** Improve supply-chain documentation, HS classification and traceability mechanisms.
4. **Sectoral Strategy:** Promote exports in sectors with high comparative advantage.
5. **Regular Review:** Continuously monitor implementation and resolve emerging trade barriers.

Conclusion: The India–New Zealand FTA represents a shift from **tariff-centric** trade agreements to **facilitation-driven economic partnerships**. Its success will depend on effective implementation, regulatory cooperation and the ability of Indian businesses to leverage its opportunities through greater competitiveness and compliance.

Question. The India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) reflects the changing nature of modern trade agreements beyond tariff reduction. Discuss its significance and the challenges in its effective implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Supreme Court Sought Trauma Care System to Curb Road Deaths

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

Introduction

On **26 May 2026**, the Supreme Court recognised the **Right to Trauma Care** as part of the **Right to Life under Article 21** and directed States and Union Territories to build a uniform trauma care system. The judgment aims to reduce preventable deaths by strengthening emergency response during the **Golden Hour**, the first **60 minutes** after an accident, through better coordination, timely medical care and an integrated trauma response from the accident site to the hospital.

Need for a Robust Trauma Care System

1. **High burden of trauma deaths:** Around **4.67 lakh** people die every year due to road crashes, falls, burns, drowning, industrial accidents, fires and disasters. Road crashes alone account for nearly **1.77 lakh** deaths, while trauma is the leading cause of death among people aged **18–45 years**.
2. **Many deaths are preventable:** The **Law Commission (201st Report)** estimated that nearly half of road crash deaths can be prevented through timely treatment. A **2021 NITI Aayog–AIIMS Emergency and Injury Care Report** found that at least **30%** of trauma deaths are linked to delays in emergency response.
3. **Golden Hour is critical:** The first **60 minutes** after an accident are crucial for saving lives. Quick rescue, transport and treatment during this period can significantly improve survival.
4. **Trauma care is a complete system:** Trauma care begins at the accident site and continues until definitive hospital treatment. It depends on bystanders, emergency calls, ambulances, trained personnel and hospitals working together.
5. **Existing policies need stronger implementation:** India already has emergency care policies and guidelines, but they have not created a uniform and enforceable trauma care system across all States.
6. **Benefits extend beyond road accidents:** A strong trauma care system also improves emergency treatment for injuries caused by falls, burns, industrial accidents, disasters and other emergencies.

Supreme Court Recognition of the Right to Trauma Care

1. **Trauma care recognised under Article 21:** The Supreme Court held that the **Right to Trauma Care** forms an integral part of the **Right to Life**. The right extends from the place of injury until the patient receives definitive medical treatment.
2. **Based on earlier judicial decisions:** The judgment builds upon **Parmanand Katara (1989)** and **Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (1996)**, which recognised emergency medical care as part of Article 21.
3. **Constitutional duty of the State:** Governments now have a positive obligation to establish and maintain an integrated trauma response system. Emergency care is no longer viewed only as a hospital service.
4. **Shift to a systems approach:** The Court recognised that delayed transport or weak emergency response can reduce the effectiveness of even advanced hospitals. Every stage of trauma care must function together.
5. **Uniform and enforceable framework:** The judgment seeks to replace fragmented emergency care with a nationwide trauma care system that provides equal access across all States.

Major Directives of the Supreme Court

1. **Unified emergency communication:** All emergency helplines, including **100, 101, 102, 108, 1033 and 1091**, along with State variants, must be integrated into **112**. Governments must also spread public awareness about the common emergency number.
2. **Protection for Good Samaritans:** Every State must establish physical and digital grievance redress systems. State and district-level nodal authorities must protect citizens who assist accident victims.
3. **Stronger ambulance services:** Public and private ambulances must comply with the **National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)**. They should carry GPS linked to **112** and undergo regular audits.
4. **Training of emergency personnel:** States must adopt the notified **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** curriculum and strengthen paramedic training and accreditation.
5. **Better hospital preparedness:** States must grade trauma care facilities according to their capabilities. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will notify a national medical rescue protocol and a common **Trauma Registry** format.
6. **Financial support for victims:** States must operationalise **PM RAHAT**, the Centre's cashless treatment scheme for road crash victims, within the prescribed time. Failure to implement it will violate the **Motor Vehicles Act**.
7. **Administrative accountability:** The Supreme Court directed **Chief Secretaries** to ensure compliance with its directions across all concerned departments.

Implementation of the Supreme Court Directives

1. **Incomplete implementation:** Data submitted by **34 States and Union Territories** shows that **no State** has yet established a complete trauma care architecture as directed by the Supreme Court.

2. **Progress in 112 integration:** Only **Delhi, Kerala, Gujarat, Haryana and Lakshadweep** have reported complete integration with the **112 National Emergency Response System (NERS)**. Uttar Pradesh is close to full API integration, with only **102 emergency medical services** remaining.
3. **Integration of highway emergency services:** API-level integration of the **1033 highway helpline** with **112** has been completed in around **20 States**. This allows accident calls on national highways to be automatically shared with the highway management system.
4. **Improved system integration:** The migration to a software platform developed by **C-DAC**, which also runs the **112** emergency response system, is expected to speed up integration between different emergency services.
5. **State-level initiatives:** **West Bengal** has allocated **₹100 crore** for the Dial **112** helpline and plans to deploy one dedicated emergency vehicle in every police station for quicker response.
6. **Operational preparedness:** **Uttar Pradesh** has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for **112** and established a command centre in Lucknow to improve emergency coordination.

Challenges in Building a National Trauma Care System

1. **Poor inter-departmental coordination:** Road accident response involves at least **six departments**—police, health, road agencies, district administration, insurance authorities and death registration offices. Weak coordination delays emergency response.
2. **Multiple emergency helplines:** Different emergency numbers such as **100, 101, 102, 108 and 1033** create confusion during emergencies. This affects timely access to emergency services.
3. **Need for effective command centres:** The **112** emergency system can function effectively only when district or State-level command centres can quickly deploy ambulances, police and other emergency resources.
4. **Uneven healthcare capacity:** States differ widely in healthcare infrastructure and administrative capacity. This makes uniform implementation of the Supreme Court's directions difficult.
5. **Shortage of trained emergency workforce:** India requires more Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), paramedics, trauma nurses, emergency physicians, trauma surgeons, dispatch professionals, trauma coordinators and rehabilitation specialists.
6. **Gaps in emergency preparedness:** Many States still need grievance redress systems for Good Samaritans, GPS-enabled ambulances, compliance with the **National Ambulance Code**, trained paramedics and graded trauma centres.

Way Forward

1. **Enact a Right to Trauma Care law:** A dedicated law can bring together all infrastructure and governance measures directed by the Supreme Court. It can also establish a **nodal authority** to ensure effective implementation.
2. **Strengthen cooperative federalism:** Public health, hospitals and ambulance services fall under the State List. The Union should support States while States lead implementation.

3. **Union as an enabling authority:** The Union should facilitate implementation through sustained coordination while respecting the States' primary role.
4. **Implement existing national initiatives:** Fully operationalise **PM RAHAT**, **Emergency Response Support System (112)**, the **National Ambulance Code**, the **EMT curriculum**, the **Good Samaritan Rules** and Health Ministry trauma care guidelines.
5. **Complete nationwide 112 integration:** Integrate all emergency numbers with **112**, supported by district and State command centres and Standard Operating Procedures.
6. **Strengthen emergency infrastructure:** Expand GPS-enabled ambulances, trauma centres, EMT training, paramedic accreditation and hospital preparedness.
7. **Adopt integrated trauma networks:** Learn from countries such as the **United States** and the **United Kingdom**, where ambulances are linked with specialised trauma centres.
8. **Improve emergency coordination:** Draw lessons from **Australia's** integrated ambulance and retrieval systems and **Israel's** coordination of trauma care with disaster management.
9. **Promote data-driven governance:** Build trauma systems based on trained personnel, accountability, Trauma Registry data and continuous quality improvement.
10. **Ensure continuous monitoring:** Chief Secretaries, the Attorney General and other authorities should regularly review implementation and ensure measurable progress.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court has made timely trauma care a constitutional guarantee under **Article 21**. The priority now is effective implementation through coordinated institutions, stronger emergency infrastructure, trained personnel and sustained Union-State cooperation. A comprehensive trauma care system can reduce preventable deaths and ensure timely, accessible and quality emergency care for every injured person across the country.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the significance of the Supreme Court's recognition of the Right to Trauma Care under Article 21 in strengthening India's emergency trauma care system.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

The Iran-India Civilizational Relationship

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International Relations

Introduction

India and Iran share a **civilizational relationship spanning more than three millennia**, built on common ancestry, language, religion, trade, culture and political exchanges. These long-standing interactions shaped both societies through ancient, medieval and modern periods. Today, despite changing geopolitical realities, this relationship remains important because it combines a deep historical legacy with strategic interests, making India-Iran ties significant in both civilizational and contemporary foreign policy contexts.

Historical Foundations of India-Iran Relations

1. **Common Origins and Migration:** India and Iran emerged from a common Indo-Iranian cultural tradition. Around 2000-1500 BC, one branch settled in Iran while another entered the Indian subcontinent.

2. **Shared Linguistic and Geographical Heritage:** Sanskrit and Avestan belong to the same Indo-Iranian language family. Similar words, place names and rivers such as Sapta Sindhu–Hapta Hendu and Sarasvati–Haraxvaiti reflect their common roots.
3. **Common Religious Traditions:** The Rig Veda and the Avesta preserve many shared religious ideas. Fire rituals, sacred offerings, priests, and several early beliefs developed from a common Indo-Iranian tradition.
4. **Similar Social and Cultural Concepts:** Both societies followed comparable ideas of social organisation, sacred ceremonies, and moral order. The traditions of upanayana, yajna–yasna, and the concept of rita–asha reflect these similarities.
5. **Ancient Trade Networks:** Trade connected the Indus Valley Civilization with Iran and Mesopotamia through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Harappans exchanged ivory while importing silver, copper, turquoise and lapis lazuli.
6. **Archaeological Evidence:** Similar pottery, seals, engraved stones and other archaeological remains found in Iran, Baluchistan and north-west India indicate sustained cultural interaction during ancient times.
7. **Shared Cultural Memory:** Indian and Iranian traditions preserve similar myths, festivals and historical memories. Nowruz, shared mythological figures and common symbolic practices reflect their long civilizational association.

Political and Cultural Exchanges Through History

1. **Achaemenid Contacts:** During the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BCE), Gandhara and Sind formed part of the empire under Darius. Indian soldiers served in Persian armies while trade expanded across the region.
2. **Administrative Influence:** Persian administrative practices influenced north-west India. The use of satraps, inscriptions, and some political institutions reflected contacts between the two regions.
3. **Mauryan Connections:** Scholars associate Mauryan pillars, polished stone architecture, and monumental construction with Achaemenid influence. Political, artistic and commercial exchanges continued during this period.
4. **Expansion of Trade:** The introduction of coinage, wider trade routes and commercial exchanges strengthened economic links. India exported spices and imported precious metals, while agricultural products also moved across regions.
5. **Sassanian–Gupta Relations:** The Sassanian Empire and the Gupta Empire maintained diplomatic and commercial contacts. Embassies, merchants and physicians regularly travelled between the two regions.

6. **Spread of Knowledge:** Indian medicine, astronomy, literature and scientific ideas reached Persia through scholars and translations. Works like the Panchatantra and Charaka Samhita later spread further into West Asia.
7. **Religious and Intellectual Exchange:** Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and other traditions influenced each other across Central Asia. Religious ideas, artistic styles and philosophical concepts travelled in both directions.
8. **Medieval Integration:** The Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire brought India into close contact with the Persianate world. This created stronger links in governance, diplomacy and intellectual life.
9. **Migration of Skilled People:** From the 16th century, thousands of Iranian scholars, poets, administrators, physicians, artists and merchants settled in India. They became an important part of the Mughal administration and cultural life.

Contributions of Iran to Indian Civilization

1. **Persian as the Language of Administration:** Persian became the language of governance, diplomacy and scholarship during medieval India. It was used by both Hindus and Muslims and became an important Indian language.
2. **Growth of Indo-Persian Literature:** Persian literary traditions blended with Indian ideas to create Indo-Persian literature, which became one of the major intellectual traditions of the early modern period.
3. **Architectural Heritage:** Iranian features such as the **arch, dome, aiwan, pishtaq** and **charbagh gardens** blended with Indian traditions. This fusion is visible in **Humayun's Tomb, Fatehpur Sikri, the gardens of Kashmir, Agra monuments and the Taj Mahal.**
4. **Contribution to Governance:** Iranian administrators and scholars strengthened the Mughal administrative system. Eminent figures such as Qazi Nurullah Shustari, Shah Fathullah Shirazi and Hakim Abul Fath Gilani played important roles.
5. **Development of Art and Painting:** Iranian painters contributed to the rise of the Mughal atelier and enriched Indian painting with new artistic techniques and styles.
6. **Expansion of Commercial Networks:** Iranian merchants connected India with trade routes stretching from Isfahan to the Mediterranean, strengthening India's commercial engagement with the wider world.
7. **Creation of a Cosmopolitan Society:** The Mughal Empire became a meeting place for Indians, Iranians, Central Asians, Arabs, Africans and Europeans. This interaction encouraged cultural exchange and intellectual growth.
8. **Lasting Civilizational Legacy:** Iran shaped Indian literature, administration, architecture, art and intellectual life over several centuries. These contributions became an integral part of India's historical and cultural development.

Contemporary India-Iran Relations

1. **Post-Independence Relations:** After Independence, India and Iran maintained generally cordial relations despite belonging to different geopolitical blocs. This reflected India's balanced foreign policy and the continuation of their historical ties.
2. **Energy Partnership:** Iran remained an important supplier of energy for India. Energy cooperation became one of the major pillars of bilateral relations.
3. **Gateway to Central Asia:** India considers Iran an important land and sea route for connecting with Afghanistan and Central Asia. This gives Iran significant strategic value.
4. **Importance of Chabahar Port:** The Chabahar Port project represents one of India's most important strategic partnerships in its neighbourhood. It reflects the shared interests of both countries in regional connectivity.
5. **Growing Geopolitical Challenges:** India's stronger engagement with Israel and Western partners, along with regional conflicts, has made balancing ties with Iran more difficult. At the same time, sanctions and China's growing presence in Iran have added new challenges.
6. **Need for Balanced Diplomacy:** India seeks to maintain relations with all major countries in West Asia. This approach helps preserve its long-standing policy of strategic autonomy.
7. **Enduring Civilizational Value:** Iran is not only a neighbouring country but also a civilization that has shaped India's language, literature, architecture, scholarship and trade for centuries. These historical links continue to influence bilateral relations.
8. **Present Relevance:** Recent political developments have led some observers to question the relationship. However, its significance continues because it rests on deep historical and cultural foundations rather than only current strategic interests.

Future Outlook

1. **Preserve Strategic Autonomy:** India should continue engaging with Iran, Israel and the Gulf countries while maintaining its independent foreign policy. This balanced approach has guided India's diplomacy for decades.
2. **Strengthen Chabahar Connectivity:** The long-term viability of Chabahar Port should be protected through suitable financial arrangements and practical mechanisms despite external restrictions.
3. **Strengthen Civilizational Partnership:** India should use its shared history, language and cultural ties with Iran to strengthen long-term cooperation. These civilizational links can also support diplomatic engagement during periods of regional tension.
4. **Manage Regional Conflicts Carefully:** Rising tensions involving Iran, Israel and the United States require India to protect its strategic interests while avoiding alignment with regional conflicts.

5. **Address Sanctions Challenges:** International sanctions affecting Iran's banking, shipping and oil sectors require practical solutions to maintain trade and economic cooperation.
6. **Respond to Regional Competition:** China's expanding infrastructure investments in Iran require India to strengthen its own long-term engagement and connectivity initiatives.
7. **Protect the Indian Diaspora:** India should work with regional governments to strengthen emergency communication and coordination systems for Indians living and working in West Asia.

Conclusion

India-Iran relations have evolved through **more than three thousand years** of shared history, cultural exchange, trade and political engagement. These enduring links have shaped important aspects of India's civilization and continue to influence bilateral relations today. While contemporary geopolitical realities present new challenges, the long-standing civilizational relationship provides a strong foundation for sustaining cooperation through balanced diplomacy and mutual understanding.

Question for practice:

Discuss the civilizational relationship between India and Iran, highlighting its historical foundations, major contributions, and present-day relevance.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

The new digital slavery needs constitutional guardrails

Source: The post “**The new digital slavery needs constitutional guardrails**” has been created based on “The new digital slavery needs constitutional guardrails”, published in “The Hindu” on 29th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS 2- Polity & Governance

Context: In recent times, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed governance and society, but its unchecked growth threatens **human dignity, democracy, and digital autonomy**. AI governance should move beyond ethical guidelines and be anchored in **constitutional safeguards** to protect citizens' rights.

AI a threat to democracy and society

1. AI enables **ownership and misuse of citizens' personal data**, creating a new form of **digital slavery**.
2. AI development is much faster than law-making, resulting in a **regulatory gap**.
3. Legislations often become outdated before implementation because technology evolves rapidly.
4. AI-generated **deepfakes, synthetic media, and misinformation** make it difficult to distinguish truth from fabrication.
5. Fake audio and video of political leaders can reduce voter turnout, create false scandals, and weaken trust in democratic institutions.
6. Platform algorithms prioritise **outrage and sensational content** to maximise user engagement.
7. Echo chambers created by algorithms promote **radicalisation, hate speech, and social fragmentation**.
8. Big Tech companies exercise **unaccountable influence over the public sphere** while prioritising profits over social cohesion.
9. Foreign states and non-state actors exploit AI for **information warfare**, targeting religious, ethnic, and socio-economic divisions.

10. India's rapid digital adoption combined with relatively lower digital literacy increases vulnerability to AI-driven manipulation.

Need for constitutional safeguards

1. Ordinary regulation alone cannot keep pace with technological innovation.
2. AI governance should be based on **fundamental rights and constitutional values**.
3. Citizens should have **inalienable rights over their personal data** and digital autonomy.
4. Human accountability must remain central in AI-assisted decisions involving **employment, healthcare, education, loans, and credit**.
5. Constitutional safeguards ensure protection of **human dignity, liberty, equality, and democratic sovereignty**.

Measures to be adopted

1. Rights-based AI governance

- a. Protect digital autonomy and ownership of personal data.
- b. Ensure strict consent mechanisms.
- c. Prevent algorithmic discrimination in critical sectors.

2. Democratic accountability of platforms

- a. Remove blanket safe-harbour protection where necessary.
- b. Mandate transparency in recommendation algorithms.
- c. Allow independent audits of AI systems.
- d. Fix legal liability for algorithmic amplification of harmful content.

3. Protect freedom of speech

- a. Counter misinformation without enabling censorship.
- b. Focus regulation on platform architecture, bot networks, and fake accounts rather than policing individual opinions.

4. Build cognitive resilience

- a. Launch nationwide **media literacy and digital citizenship programmes**.
- b. Integrate digital literacy into schools, universities, and community centres.
- c. Train citizens to identify misinformation and emotional manipulation.

5. Strengthen national security

- a. Establish early-warning systems against coordinated misinformation campaigns.
- b. Promote collaboration among state agencies, independent fact-checkers, ethical hackers, and technology experts.

Conclusion: AI governance should not remain merely a technical or regulatory issue but become a **constitutional imperative**. India must adopt a rights-based AI framework that safeguards **human dignity, democratic institutions, freedom of expression, and national sovereignty**, while ensuring that innovation remains accountable and citizen-centric.

Question: Unchecked Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses significant challenges to democracy, governance, and individual rights. Discuss the need for constitutional safeguards to regulate AI while balancing innovation and freedom of speech.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

How schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition

Source: The post “**How schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition**” has been created based on “How schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition”, published in “The Hindu” on 29th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS 2- Polity & Governance

Context: Adolescent malnutrition has emerged as a major public health challenge in India. According to the **NFHS-6 (2023–24)**, obesity and high blood sugar levels are rising rapidly among both men and women. At the same time, undernutrition continues to persist. Since unhealthy dietary habits and lifestyle-related diseases often begin during adolescence, schools are the most important institutions for preventive interventions.

Reasons behind adolescent malnutrition being a serious concern

1. India is experiencing a **double burden of malnutrition**, where persistent undernutrition coexists with rising obesity and metabolic disorders.
2. According to **NFHS-6 (2023–24)**, obesity among women increased from **24% to 30.7%**, while obesity among men increased from **22.9% to 27.3%**.
3. The prevalence of high blood sugar also increased from **15.6% to 20.9%** among men and from **13.5% to 17.8%** among women.
4. Lifestyle changes such as **sedentary behaviour, consumption of processed foods, stress, and reduced physical activity** are no longer confined to urban areas and are increasingly affecting rural populations.
5. According to the **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS), 2019**, **27.4% of Indian adolescents are stunted**, while obesity is increasing, especially among urban youth.
6. India is also witnessing the “**thin-fat phenotype**,” in which children appear lean but possess a high metabolic risk that increases their chances of developing diabetes and cardiovascular diseases later in life.

Ways in which schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition

1. Promoting healthy dietary habits

- a. Schools should improve the nutritional quality of **Mid-Day Meals** and ensure that balanced meals are provided to students.
- b. Schools should establish healthier canteens and organise food demonstrations to teach students how to prepare balanced meals.
- c. Schools should encourage students to follow the **Dietary Guidelines for Indians 2024**, which recommend that half of the plate should consist of fruits and vegetables.
- d. Schools should promote the regular consumption of milk, dairy products green leafy vegetables, fruits, and protein-rich foods.

2. Creating healthy food environments

- a. Schools should develop **school gardens**, organise fruit breaks, and encourage the use of locally available seasonal foods to normalise healthy eating habits.
- b. Schools should reduce students' dependence on cereal-heavy diets by promoting diversified and nutritious food choices.

3. Reducing sugar and Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)

- a. Schools should discourage the consumption of sugary beverages, High Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) foods, and Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs).
- b. Schools should display **sugar boards** that reveal the hidden sugar content of commonly consumed foods and beverages.
- c. Schools should establish **UPF-free school zones** and conduct continuous awareness programmes instead of one-time campaigns.

4. Encouraging physical activity

- a. Schools should make sports and structured physical activity an essential part of the curriculum rather than treating them as optional activities.
- b. Schools should reduce sedentary and screen-based lifestyles by ensuring regular physical exercise for all students.

5. Improving nutrition literacy

- a. Schools should teach students how to read food labels, understand portion sizes, identify misleading food advertisements, and develop basic cooking skills.
- b. Nutrition education should focus on developing lifelong healthy eating habits through practical learning.

Policy measures required

1. The **Let's Fix Our Food (LFOF)** initiative should be strengthened to promote healthier school food environments.
2. The government should regulate the advertising of HFSS foods targeted at children and adolescents.
3. Taxes should be imposed on unhealthy sugary beverages to discourage excessive consumption.
4. A comprehensive school nutrition curriculum should be introduced across educational institutions.
5. Nutrition literacy programmes should be strengthened through evidence-based public health policies and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Conclusion: Schools should not function merely as centres of education but should also become **public health-promoting institutions**. By improving nutrition, encouraging physical activity, strengthening nutrition literacy, and creating healthier food environments, schools can significantly reduce adolescent malnutrition and prevent the future burden of non-communicable diseases in India.

Question: India is facing a double burden of malnutrition among adolescents. Discuss how schools can play a transformative role in addressing this challenge.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Elder Care is Not a Silver Mine

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- population and associated issues
Introduction

India is witnessing a rapid demographic transition as its elderly population continues to grow. This shift is creating new opportunities in senior housing, healthcare and other elder care services, giving rise to a growing silver economy. At the same time, it raises concerns about affordability, financing, quality of care and excessive

commercialisation. Elder care should be developed as a social responsibility, supported by effective policies, responsible investment and strong regulatory safeguards.

India's Demographic Transition and Rising Elderly Population

1. **Growing Elderly Population:** India has a population of about **1.48 billion**, and senior citizens form nearly **12%** of the population. Their share is expected to increase to **15% by 2036** and **20.8% by 2050**, reaching about 350 million people by 2050.
2. **Declining Fertility Rate:** India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** is falling rapidly. However, higher fertility in states like **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar** means the country's overall population will continue to grow for nearly another three decades.
3. **Regional Differences in Ageing:** Southern states are ageing much faster than northern states. By **2036**, the elderly population is projected to reach **23% in Kerala** and **21% in Tamil Nadu**, while it may remain around **12% in Uttar Pradesh** and **10% in Bihar**.
4. **New Policy Challenges:** Governments are becoming concerned about an ageing society before becoming fully prosperous. Rising dependency ratios, pension and welfare costs, inter-state fiscal transfers and delimitation are emerging policy issues.
5. **Different State Responses:** Some states have started adapting to demographic changes through elder-focused policies. At the same time, a few states are encouraging higher births to slow population ageing.
6. **Changing Family Structure:** The traditional joint family system is weakening as migration and smaller families become common. Many elderly people now live alone or receive limited family support.
7. **Increasing Care Burden:** Caregiving responsibilities mostly fall on women who also manage jobs and families. Many middle-aged adults now belong to the "**sandwich generation**", caring for both children and ageing parents.

Growth of the Elder Care Ecosystem

1. **Market-Led Expansion:** The private sector has responded quickly by developing senior housing, geriatric health care facilities and specialised hospitality services. Markets have recognised ageing as a long-term economic opportunity.
2. **Growing Demand for Senior Housing:** Estimates suggest that senior living infrastructure alone may require nearly **\$35 billion by 2036**. Much of this expansion is expected to come through private investment.
3. **Geographical Expansion:** Elder care services are concentrated in **Kerala, Chennai, Coimbatore, Bengaluru and Mysuru**, but are also expanding rapidly to cities like **Pune** and **Dehradun**.
4. **Kerala as India's Leading Model:** Kerala has transformed ageing into an economic opportunity through a dedicated elderly department, Japanese-style care initiatives and more than **750 senior homes**, attracting both residents and investment.

5. **Quality-Focused Infrastructure:** Well-planned senior living facilities provide elder-friendly buildings, medical support, trained caregivers and community activities. These services aim to improve both safety and quality of life.
6. **Beyond Real Estate:** Senior living is becoming more than a housing business. It also supports health care, hospitality, employment and other services, making it an important economic sector.

Challenges in Building a Sustainable Elder Care Sector

1. **Affordability Remains the Biggest Concern:** Most elderly people cannot afford expensive senior housing or long-term care. Rising healthcare and caregiving costs place heavy pressure on middle-class families.
2. **Limited Public Resources:** Government funding mainly supports weaker sections and cannot meet the growing demand for quality elder care across all income groups.
3. **Risks of Financialisation:** Private equity and institutional investors often seek quick profits, leading to cost-cutting, lower staffing, short investment cycles and even asset stripping. Such practices may compromise long-term care and resident welfare.
4. **Weak Financial Protection:** Existing health insurance products often contain exclusions and do not adequately cover long-term or home-based care. Better financial products are needed for an ageing population.
5. **Policy Gaps in Long-Term Care:** Public health programmes largely focus on hospitals, while home-based care, dementia support and continuous caregiving remain underdeveloped. Families therefore continue to carry much of the care burden.
6. **Growing Burden on Families:** Women continue to shoulder most caregiving responsibilities, and many working adults struggle to balance employment, childcare and elder care at the same time.

Policy and Regulatory Framework for Elder Care

1. **Dedicated Government Initiatives:** Kerala has announced a separate department for the elderly by bringing together different welfare programmes. It also plans to develop a Japanese-style elder care system.
2. **National Quality Standards:** The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has issued standards that require geriatric care and promote "ageing with dignity" as a basic principle.
3. **Role of State Governments:** State governments and real estate regulatory authorities are introducing safeguards to improve the quality of senior living facilities.
4. **Need for Lifelong Care Commitment:** Senior living projects should function with a long-term social commitment rather than only as commercial ventures. Continuous quality care must remain the primary objective.

5. **Existing Legal Protection:** The **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007** allows parents to seek maintenance from their children. However, legal and social barriers often prevent its effective use.
6. **Health Policy Gaps:** The **National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE)** mainly focuses on hospital services and does not adequately cover long-term home-based care.
7. **Limited Policy Attention:** Elder care policies remain fragmented despite growing demographic changes. A private member's Bill introduced in **2019** has also remained pending.

Way Forward

1. **Adopt a Comprehensive National Eldercare Policy:** India needs an integrated policy covering healthcare, caregiving, financial security, infrastructure and healthy ageing.
2. **Professionalise Caregiving:** Paid caregivers should be trained and certified through institutions such as the **National Skill Development Council** to improve service quality and working conditions.
3. **Expand Financial Protection:** Long-term care insurance should include home-based care and assisted-living facilities without excessive exclusions.
4. **Promote Responsible Investment:** Public and private funding should expand elder care with strong regulatory safeguards so that commercial interests do not weaken care standards.
5. **Support Community-Based and Technology-Driven Care:** CSR initiatives can establish community care centres, while technology can improve safety, monitoring and independent living for senior citizens.
6. **Increase Awareness of Age-Related Diseases:** Better awareness and early care for conditions such as dementia can reduce suffering and improve the quality of life for elderly people and their families.

Conclusion

India's ageing population presents both an economic opportunity and a social responsibility. The silver economy should improve the quality of life of senior citizens without turning elder care into a profit-driven business. Strong regulation, responsible investment, better financing and integrated public policies can ensure affordable, dignified and lifelong care for every elderly person.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the opportunities and challenges arising from India's growing elderly population, and discuss the policy and regulatory measures needed to ensure affordable, dignified and sustainable elder care.

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Fixing Mis-selling of Market-linked Products

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The popularity of **market-linked financial products** has grown rapidly after the Covid-19 pandemic, but financial literacy has not kept pace. This has increased the risk of mis-selling by **banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and their agents through unsuitable products, poor disclosures and aggressive cross-selling. To strengthen ethical sales practices and customer protection, the **RBI** has issued a comprehensive framework governing the advertising, marketing and sale of financial products by regulated entities, effective from **1 January 2027**.

Why Was the New Framework Needed?

1. **Expansion of Financial Product Distribution:** Banks and NBFCs now sell insurance, mutual funds, pension products and other investment products along with their regular banking services. This has made financial product distribution more complex.
2. **Low Financial Literacy:** Many customers do not fully understand product risks, charges, lock-in periods or exit conditions. This makes them vulnerable to unsuitable financial products.
3. **Commission-driven Selling:** Financial institutions earn fee income by distributing third-party products. This creates an incentive to promote products that generate higher commissions rather than those suitable for customers.
4. **Rise in Mis-selling Practices:** Unsuitable products were sold through forced bundling, misleading information and aggressive cross-selling. Past concerns involved mis-selling of **Additional Tier-1 (AT-1) bonds**, currency derivatives and insurance products.
5. **Need for Better Consumer Protection:** Mere customer signatures or digital consent were often used to justify sales. The new framework shifts the focus from a sales-first approach to a **suitability-first approach**.

Key Features of RBI's New Ethical Conduct Framework

1. **Transparency in Sales:** Banks using external agents must display an updated list of authorised intermediaries on their websites. Agents selling third-party products must clearly disclose their identity.
2. **Explicit Customer Consent:** Every product requires separate and clear consent through signed declaration, OTP or digitally recorded confirmation. Sales calls should be limited to normal business hours, while digital platforms must keep the default consent option as **"No"**.
3. **Suitability Assessment:** Banks and NBFCs must assess whether a product matches the customer's age, income, financial knowledge, risk appetite and investment horizon before selling it.
4. **Restrictions on Unfair Selling:** Banks cannot bundle loans with any financial product or force customers to purchase insurance or other products while availing financial services. Third-party commissions to bank staff and loans to finance products sold by the same institution are also prohibited.

5. **Digital Protection and Complaint Redressal:** The framework prohibits dark patterns such as hidden consent and misleading app designs. Customers get a **30-day complaint window**, and proven cases of mis-selling require a full refund, including for third-party products.

Significance of the New Framework

1. **Customer-centric Selling:** Financial products must now suit the customer's needs instead of only generating commissions. This strengthens responsible financial advice.
2. **Greater Transparency:** Better disclosures, informed consent and clear explanations will help customers make better financial decisions and reduce confusion.
3. **Better Digital Practices:** Restrictions on dark patterns make digital journeys fairer and reduce manipulation during online financial transactions.
4. **Higher Institutional Accountability:** Banks and NBFCs must maintain proper consent records, customer feedback systems and stronger compliance processes. Sellers must prove that products were sold fairly.
5. **Improved Market Confidence:** Better quality sales can reduce complaints, improve customer trust and encourage long-term participation in financial markets.
6. **Ethical Sales Practices:** The framework regulates both the products being sold and the manner in which they are marketed, making the sales process more transparent and customer-focused.

Challenges and Remaining Concerns

1. **Limited Appeal Mechanism:** The framework does not clearly specify the remedy if banks or NBFCs fail to resolve customer complaints satisfactorily.
2. **Pressure on Ombudsman System:** The existing Banking Ombudsman already handles a large number of complaints related to core banking services. Additional cases may affect its effectiveness.
3. **Compliance Burden:** Institutions may have to redesign forms, digital platforms, sales processes and employee training systems to meet the new requirements.
4. **Impact on Fee-based Business:** Banks depending heavily on cross-selling may experience slower growth in commission and distribution income after the rules take effect.
5. **Need for Public Awareness:** Customers must know how to verify authorised agents and understand their rights under the new framework for the rules to work effectively.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Grievance Redressal:** A dedicated mechanism similar to **SEBI's SCORES** can provide quicker resolution of mis-selling complaints beyond the banking system.

2. **Ensure Strict Enforcement:** High penalties for violations can discourage unethical selling practices and improve compliance with RBI directions.
3. **Promote Financial Literacy:** Customers should receive better awareness about financial products, risks, charges and their rights before making investment decisions.
4. **Monitor Implementation:** RBI should closely supervise digital sales practices, third-party agents and customer complaint trends after implementation.
5. **Encourage Responsible Distribution:** Banks, NBFCs and insurers should focus on long-term customer trust through transparent, suitable and well-explained product sales instead of aggressive cross-selling.

Conclusion

The RBI's framework marks an important move towards **ethical, transparent and suitability-based** distribution of financial products. Its success will depend on **effective enforcement, stronger grievance redressal, strict penalties and greater financial awareness**. These measures can reduce mis-selling, improve customer confidence and promote a more responsible and accountable financial services ecosystem from **January 2027**.

Question for practice:

Examine the need for the RBI's new ethical conduct framework to curb the mis-selling of market-linked financial products. Discuss its key features, significance, challenges and the way forward.

Source: [Businessline](#)

Reforms 3.0 — Towards the Bharat Rate of Growth

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

For nearly 45 years after Independence, India remained stuck at the 3% “Hindu rate of growth” until the 1991 economic reforms transformed its economic trajectory. Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a similar opportunity to drive the next phase of structural reforms. With its strong digital public infrastructure and growing technological capabilities, India has the potential to use AI to accelerate innovation, productivity and achieve a sustained “Bharat rate of growth” of 8% and beyond.

Why AI is India's Next Transformational Reform

1. **Lessons from the 1991 Reforms:** The balance-of-payments crisis forced India to liberalise its economy. The reforms sharply increased GDP growth and showed that major reforms can produce long-term economic gains.
2. **AI as the Next Growth Multiplier:** AI offers the same transformational potential that economic liberalisation provided in 1991. Investing in AI is becoming a necessity rather than a choice.

3. **India Has Proven Its Ability to Leapfrog:** India has repeatedly skipped older stages of development by adopting digital technologies at a large scale. This experience provides confidence for the next AI-led transformation.
4. **Aadhaar Built a Strong Digital Foundation:** Aadhaar enrolled 1.38 billion people, creating the world's largest biometric identity system and enabling nationwide digital services.
5. **UPI Created a Global Digital Payment Platform:** UPI processes around 250 billion annual transactions worth \$3.4 trillion and handles nearly 50% of the world's real-time digital payments, showing India's ability to build digital systems at global scale.
6. **Jio Expanded Affordable Digital Access:** Reliance Jio added 100 million subscribers within five months of its 2016 launch and made mobile data nearly free. This rapidly expanded internet access across the country.
7. **Digital Success Can Be Extended to AI:** The achievements of Aadhaar, UPI and Jio show that India can also build an AI ecosystem capable of serving people at a national scale.

Why India Needs to Invest in AI

1. **Low Spending on Research and Development:** India spends only 0.65% of GDP on R&D, far below China (2.4%), the United States (3.5%), South Korea (4.9%) and Israel (5.4%). This limits scientific research and technological progress.
2. **AI Investment Is Financially Affordable:** Providing AI tokens to the top 100 universities and national R&D institutions along with 5,000 high schools would cost about \$2 billion annually, or only 0.06% of GDP.
3. **Current Subsidies Are Much Larger:** India spends nearly \$49 billion every year on subsidies for calories, chemicals and carbon. The proposed AI investment is only a small share of this expenditure.
4. **Higher Returns with Limited Public Spending:** The AI investment would be about one-fourteenth of the food subsidy, one-tenth of the fertiliser subsidy, and lower than the compensation paid for LPG under-recoveries in one quarter. Such spending can generate long-term economic and knowledge gains.
5. **Investment Needs New Priorities, Not More Money:** India does not need additional financial resources for AI. It needs to change spending priorities and reallocate existing resources towards future productivity.
6. **AI Supports Scientists and Students:** Wider access to AI can strengthen research, innovation and learning by making AI a regular knowledge partner for researchers and students.
7. **AI Can Produce Long-Term Economic Benefits:** Unlike many welfare expenditures, investment in AI has the potential to generate continuous and compounding returns through higher productivity, innovation and economic growth.

Challenges and Strategic Requirements

1. **Dependence on Foreign AI Infrastructure:** India mainly consumes AI through foreign **Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)** instead of hosting large language models within the country. This limits technological sovereignty.
2. **Need for Sovereign AI Infrastructure:** Although **Sarvam** has shown that frontier AI models can be trained in India, the country still needs the capability to host and operate such models at a national scale.
3. **Balancing Sovereignty with Open Innovation:** India must reduce dependence on a single AI ecosystem while benefiting from open-source models and domestic AI capabilities.
4. **Operational Complexity of AI Infrastructure:** Hosting large language models requires expertise in **high availability, low latency, efficient computing, data residency, prompt injection defence and audit trails**. Building this capability is a major technical requirement.
5. **Vendor Lock-in Risks:** **NVIDIA controls more than 80% of AI training hardware**, creating financial and strategic dependence on a single company.
6. **High Cost of AI Compute Infrastructure:** Building national AI infrastructure only with NVIDIA hardware is financially difficult. India needs a more affordable computing ecosystem.
7. **Need for Cost-Effective and Resilient Compute Capacity:** India requires a diversified AI hardware ecosystem that supports lower costs, reliable operations and long-term technological resilience

Way Forward

1. **Launch a National AI Token Policy:** India should announce a **National AI Token Policy** and implement it over the next **24 months** to expand AI access in a phased manner.
2. **Provide Free AI Tokens for Research and Education:** The first step should provide free AI tokens to the **top 20 IITs, the IISc, the top 100 universities and national R&D institutions, and 5,000 high schools** so that AI becomes a regular tool for learning and research.
3. **Build Public-Private Partnerships:** India should partner with **AWS, Google and Microsoft** to create a **multi-vendor sovereign compute framework**. In return, it can offer data centre land, power support and data sovereignty assurances for free inference capacity.
4. **Use Smarter Financing Models:** AI access can be financed without reducing existing welfare benefits by **freezing subsidy growth for one year**. If needed, paid enterprise services can also cross-subsidise free access for schools and research institutions.
5. **Create the Right Market Conditions:** India should follow the approach used for affordable mobile data. Instead of directly funding AI services, it should create supportive regulations so that competition reduces AI costs, just as data prices fell from about **\$3 per GB to \$0.10 per GB**.
6. **Expand AI Access in Phases:** After the initial rollout, India should open an **API sandbox for 500 startups**, extend AI access to **100 universities**, and launch an **AI literacy programme in 500 high schools across 10 States**.

7. **Develop National AI Benchmarks:** The programme should publish India's first **sovereign Indic AI model benchmarks** to measure progress and strengthen domestic AI capability.
8. **Scale AI Across Priority Sectors:** Fine-tuned AI models should be deployed in **healthcare, agriculture, judiciary and education**. The programme should then expand to **5,000 high schools** and support **all 22 Indian languages**.
9. **Strengthen India's Global AI Position:** As AI adoption expands, India can become one of the **top five countries in AI token consumption**, build **10,000+ AI-native startups**, and make India-trained AI models competitive on international benchmarks.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence can become India's next major structural reform after the 1991 economic liberalisation. By strengthening sovereign AI infrastructure, expanding affordable AI access, promoting open models and diversifying compute hardware, India can boost research, innovation and productivity. With decisive leadership and timely implementation, AI can drive the Bharat rate of growth and establish India as a global AI leader.

Question for practice:

Examine how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can serve as India's next major structural reform and accelerate the transition towards the "Bharat rate of growth."

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Preparing India for China's Missile Challenge

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

Introduction

Modern warfare is increasingly shaped by conventional missiles that can damage critical infrastructure, weaken military operations and create political pressure without a full-scale war. **With China deploying more than 200 conventional missile launchers opposite India**, missile superiority has become a major challenge for India's security. Strengthening a credible conventional missile deterrent through organisational reforms, technological advancement and a dedicated Rocket Force is becoming essential to counter this evolving threat.

China's Missile Superiority

1. **Missiles as tools of coercion and war:** China treats conventional missiles as weapons for both **political coercion and military operations**. Even the threat of missile strikes can achieve strategic goals without escalating into a full-scale war.
2. **Large and advanced missile arsenal:** The missile bases at **Korla and Kunming** operate (Dong Feng-DF) **DF-15B, DF-16, DF-21C and DF-26** missiles. The first three mainly target military positions along the border, while the **DF-26** can strike high-value targets deep inside India.
3. **Hypersonic advantage:** China also fields **DF-100 and CJ-1000 hypersonic missiles**, which can strike distant targets with almost no launch warning. **India currently has no reliable defence** against such weapons.

4. **Reduced strategic depth for India:** China's missile capability reduces the protection offered by the Himalayas. Missiles launched from the Tibetan Plateau also shorten India's detection time and increase the risk of escalation because the **DF-26** has a dual role.

India's Existing Vulnerabilities

1. **Gaps in missile capability:** India's long-range missile systems, including **Agni, LR-LACM (Nirbhay), BrahMos and their variants**, are still being integrated. The country also faces limitations in missile range and diversity.
2. **Technology and operational limitations:** India lacks robust **real-time targeting capability**, has **limited missile stockpiles**, and is still developing hypersonic missile technology.
3. **Organisational weakness:** India does not yet have an operational Rocket Force. Policy and organisational issues have kept the proposal at the conceptual stage.
4. **Limited retaliatory capability:** Without a dedicated Rocket Force, India may have little choice but to absorb Chinese missile strikes. This could create a military stalemate even before the border conflict begins.

Need for a Dedicated Rocket Force

1. **Rocket Force:** A Rocket Force is a dedicated military command that controls and operates conventional long-range missiles under a **single command authority**. It allows faster decisions and coordinated strikes against strategic, operational and tactical targets.
2. **Creating mutual vulnerability:** A Rocket Force would enable India to inflict significant damage if China launches missile attacks. India does not need equal missile numbers but must produce **comparable military effects**.
3. **Holding Chinese military assets at risk:** The Rocket Force should be capable of threatening the **PLA's Western Theatre Command (WTC)** by targeting important military locations in **Tibet and Xinjiang**.
4. **Supporting operations across the battlefield:** It should degrade PLA roads, railways, airbases and logistics installations while also helping field commanders strike camps, gun positions and ammunition dumps during combat.

Key Reforms Required

1. **Counter-value strategy:** India should adopt **counter-value strikes** as part of its conventional missile strategy. This would require rethinking the scope and scale of its counter-force doctrine.
2. **Unified target planning:** India should prepare a **single unified target list** because service- or agency-specific target lists are unsuitable for time-sensitive missile warfare.

3. **Pre-delegated launch authority:** The Rocket Force should have authority to carry out **pre-designated precautionary strikes** during the opening phase of a conflict. Delayed launch approval could weaken India's response.
4. **Unified command structure:** The Rocket Force should function under the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**. Keeping it under one service would reduce operational effectiveness.
5. **Expanding missile inventory:** India should increase its **Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM)** and **Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)** inventory, including **Agni variants**, to hold **Korla and Kunming** at reciprocal risk.
6. **Developing hypersonic capability:** India should fast-track hypersonic missile development because **DF-100** is already part of the PLA Rocket Force's **ORBAT**.
7. **Strengthening indigenous missile industry:** Greater participation of the private sector should complement **DRDO**. Higher investment in **R&D** is needed to improve missile development.
8. **Reducing technology dependence:** India should strengthen domestic capabilities in advanced propulsion systems, semiconductors and high-grade materials to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers.

Immediate Priorities

1. **Protecting air power:** The **IAF** should disperse aircraft and strengthen airbases to reduce vulnerability. This would force China to use more missiles to achieve the same effect.
2. **Improving air defence:** Better deployment of air-defence systems can compel the PLA Rocket Force to attack these defences instead of India's critical infrastructure.
3. **Strengthening conventional strike capability:** India should improve long-range conventional strike systems capable of holding important targets in **Tibet and Xinjiang** at risk, thereby creating reciprocal vulnerability.
4. **Enhancing surveillance:** India should expand satellite surveillance to detect mobile missile launchers, particularly **DF-26 systems**, improving the chances of early neutralisation.

Conclusion

China's missile capability has made conventional missile warfare a major security challenge for India. A credible **Rocket Force**, stronger missile capabilities, better military organisation, and faster technological development are essential to create effective conventional deterrence. Along with immediate defensive measures, these reforms can improve India's preparedness and reduce its vulnerability in any future conflict.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges posed by China's conventional missile superiority and examine the measures needed to strengthen India's conventional missile deterrence.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GST at nine: From building the system to strengthening it

Source: The post “GST at nine: From building the system to strengthening it” has been created based on “GST at nine: From building the system to strengthening it” published in “Financial Express” on 30th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS 3- Economy

Context: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has completed **nine years** of implementation, marking a transition from the **system-building phase to the system-strengthening phase**. It is one of independent India's most significant **constitutional and fiscal reforms**, creating a unified indirect tax framework through cooperative federalism.

Achievements of GST in the Last Nine Years

1. Constitutional and Cooperative Federal Reform

- a. GST brought the Union and States under a common indirect tax framework through the GST Council.
- b. It created a **single national market** based on dialogue and consensus.

2. Streamlined Indirect Tax System

- a. GST eliminated cascading taxes through the input tax credit mechanism.
- b. It introduced a **unified tax structure** across the country.
- c. It improved transparency and enhanced the ease of doing business.
- d. It reduced compliance and transaction costs across supply chains.
- e. It ensured more competitive pricing and uniform tax treatment for consumers across states.

3. Creation of a Robust Digital Tax Ecosystem

- a. GST Network (GSTN), e-Way Bills, e-Invoicing, and the Invoice Management System (IMS) have created one of the world's largest digital tax ecosystems.
- b. Digital trails of transactions have strengthened compliance monitoring and transparency.

4. Digital Transformation of Businesses

- a. Businesses have adopted ERP systems, automated invoicing, and data-driven compliance.
- b. Technology-enabled compliance has become an integral part of corporate governance.

5. Rate Rationalisation

- a. GST reduced the effective tax burden compared to the pre-GST regime.
- b. The maximum tax incidence on mass consumption goods declined significantly.
- c. The move towards a simplified **5% and 18% slab structure** improved transparency and ease of compliance.
- d. Essential consumer goods in the 5% slab have improved affordability and accessibility.
- e. GST has benefited households while strengthening tax administration.

Challenges in GST After Nine Years

1. **Lack of Predictability:** Frequent disputes and ambiguities in GST interpretation create uncertainty and increase compliance costs for businesses.

2. **Inverted Duty Structure (Credit Inversion):** Many goods taxed at 5% accumulate input tax credit because services and capital goods continue to attract 18% GST.
3. **Higher Cost of Capital Investment:** Accumulated and blocked input tax credits increase the effective cost of capital investment for domestic manufacturers. This reduces the competitiveness of manufacturing in India.
4. **Impact on Investment:** Higher investment costs may encourage multinational companies to invest in other countries and import goods into India.
5. **Compliance-related Bottlenecks:** Delays in refunds, complex registration procedures, cumbersome audit processes, and criminal provisions increase the cost of doing business.

Way Forward

1. **Enhance Predictability**
 - a. Reduce disputes by providing greater clarity, consistency, and certainty in GST laws and their implementation.
2. **Rationalise Input Tax Credit (ITC)**
 - a. Address credit inversion by rationalising the ITC framework.
 - b. Explore annual refunds of accumulated input tax credits.
3. **Support Capital Investment**
 - a. Introduce staggered refunds of accumulated credits on capital expenditure under the inverted duty structure.
 - b. Gradually extend refunds to input services as well.
4. **Improve Ease of Doing Business**
 - a. Simplify refund mechanisms, registration processes, and audit procedures.
 - b. Continue the decriminalisation of minor GST offences.
5. **Strengthen Technology-driven Compliance**
 - a. Further improve the GSTN ecosystem, e-Invoicing, e-Way Bills, and IMS to ensure stable, seamless, and efficient compliance.
6. **Reduce Transaction Costs**
 - a. A simpler and technology-driven GST system can lower business costs, encourage investment, and make goods more affordable for consumers.

Conclusion: The first decade of GST focused on **building a unified indirect tax system**. The next phase should focus on **simplifying compliance, improving predictability, rationalising input tax credits, and strengthening technology-driven governance** to make India's GST regime more investment-friendly, efficient, and globally competitive.

Question. Nine years after the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), discuss its major achievements and examine the reforms required to make India's indirect tax system simpler, more predictable, and investment-friendly.

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Caught in the middle: On India and curbing drug abuse

Source: The post "Caught in the middle: On India and curbing drug abuse" has been created based on "Caught in the middle: On India and curbing drug abuse" published in "The Hindu" on 30th June 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS 3- International Relations

Context: India is located between the **Golden Crescent** and the **Golden Triangle**, two of the world's largest drug-producing regions. The increasing production and trafficking of heroin and synthetic drugs have made drug abuse a major **public health, social, and national security** challenge.

Challenges

1. India's geographical location facilitates drug trafficking.

- a. India shares borders with major drug-producing regions, making it highly vulnerable to cross-border smuggling.
- b. The rise of Myanmar as a leading producer of heroin and methamphetamine has increased drug inflows into India.

2. Drug production within India has become a growing concern.

- a. Some narcotic drugs are manufactured domestically using illegally diverted pharmaceutical ingredients.
- b. This has expanded the availability of drugs within the country.

3. Drug trafficking networks are using advanced technology.

- a. Drug smugglers are increasingly using drones to transport narcotics across international borders.
- b. Criminal networks are also using the dark web and cryptocurrencies to organise drug trade and evade law enforcement agencies.

4. The legal framework places a greater burden on users than traffickers.

- a. Individuals possessing small quantities of drugs can face imprisonment.
- b. At the same time, major drug traffickers often escape punishment because of weak enforcement and investigation.

5. Drug abuse has become a serious public health issue.

- a. Drug addiction causes severe physical and mental health problems.
- b. Forced detoxification and physical abuse continue to occur in several treatment facilities.

6. De-addiction and rehabilitation facilities remain inadequate.

- a. Punjab has developed an extensive network of treatment centres, but many other States have limited facilities.
- b. Most rehabilitation centres are located in urban areas, leaving rural and border regions underserved.

7. Access to treatment remains unequal.

- a. People living in villages and border districts often have limited access to addiction treatment and rehabilitation services.
- b. This delays recovery and increases the risk of relapse.

8. Social stigma and criminalisation hinder rehabilitation.

- a. Drug addiction is often viewed as a moral failure rather than a health condition.
- b. Criminal records for small-scale possession reduce employment opportunities and make social reintegration difficult.

9. Women face additional barriers in accessing treatment.

- a. Dedicated treatment centres for women are limited.
- b. Social stigma, caregiving responsibilities, and the lack of gender-sensitive services discourage women from seeking treatment.

Way Forward

1. India should adopt a public health-based approach to drug abuse.

- a. Drug addiction should be treated as a health and social issue rather than only as a criminal offence.
- b. Prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration should receive equal attention.

2. Border management should be strengthened.

- a. Surveillance and intelligence gathering along vulnerable borders should be enhanced.
- b. Modern technologies should be used to detect drones and disrupt cross-border drug trafficking.

3. Law enforcement should focus on organised drug networks.

- a. Stronger action should be taken against drug traffickers and organised criminal syndicates.
- b. Small-scale drug users should be encouraged to seek treatment instead of facing excessive criminal penalties.

4. De-addiction and rehabilitation infrastructure should be expanded.

- a. More treatment centres should be established across all States.
- b. Rehabilitation facilities should be extended to rural and border areas.

5. Access to treatment should be improved.

- a. Affordable and quality addiction treatment should be made available in underserved regions.
- b. Opioid substitution therapy and counselling services should be expanded.

6. Social reintegration of recovering addicts should be promoted.

- a. Measures should be taken to reduce the long-term impact of criminal records for minor drug possession.
- b. Education, skill development, and employment opportunities should be provided to help recovering addicts rebuild their lives.

7. Gender-sensitive treatment facilities should be developed.

- a. Dedicated rehabilitation centres for women should be established.
- b. Treatment programmes should address the specific social and healthcare needs of women.

8. Regulation of pharmaceutical supply chains should be strengthened.

- a. Strict monitoring should prevent the diversion of pharmaceutical ingredients for illegal drug manufacturing.
- b. Better coordination between health authorities and law enforcement agencies should be ensured.

Conclusion: India needs a balanced strategy that combines **strong action against organised drug trafficking** with a **compassionate public health approach** centred on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. This approach will help reduce drug abuse while strengthening both national security and public health.

Question: Drug abuse has emerged as a major public health and national security challenge in India. Discuss the challenges posed by drug abuse and suggest measures to address the issue.

Source: [The Hindu](#)