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Features :

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Most complete coverage of major News Papers editorials

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How to appoint judges: A view from South Africa

Source: The post **"How to appoint judges: A view from South Africa"** has been created based on **"How to appoint judges: A view from South Africa"** published in **"Indian Express" on 09th September 2026.**

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2-Governance

Context: Judicial appointments are crucial for maintaining independence**, impartiality and public confidence** in the judiciary. The debate assumes importance in the context of the Supreme Court of India's judgment in Arvind Malhotra v. High Court of Himachal Pradesh and the contrasting experience of South Africa.

Key differences between India and South Africa

1. **Transparency in appointments**
   a. In India, the collegium process operates largely through **confidential deliberations** to protect the integrity of judicial appointments.
   b. In South Africa, the **Judicial Service Commission (JSC)** follows a highly transparent process, including public interviews and televised proceedings.
2. **Nature of the appointing authority**
   a. The Indian system gives a central role to the **judicial collegium**, consisting of senior judges.
   b. South Africa's JSC is a **more representative constitutional body**, comprising senior judges, lawyers, legal academics and limited political representation.
3. **Selection process**
   a. South Africa begins with **public calls for nominations**, followed by shortlisting and seeking public comments on candidates.
   b. Candidates are then subjected to **public interviews** to assess their competence, impartiality and independence.
   c. Where consensus is not possible, the JSC decides through voting, although the identity of individual voters remains confidential.
4. **Public scrutiny and accountability**
   a. South African candidates may face scrutiny regarding their **professional record, views expressed as lawyers, lifestyle and judicial performance**.
   b. Judges also do not enjoy absolute immunity from disciplinary scrutiny.
5. **Judicial discipline**
   a. South Africa provides for **investigation and, where appropriate, public enquiries** into allegations of judicial misconduct.
   b. For instance, a senior High Court judge faced a public enquiry following a sexual-harassment complaint and was found guilty of gross misconduct, leading to a recommendation for impeachment and suspension.
6. **Public confidence**
   a. The South African model rests on the belief that **openness enhances public and professional confidence** in judicial institutions.
   b. Excessive secrecy, even when intended to protect institutional integrity, can create doubts about the fairness and independence of appointments.

Way Forward for India

1. There should be a **public and fearless debate** among lawyers, politicians, legal academics and members of the judiciary on judicial appointments.
2. Transparency should be increased while protecting genuinely sensitive information.
3. The appointment mechanism should balance **judicial independence with broader societal representation and public confidence**.
4. Greater openness can help ensure that judges are selected on the basis of **experience, competence, impartiality and independence**, rather than perceived political alignment.
5. A credible and transparent **judicial disciplinary mechanism** should accompany reforms in appointments.

Conclusion: Judicial independence cannot be secured merely by insulating appointments from political influence. It also requires a process that commands **public legitimacy, transparency and confidence**. The South African experience shows that an open and vigorous debate, though difficult, can be an important **precursor to an independent judiciary and a truly democratic society**.

Question: Judicial independence requires not only competent judges but also a transparent, credible and representative process of judicial appointments. Discuss in the light of the comparative experience of India and South Africa.

Source: [Indian Express]

Concerns over the Census questions

Source: The post **"Concerns over the Census questions"** has been created based on **"Concerns over the Census questions"** published in **"The Hindu" on 09th September 2026.**

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2-Governance

Context: The **Census is a statistical exercise** undertaken to collect, process and disseminate demographic, economic and social data for policy and planning. The proposed **2027 Census questionnaire contains 40 questions**, including several new questions seeking personal details, which has generated concerns about their relevance and confidentiality.

Concerns regarding the 2027 Census

1. **Departure from the statistical purpose of Census**
    a. The United Nations defines a population census as a process of collecting and analysing demographic, economic and social data for the country.
    b. Several proposed details, such as **mobile number, Aadhaar number, Voter ID and passport number**, do not appear to generate meaningful statistical tables.
2. **Violation of the principle of confidentiality**
    a. The **UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics** require individual data collected by statistical agencies to remain strictly confidential and be used exclusively for statistical purposes.
    b. Collecting identifiable information and subsequently sharing it for non-statistical purposes could undermine this principle.
3. **Unnecessary collection of names and family details**

   a. Traditionally, names have served only as **placeholders for identification during enumeration** and have not been maintained in Census databases in India.
   b. Requiring names of individuals and their parents creates difficulties, particularly in **hostels, old-age homes, jails and other institutional households**.
4. **Difficulty in enumerating persons living away from home**
   a. Many students live in **hostels, as paying guests or away from their normal households**.
   b. Since February falls towards the end of the academic year, some students may not be present at their usual households, complicating accurate enumeration.
5. **Question on COVID-19 vaccination**
   a. COVID-19 vaccination occurred several years before the 2027 Census and vaccination is no longer a major ongoing public programme.
   b. Therefore, information about the **place of vaccination** may have limited statistical or policy utility.
6. **Problems with personal identifiers**
   a. Asking for **mobile, Aadhaar and Voter ID numbers "if available"** creates ambiguity about whether availability means with the individual concerned or with the respondent.
   b. Households where the respondent is an elderly person or a homemaker may not have the identifiers of every family member readily available.
   c. Institutional households may similarly lack the records of their residents.
7. **Practical burden on enumerators**
   a. With more than **30 lakh enumerators**, collecting and correctly recording multiple identification numbers from every household could consume considerable time.
   b. Respondents may also be unwilling or unable to produce such documents, particularly in institutional households.
8. **Concerns regarding visitors and domestic servants**
   a. Visitors and domestic servants residing in a household during the enumeration period may also fall within the enumeration requirements.
   b. It may be difficult for the household respondent to obtain their sensitive personal details, raising questions about privacy and protection against misuse.
9. **Questionable utility of nationality**
   a. The question on **"nationality as declared"** may not accurately identify citizenship because an illegal immigrant could declare themselves to be an Indian national.
   b. India had experimented with this question in the **1951 and 1961 Censuses but discontinued it from 1971 onwards**.
   c. Similarly, the **US Census decided not to include a citizenship question in its 2020 Census** after considerable debate.
10. **Bank-account information**
   a. Asking for the **total number of bank accounts** may have limited additional value.
   b. If the objective is to identify financial inclusion, simply asking whether a person has a bank account may be sufficient.
   c. Moreover, obtaining accurate responses to the number of accounts may be difficult, especially when respondents are unwilling to disclose such information.
11. **Possible linkage with the NPR**
   a. Information on **parents, permanent address and nationality** could be useful for preparing or updating the **National Population Register (NPR)**, which is linked to the proposed process of preparing the National Register of Citizens.
   b. This raises concerns that information collected for the Census could potentially be used for another governmental purpose.

12. Legal and federal concerns

a. Census enumerators are appointed by State governments under **Section 4(2) of the Census Act, 1948**.
b. Since several States had earlier objected to updating the NPR through the Census exercise, using State-appointed personnel for activities beyond the Census could raise federal concerns.

13. Respondent fatigue and data quality

a. A questionnaire containing **40 questions**, many of which require descriptive answers for every household member, can cause respondent fatigue.
b. Tired or uninterested respondents may provide casual or inaccurate answers, thereby **reducing the quality and reliability of Census data**.

Way Forward

1. The Census questionnaire should primarily contain questions that have **clear statistical and policy utility**.
2. Any information required for the **NPR or another population/citizen register** should be collected through a separate, transparent process having a clear legal basis.
3. The government should provide clear safeguards regarding the **confidentiality, storage, access and use of individual information**.
4. Questions should be tested for their **relevance, feasibility and ability to generate reliable statistics** before inclusion.
5. The questionnaire should be kept as simple as possible to reduce **respondent fatigue and enumerator burden**.

Conclusion: The Census is the foundation of **evidence-based governance and public policy**. Therefore, expanding it with personal information that has little statistical value may compromise **privacy, administrative efficiency and data quality**. A clear separation between **statistical enumeration and population-register objectives**, backed by legal safeguards and transparency, is essential to preserve the credibility of the 2027 Census.

Question: The proposed questions in the 2027 Census raise concerns regarding privacy, relevance, administrative feasibility and the possible use of Census data for purposes beyond statistical compilation. Examine these concerns and suggest a way forward.

Source: The Hindu

India-Japan Defence Cooperation Breaks New Ground

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- International Relations

Introduction

India and Japan share a long-standing partnership based on **shared democratic values, mutual respect and civilisational ties**. The two countries will mark **75 years of diplomatic relations in 2027**. Their defence cooperation has expanded through dialogues, the 2+2 mechanism, military exercises, logistics and technology discussions. The August 2026 Defence Ministers' meeting marks a new phase, focused on **operational capability, defence-industrial cooperation and stronger maritime coordination**.

Evolution of Defence Cooperation

1. **Institutionalising Defence Ties:** Over the past decade, India and Japan have developed defence cooperation through **annual dialogues, the 2+2 mechanism, military exercises, logistics arrangements and defence-technology discussions**.
2. **Expanding Military Exercises:** Defence exercises have moved beyond basic engagement, with **Dharma Guardian, JAIMEX and Veer Guardian** providing increasing opportunities for interoperability among the armed forces.
3. **Deepening Army Interoperability:** The **2026 Dharma Guardian**, involving more than **200 troops**, strengthened joint capabilities through counter-terrorism, urban warfare and combat drills in complex terrain.
4. **Moving into Advanced Air Cooperation: Veer Guardian 26** marks a new step as Japanese fighter aircraft are participating in the exercise in India for the **first time**, scheduled for September 9–22, 2026.
5. **Building Naval Operational Experience:** The **2025 JAIMEX** included anti-submarine warfare, missile defence, flying operations and replenishment drills, followed by **INS Sahyadri's port call at Yokosuka**.
6. **Extending Cooperation to Third Countries:** India and Japan conducted their **first trilateral naval exercise with Indonesia in early 2026**, showing a move towards wider regional maritime cooperation.

New Areas of Defence Cooperation

1. **Formalising Maritime Security:** India and Japan signed a **Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation** to strengthen coordination for the protection of maritime routes and Sea Lines of Communication.
2. **Creating a Shared Maritime Picture:** Both sides will deepen **information sharing and Maritime Domain Awareness**, linking Japan's focus on the East China Sea and waters around Taiwan with India's central role in the Indian Ocean.
3. **Strengthening Naval Logistics:** Cooperation will include **mutual naval visits, use of ports, maintenance and repair facilities, personnel exchanges and Subject Matter Expert exchanges**, making naval cooperation more practical.
4. **Exploring Joint Shipbuilding:** India and Japan will explore **joint development in naval shipbuilding and design**, combining Japanese technological expertise with India's production capabilities.

5. **Expanding Defence Production:** Japan will deepen discussions on using Indian production capabilities under **Make in India**, while both sides will explore reciprocal arrangements for ship-repair facilities.

6. **Implementing UNICORN:** The proposed transfer of Japan's **UNICORN integrated communications antenna system** represents a concrete step in defence-technology cooperation; its co-development with Bharat Electronics Limited was already covered by an MoU signed in **November 2024**.

7. **Deepening DRDO–ATLA Cooperation:** India's **DRDO** and Japan's **Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA)** will deepen cooperation, supporting the implementation of defence-technology projects between the two countries.

Significance and Impact

1. **Shifting from Dialogue to Delivery:** The key change is the move from repeated declarations of strategic convergence towards **projects, exercises and arrangements that improve actual operational capability**.

2. **Connecting the Indian Ocean and Pacific:** India and Japan's positions at opposite ends of the Indo-Pacific make information sharing important for developing a **more continuous maritime picture across interconnected sea spaces.**

3. **Strengthening Defence-Industrial Cooperation:** Joint shipbuilding, Indian production and reciprocal repair arrangements can address the long-standing gap between **strong political-strategic ties and limited defence-industrial outcomes**.

4. **Improving Operational Preparedness:** More complex exercises, unmanned systems, short-notice drills and cooperation between special operations forces will make bilateral military engagement more operationally focused.

5. **Protecting Maritime Lifelines:** Greater coordination on Sea Lines of Communication supports **freedom of navigation, overflight and lawful commerce**, which both countries view as increasingly vulnerable.

6. **Building a Wider Security Architecture:** Maritime security, defence industry, logistics, resilient supply chains and third-country cooperation are increasingly linking India-Japan defence ties with the **broader Indo-Pacific security framework**.

Way Forward

1. **Ensure Early Project Delivery:** India and Japan need to prioritise implementation of existing commitments, particularly **UNICORN and defence-technology cooperation**, instead of limiting engagement to identifying new possibilities.

2. **Turn Technology into Production:** Cooperation should move further towards **joint development, shipbuilding, Indian production and technology transfer**, using Japanese expertise and Indian manufacturing capabilities.

3. **Institutionalise Maritime Cooperation:** Regular information sharing, naval visits, port access, maintenance and repair arrangements should be developed into a sustained framework for protecting **Sea Lines of Communication**.

4. **Raise Exercise Complexity:** The two countries should build on existing exercises by adding **unmanned systems, short-notice drills and greater special-operations cooperation** to improve interoperability.

5. **Expand Third-Country Cooperation:** India and Japan should deepen exercises and high-level exchanges with countries such as **Indonesia**, strengthening their joint contribution to regional peace and stability.

6. **Link Defence with Economic Security:** Defence cooperation should complement the wider partnership in **critical technologies, economic security and resilient supply chains**, connecting industrial and technological strengths.

Conclusion

India-Japan defence ties have moved from building institutions and strategic trust towards developing **usable military and industrial capabilities.** The latest initiatives give this partnership a stronger operational base. Their success will depend on timely implementation, deeper technology and production cooperation, and sustained maritime coordination, enabling both countries to make a practical contribution to a **free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the recent developments in India-Japan defence cooperation and their significance for the Indo-Pacific region.

Source: The Hindu

Subhash Chandra Case with National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The **Subhash Chandra personal insolvency case** involves a repayment plan against creditor claims of about **₹22,006 crore**. The plan faced controversy over the eligibility of certain creditors to vote and the resulting voting outcome. The dispute produced **three different judicial views**, after which the NCLT found that no majority view had emerged. The matter then reached a **five-member NCLT Bench**, raising wider questions about creditor eligibility, judicial oversight and the suitability of the existing NCLT structure for insolvency proceedings.

Subhash Chandra Case: What is the Controversy?

1. **Personal guarantee liability:** The proceedings concern personal guarantees given by Subhash Chandra for borrowings of Essel Group-linked companies, rather than direct borrowings by him..

2. **Large gap in repayment:** The plan proposed about ₹**6.25 crore for creditors**, plus ₹25 lakh towards process costs, against admitted claims of ₹**22,006.57 crore**, creating the reported **99.97% haircut**.

3. **High voting support:** Creditors supporting the plan held about **80.81% of the voting share**, apparently crossing the required threshold for approval.

4. **Disputed voting rights:** Five entities allegedly linked to Chandra's family together held **61.78% of the voting share**, making their eligibility decisive to the outcome.

5. **Effect of excluding disputed voters:** Dissenting creditors argued that these entities were associates under the IBC and should not have voted; without them, plan supporters would hold **below 16%**, against about **18% opposing votes**.

6. **Wider concern over creditor recovery:** The case has attracted criticism because a very small repayment was proposed against a very large claim, while several major financial creditors opposed the plan.

How Did the Legal Dispute Escalate and What Were the Three Judicial Views?

1. **Initial split:** The original two-member Bench, comprising a **Judicial Member and a Technical Member**, gave different views on the repayment plan, requiring reference to a Third Member.

2. **Judicial Member—plan approved:** The Judicial Member treated the disputed creditors as eligible to vote and approved the repayment plan, while allowing dissenting creditors to pursue **available recovery remedies.**

3. **Technical Member—plan rejected:** The Technical Member rejected the plan and questioned **creditor eligibility, voting, the Resolution Professional's conduct, asset disclosure and repayment certainty**.

4. **Third Member—plan approved:** The Third Member treated the disputed creditors as eligible and approved the plan, while directing exclusion of certain other claims from the creditor list.

5. **Dissenting creditors also bound:** Unlike the Judicial Member, the Third Member held that the approved plan would bind **both assenting and dissenting creditors** under Section 115 of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.

6. **No majority emerged:** The original Bench found that the three views differed on material consequences and held that **no majority view had emerged**, so no final order could be passed.

7. **Five-member Bench and fresh challenge:** The matter was referred to the NCLT President, who constituted a **five-member Special Bench**.

8. **Challenge before NCLAT:** Subhash Chandra challenged the **NCLT's power to constitute the five-member Bench** before the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)**. The issue remains pending, while the NCLAT proceedings concerning the repayment plan have also been kept pending.

The Institutional Problem Exposed by the Case

1. **NCLT's inherited structure:** The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** uses the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** as its Adjudicating Authority (AA), so insolvency inherits the **Judicial Member–Technical Member** structure of the Companies Act.

2. Personal guarantee liability: The proceedings concern personal guarantees given by Subhash Chandra for borrowings of Essel Group-linked companies, rather than direct borrowings by him.

3. **AA's limited role:** The **Adjudicating Authority (AA)** is not primarily meant to resolve bilateral disputes or decide the commercial outcome; it should mainly ensure that creditors act **within the statutory framework**.

4. **Commercial wisdom needs a valid electorate:** Judicial deference to creditor commercial wisdom can apply only when the **creditor body is legally constituted**; an unlawful vote cannot be protected as commercial wisdom.

5. **Corporate insolvency safeguards:** The IBC provides safeguards such as excluding related-party financial creditors from the Committee of Creditors, restricting specified persons from bidding and protecting dissenting creditors.

6. **Personal insolvency gap:** The framework for individual insolvency requires the Adjudicating Authority to examine a repayment plan based on the creditors' report, but lacks a comparable mechanism for determining the valid electorate.

7. **Core institutional lesson:** The case shows that insolvency needs an adjudicatory structure designed specifically for **collective decision-making, speed, commercial certainty and preservation of value**, rather than an inherited company-law model.

Way Forward

1. **Create a dedicated insolvency AA:** A separate **Adjudicating Authority under the IBC** could avoid importing the broader institutional design of the Companies Act into insolvency proceedings.

2. **Single-member insolvency authority:** The dedicated authority should ordinarily function through a **single specialised member**, similar to the single-judge approach used for bankruptcy adjudication in the United States.

3. **Provide specialised procedures:** It should have its own procedure, case-management system and specialised members suited to insolvency matters.

4. **Keep appellate review for wider issues:** Questions of wider legal importance can continue through the **appellate hierarchy**, without repeatedly expanding the composition of the first-level authority.

5. **Separate company and insolvency adjudication:** Company-law matters can remain with the NCLT, while insolvency matters can be handled by an institution designed specifically for the **IBC's requirements**.

6. **Focus on core insolvency objectives:** The institutional design should prioritise **speed, collective decision-making, commercial certainty and preservation of value**.

Conclusion

The **Subhash Chandra case** goes beyond the dispute over a ₹6.25-crore repayment plan against claims of about ₹**22,006 crore**. It shows how disputed creditor eligibility can produce conflicting judicial views, **no majority and successive Benches**, creating institutional uncertainty. The case therefore strengthens the need for a **dedicated, simpler and specialised insolvency authority** that ensures statutory compliance while respecting valid creditor commercial wisdom.

Question for practice:

Examine the institutional challenges highlighted by the Subhash Chandra case before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

Source: [Businessline]

Dangerous phase: On the crisis in West Asia

Source: The post "Dangerous phase: On the crisis in West Asia" has been created based on **"Dangerous phase: On the crisis in West Asia"** published in "The Hindu" on 10th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

Context: The ongoing Iran war has escalated tensions across **West Asia**, with the conflict increasingly spreading beyond Iran and the United States. The involvement of regional actors and disruption of vital trade routes has created the possibility of an **economic and security crisis across the region**.

Key developments in the conflict

1. The **US has carried out strikes on Iranian oil tankers in the Gulf waters**, following what it described as Iranian attacks on US warships.
2. Iran responded with a **massive ballistic missile attack on a US air base in Jordan** and warned of a stronger response to further US attacks.
3. Iran has also declared a **restricted zone in the Strait of Hormuz**, warning commercial ships against crossing it without American naval escort.
4. **Yemen's Houthis**, aligned with Iran, have attacked **Saudi Arabia**, causing casualties and injuries.
5. The Houthis have also imposed a **naval blockade on Saudi Arabia's western ports** and launched an offensive against Saudi-backed forces in **Taiz and Mocha**.
6. Thus, the conflict has expanded from **Tehran to Jordan, Riyadh and the Bab-el-Mandeb region.**

Reason behind current phase being dangerous

1. Threat to strategic trade routes

a. The **Strait of Hormuz** connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and is a critical channel for global energy trade.
b. The **Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb** are also important trade routes connecting Europe and Asia.
c. Any prolonged disruption of these routes can affect global trade, shipping and energy supplies.

2. Risk of energy and economic crisis

a. The US naval blockade has largely prevented Iran from exporting its oil.
b. At the same time, the American naval escort has helped a limited number of ships pass through the Strait of Hormuz, reducing the immediate impact of Iran's restrictions on global energy prices.
c. However, continued disruption could put **global energy markets and the wider economy under pressure**.

3. Escalation of military confrontation

a. The US is simultaneously using **intense military strikes and economic pressure** to force Iran to surrender.
b. Iran has instead escalated the conflict by attacking American warships outside the Persian Gulf.
c. This could invite a **stronger US military response** and further widen the conflict.

4. Rebuilding of Iranian military capabilities

a. Iran's missile attack on US bases in Jordan indicates that Tehran may have been **rebuilding its strike capabilities**, despite earlier US claims that these capabilities had been destroyed.
b. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of military pressure in permanently weakening Iran's ability to retaliate.

5. Political calculations

a. Iran appears to believe that the US is entering its **midterm election period**, while President Trump is politically weak domestically.
b. Iran may therefore see an opportunity to increase pressure on the US and strengthen its negotiating position.

Way forward

1. Both Washington and Tehran need to avoid further escalation and prevent the conflict from expanding to additional countries.
2. **Freedom of navigation** through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb should be protected to prevent disruption of global trade.
3. Diplomatic channels should be strengthened alongside military de-escalation measures.
4. Regional powers should work towards preventing the conflict from turning into a wider **West Asian security crisis**.

Conclusion: The Iran war has moved beyond a bilateral confrontation and now threatens **regional stability, maritime security and the global economy**. With neither the US nor Iran appearing ready to step back, the conflict risks entering a more dangerous phase with **far-reaching global economic implications**.

Question: The Iran war has pushed West Asia into a dangerous phase with serious economic and security implications. Discuss.

Source: [The Hindu]

India has to act on its 'sugar' problem

Source: The post "India has to act on its 'sugar' problem" has been created based on **"India has to act on its 'sugar' problem"** published in "The Hindu" on 10th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

Context: India is witnessing a rise in **obesity, diabetes and lifestyle-related diseases**, particularly among children. Excessive consumption of **sugar-sweetened beverages and processed foods** is emerging as an important public health concern.

Growing sugar consumption in India

1. **The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has proposed restricting packaged foods high in **fat, salt and sugar** in school canteens and introducing **warning labels** on such products.
2. The number of children suffering from **obesity and diabetes is increasing**, with a significant share of them having lifestyle-related health problems.
3. In **2024**, the leading multinational cola company in India sold around **4 billion units of sugary drinks**, showing the large scale of consumption.
4. Popular products such as **soft drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk and packaged snacks** are increasingly marketed towards children.
5. The problem is also linked to changing dietary habits, as children increasingly consume **processed and packaged foods** instead of healthier traditional options.

Major concerns

1. Rising childhood obesity

a. Excessive sugar intake contributes to weight gain and increases the risk of **childhood obesity**.
b. Obesity during childhood can continue into adulthood and increase the burden of lifestyle diseases.

2. Growing risk of diabetes

a. High consumption of sugary foods and beverages increases the risk of **diabetes and other metabolic disorders**.
b. The rising prevalence of obesity and diabetes among children indicates the need for early intervention.

3. Misleading perception of "healthy" products

a. Products marketed as **"energy drinks", "health drinks" or fortified beverages** may contain substantial amounts of sugar.
b. Such marketing can create the perception that these products are beneficial for children despite their high sugar content.

4. Easy availability and aggressive marketing

a. Sugary products are widely available in **schools, colleges, shops and online platforms**.
b. Aggressive advertising and promotional campaigns influence children's food preferences and consumption patterns.

5. Long-term public health burden: Excessive sugar consumption can contribute to **obesity, diabetes and other lifestyle-related diseases**, increasing healthcare costs and reducing productivity.

Measures required

1. Stronger food regulation

a. FSSAI should implement clear **front-of-pack warning labels** for products high in sugar, salt and fat.
b. The proposed restrictions on unhealthy packaged foods in **school canteens** should be effectively enforced.

2. Regulation of marketing

a. Advertising of high-sugar products, particularly those **targeting children**, should be strictly regulated.
b. Companies should not be allowed to create misleading health or nutritional claims for high-sugar products.

3. Fiscal measures

a. Higher taxation on **sugar-sweetened beverages** can discourage excessive consumption.
b. Revenue generated through such taxes can be used for **public health and nutrition programmes**.

4. Healthier school environments

a. Schools should promote **fresh and nutritious food** and restrict the availability of sugary drinks and unhealthy packaged snacks.
b. Children should be educated about the health consequences of excessive sugar consumption.

5. Consumer awareness

a. Public awareness campaigns should explain the **actual sugar content** of popular beverages and packaged foods.
b. Parents and schools should encourage healthier alternatives and balanced diets.

6. Industry responsibility

a. Food and beverage manufacturers should reduce the amount of **added sugar** in their products.
b. Companies should adopt responsible marketing practices and provide transparent nutritional information.

Conclusion: India's sugar problem requires a **whole-of-society approach involving government, schools, parents, consumers and the food industry**. Stronger regulation, transparent labelling, responsible marketing, healthier school environments and public awareness can help protect children and reduce the future burden of **obesity and diabetes**.

Question: India is facing a growing "sugar problem" due to rising consumption of sugary foods and beverages, particularly among children. Discuss the concerns associated with excessive sugar consumption and suggest suitable measures to address the issue.

Source: [The Hindu]

What is Article 371(K), and what could it mean for Ladakh?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Introduction

The Centre has proposed **Article 371(K)** as a new constitutional safeguard for Ladakh, with a directly elected UT-level body and legislative powers. The proposal seeks to address long-standing demands for greater democratic control and protection of land, culture, environment and natural resources. However, **no detailed draft has been provided**, leaving major questions over executive, financial, planning, police and law-and-order powers.

Why Has Ladakh Been Seeking Constitutional Protection?

1. **2019 reorganisation of J&K:** In 2019, the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganised, and **Ladakh became a separate Union Territory without a legislative assembly**.
2. **Loss of elected representation:** Ladakh had **four MLAs** in the erstwhile J&K Assembly, but after becoming a UT without a legislature, its administration became largely bureaucratic.
3. **Change in political expectations:** Leh had long demanded UT status because it felt neglected by the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir government, but the absence of a legislature later created concerns over democratic representation.
4. **Concerns over land and identity:** Changes in domicile rules increased concerns about **land, employment, demography and protection of Ladakh's distinct cultural identity**.
5. **Limited Hill Council powers:** Ladakh has Hill Councils in **Leh and Kargil**, but neither is covered by the Sixth Schedule, leaving their powers limited.
6. **Demand for stronger safeguards:** These concerns led to demands for **statehood, tribal status, Sixth Schedule protection and greater local control** over administration, land and infrastructure decisions.

What Has the Centre Proposed Under Article 371(K)?

1. **New constitutional provision:** The Centre has proposed **Article 371(K) under Part XXI**, which contains temporary, transitional and special provisions for specific regions and states.
2. **Article 371 and its present scope:** Article 371 and provisions from **371-A to 371-J** provide special arrangements for **12 States**, covering different political, cultural, social and economic interests.
3. **Directly elected UT body:** The proposed arrangement would create a governing body for Ladakh whose members would be chosen through **direct elections**.

4. **Legislative subjects:** The body would have legislative powers over **land, culture and language, forests, environment and natural resources**.

5. **Article 240 subjects:** Its legislative role could also cover other subjects reserved for Ladakh under **Article 240**, which allows the President to make laws for specified Union Territories.

6. **A new constitutional model for a UT:** Article 371(K) would create a **separate constitutional arrangement for Ladakh**, marking a departure because existing special provisions under Article 371 apply to states.

How Would Article 371(K) Change Ladakh's Governance?

1. **Greater elected participation:** A directly elected UT-level body would give local representatives a formal role in **Ladakh's governance and decision-making**.

2. **Local role in resource decisions:** Legislative powers over **land, forests, environment and natural resources** would give the proposed body a role in decisions concerning these areas.

3. **Protection of cultural interests:** Legislative authority over **culture and language** would provide a constitutional basis for addressing Ladakh's distinct cultural interests.

4. **Shift from bureaucratic administration:** The proposed elected body is intended to increase **democratic control** in Ladakh, where administration has largely been led by bureaucrats since 2019.

What Is the Difference Between Article 371(K) and the Sixth Schedule?

1. **Sixth Schedule framework:** The Sixth Schedule creates **Autonomous District Councils** with constitutionally defined legislative, judicial and administrative powers within states.

2. **Subjects under Sixth Schedule:** These councils can regulate matters including **land, forests, water, agriculture, village councils, health, inheritance, social customs and mining**.

3. **Present geographical scope:** The Sixth Schedule applies to tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura**.

4. **Ladakh's earlier recommendation:** The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes recommended Sixth Schedule protection for Ladakh in 2019, citing its **tribal population and distinct cultural heritage**.

5. **Tribal protection remains distinct:** With **97% of Ladakh's population being tribal**, people have demanded Sixth Schedule protection to give local councils greater autonomy to protect the region's **environment and culture**.

6. **Different institutional model:** Article 371(K) proposes a **directly elected UT-level body** with specified legislative powers, rather than Sixth Schedule-style autonomous district institutions.

7. **Separate constitutional route:** The proposal would create a distinct arrangement for Ladakh, while its exact difference from the Sixth Schedule depends on the final draft.

What Powers and Demands Remain Unresolved?

1. **No detailed draft yet:** Ladakh representatives have not received a draft specifying the proposed body's powers, making the Centre's offer incomplete in their view.
2. **Executive authority unclear:** It remains unsettled whether the elected body would exercise **executive powers or have supremacy over the existing bureaucracy** in governance.
3. **Financial and planning powers:** Ladakh has sought **budgetary, financial and planning powers**, but their scope under the proposed arrangement remains undecided.
4. **Police and law and order:** Representatives have sought control over **police and law and order**, while the Centre has only agreed to discuss these demands in October.
5. **Limits on Lieutenant Governor:** The **Leh Apex Body (LAB)** and **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)** want no major decisions on **administration, bureaucracy or land** until constitutional safeguards and the elected body are established.
6. **Protection against irreversible changes:** They oppose major irreversible restructuring of **governance mechanisms and land transfers** before the proposed democratic arrangement is firmly established.
7. **Relief after 2025 violence:** The groups have sought **compensation for victims and withdrawal of criminal cases against 80 protesters** connected with the September 24, 2025 violence.
8. **Timeline for legislation:** Ladakh representatives want legislation passed during the **Winter Session**, while further talks and discussion of a draft Article are expected in October.

Conclusion

Article 371(K) could provide Ladakh with a **distinct constitutional framework and greater democratic control** over key local matters. However, its actual significance will depend on the powers finally given to the elected body, especially over **bureaucracy, finance, planning, police and law and order**. The proposed draft and further October discussions will therefore be crucial to settling the scope of Ladakh's constitutional safeguards.

Question for practice:

Discuss the proposed Article 371(K) and its significance for Ladakh.

Source: [Indian Express]

Issues in GDP Computation

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian Economy

Introduction

India's **7.8% real GDP growth in Q1FY27** has renewed **debate over** the reliability of **official GDP estimates**. The concern arises from the **downward revision of the historical base, gaps in measuring the informal economy, and changes in the methodology** used to calculate real growth. The unusually low 2.5% GDP deflator has added to these concerns. The absence of a consistent back-cast series has further raised questions about the **comparability and credibility of India's growth estimates.**

Current Situation: Revision of GDP Estimates

1. **Shift in Base Year:** India's GDP series has shifted from the **2011-12 base to the 2022-23 base**, changing estimates of past economic activity.
2. **Downward Revision of GDP:** The new series lowered **nominal GDP estimates by 3.3 percentage points compared with the earlier series during FY23-FY26**, reducing estimates by about ₹**42 trillion** overall.
3. **Broad-Based Revision:** The downward revision affected **household consumption, government spending and capital formation**, covering major domestic demand components.
4. **Successive Quarterly Revisions:** Q1FY26 nominal GDP was revised downward at **every release**, from ₹**82.7 trillion in November 2025 to** ₹**80 trillion in August 2026**.
5. **Effect on Current Growth:** With Q1FY27 GDP at ₹**88.3 trillion**, using the original higher Q1FY26 base would have produced **6.7% nominal and 4.2% real growth**, instead of **10.3% and 7.8%**.
6. **Scale of Revision:** Q1FY26 alone saw a cumulative downward revision of ₹**2.7 trillion**, showing that estimates continued to change even within the new GDP series.

Why Was the GDP Series Changed?

1. **Outdated Informal-Sector Measurement:** The earlier 2011-12 series relied on **static ratios extrapolated from formal-sector growth and workforce data collected during 2010-12**.
2. **Long Gap in Informal-Sector Surveys:** Survey-based tracking of the informal economy stopped after **2012-13**, leaving its subsequent changes insufficiently captured in GDP estimates.
3. **Major Disruptions Not Captured:** The older series could not adequately measure the informal sector's response to **demonetisation, GST disruptions, global protectionism and the pandemic**.
4. **Introduction of New Survey Data:** The 2022-23 series incorporated **Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) and other surveys** that had resumed after long gaps, providing newer information on unincorporated economic activity.
5. **Employment Data Gap:** The Employment-Unemployment Survey ended after **2011-12**, while the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) began in 2017-18**, creating a significant gap in labour-market information.
6. **Consumption Data Gap:** The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey stopped in **2017-18** and resumed in **2022-23**, when it showed a sharp deceleration in real household spending.

Why Are Critics Questioning the New Estimates?

1. **Adoption of Double Deflation:** The new GDP series uses **double deflation**, which requires granular price information across industries and output categories that has not been fully disclosed.
2. **Low GDP Deflator:** The Q1FY27 implied GDP deflator was only **2.5%**, despite Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation near **4%** and WPI/PPI inflation above **9%.**
3. **Alternative Deflator Estimate:** Using earlier average weights of **46% for CPI and 54% for Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** gives an estimated GDP deflator of about **6.9%**, much higher than the reported 2.5%.
4. **Manufacturing Deflator Mismatch:** The reported **-1.5% manufacturing deflator** contrasts with **7.3% average manufacturing WPI inflation**, creating doubts about the assumptions used.
5. **Manufacturing Cost Pressure:** Data from more than **1,700 companies** showed **25.6% sales growth against a 40% rise in raw-material costs**, while nominal value addition declined by **4.5%.**
6. **Concern Over Cost Pass-Through:** MoSPI's (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) negative manufacturing deflator relies on assumptions about **cost pass-through**, while company-level results show substantial cost pressure.
7. **Consumption Deflator Concern:** Private consumption growth implies a **2.8% deflator**, while Reserve Bank of India (RBI) surveys indicate lived urban inflation near **8.5%** and worsening sentiment on jobs, income and living costs.
8. **Limited Methodological Transparency:** Double deflation requires granular price data, but the underlying **price information, calculations and assumptions have not been fully disclosed**.

Impact of the Changes on Growth Assessment

1. **Lower Growth Under Alternative Deflation:** Using a **6% deflator instead of 2.5%** would reduce Q1FY27 real GDP growth to around **3.9–4.3%**, well below the reported 7.8%.
2. **Uncertain Ten-Year Growth Picture:** No back-cast data exists under the 2022-23 base for years before that base year, making long-term growth comparisons methodologically uncertain.
3. **Uncertain Initial Estimates:** Persistent downward revisions raise questions about whether **high-frequency indicators adequately capture the wider economy** when initial GDP estimates are prepared.
4. **Macroeconomic Assessment:** Uncertain GDP estimates complicate assessment of **nominal growth, public debt, tax elasticity, youth employment, trade deficit, external borrowing, foreign investment and balance-of-payments pressure**.
5. **Policy Assessment:** If GDP data does not accurately reflect economic conditions, policymakers may face difficulty in assessing the **true pace of economic expansion** and responding to underlying weaknesses.

Way Forward

1. **Publish a Back-Cast Series:** The National Statistical Office (NSO) should provide a **consistent historical GDP series** linking the old and new bases to enable reliable long-term comparisons.

2. **Improve Deflator Transparency:** The underlying **price indices, weights, assumptions and calculations** used to derive GDP deflators should be clearly disclosed.

3. **Ensure Regular Surveys:** Surveys covering the **informal sector, employment, household consumption and enterprises** should be conducted regularly to avoid long data gaps.

4. **Improve Initial GDP Estimates:** Initial GDP estimates should use data that **better reflect wider economic activity**, so that subsequent revisions are smaller and more reliable.

5. **Explain Revisions Clearly:** Methodological changes and revisions should be clearly explained so that users can understand **why GDP estimates change across releases**.

6. **Improve Statistical Coverage:** Regular and representative data collection should ensure that GDP estimates capture changes across both the **formal and informal sectors**.

Conclusion

India's GDP debate is ultimately about the **reliability, transparency and comparability of economic data**, rather than one quarterly figure. The new series addresses important gaps in the older system, but **base revisions, deflator concerns and missing back-cast data** leave the growth trajectory uncertain. **Regular surveys, transparent methodology and consistent historical estimates** are essential for accurately assessing growth and supporting sound policymaking.

Question for practice:

Examine the major issues in India's GDP computation and their impact on the credibility of growth estimates.
Source: Businessline

FCNR(B): Benefits outweigh costs

Source: The post **"FCNR(B): Benefits outweigh costs"** has been created based on **"FCNR(B): Benefits outweigh costs"** published in "Business Line" on 11th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Economy

Context: The **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR-B) scheme** was used by the RBI to attract foreign currency deposits at concessional swap rates and strengthen India's external position. The concessional swap window operated from **June 8 to August 31, 2026**, and mobilised **$127.2 billion in just 85 days**.

Benefits of the FCNR(B) Swap Window

1. **Attracted foreign capital at a large scale:** The scheme mobilised $127.2 billion, thereby strengthening foreign capital inflows and the balance of payments.

2. **Generated a net surplus for RBI:** With average forward premia of **2.93% for three-year** and **3.23% for five-year** tenors, against average US Treasury yields of **4.23% and 4.33%**, respectively, investment returns exceeded hedging costs.
3. **Created a positive balance-sheet impact:** Under the assumed deposit distribution of **40% in three-year, 10% in four-year and 50% in five-year tenors**, the estimated hedging cost was **$16.3 billion**, while investment income was **$22.4 billion**, generating a **net surplus of $6.1 billion (₹58,372 crore)**.
4. **Provided banking-system liquidity:** The concessional swaps injected nearly **₹12 trillion** of rupee liquidity into the banking system, helping banks overcome elevated **credit-deposit (C-D) ratio constraints** and supporting productive-sector lending.
5. **Reduced government borrowing costs:** Surplus liquidity encouraged banks to invest in government securities, pushing yields lower and thereby reducing the government's borrowing costs.
6. **Strengthened external stability:** Despite foreign capital inflows of around **$136 billion**, including FCNR, ECB and OFCB inflows, reserves increased from **$681.6 billion to $740.8 billion** between June 5 and August 28, indicating the strengthening of India's forex position.

Costs and Challenges

1. **High forward-premium costs:** USD/INR forward premia touched more than **1,500 basis points for five-year tenors**, raising concerns regarding the cost of the scheme.
2. **Surplus liquidity:** Durable surplus liquidity reached **₹8.06 lakh crore** by mid-August, pushing overnight rates below the repo rate, with **call money at 4.95% and TREPS at 4.45%.**
3. **Sterilisation burden:** RBI had to undertake sterilisation operations to keep liquidity within its comfort zone of **0.5–1% of NDTL**, creating an additional cost.
4. **Temporary liquidity-management challenge:** RBI's short dollar forward position is above **$100 billion**, with around **$40 billion maturing within one year**. Their unwinding will automatically contract rupee liquidity.
5. **Seasonal liquidity pressures:** September and October are likely to witness liquidity absorption due to **festive-season withdrawals, advance tax payments, credit growth, revival of capex, government borrowing and import payments ahead of Diwali**.

Why the Costs Remain Manageable

1. Even if RBI sterilises liquidity for up to one year, the estimated costs remain manageable.
    a. With surplus liquidity of **₹3–8 trillion** and sterilisation rates of **5.3–5.7%**, quarterly sterilisation costs could be around **₹3,975–10,600 crore**, while annual costs could range from **₹17,000–45,600 crore**.
    b. Against the FCNR(B) surplus of **₹58,372 crore**, RBI could still retain a net positive balance of approximately **₹12,772–54,397 crore**.
2. RBI can manage liquidity through **incremental CRR hikes, longer-term VRRRs and OMOs**, instead of relying on permanent sterilisation mechanisms such as RBI should use CRR, VRRRs and OMOs flexibly to manage surplus liquidity without imposing excessive sterilisation costs.
3. RBI should **gradually unwind its forward dollar positions** to absorb excess rupee liquidity in an orderly manner.
4. **Future FCNR(B)-type interventions** should be undertaken after carefully assessing their costs, returns and impact on liquidity.
5. RBI should **coordinate liquidity management** with seasonal factors, credit demand, government borrowing and import payments.

a. Banks should channel surplus liquidity towards productive-sector lending rather than excessive investment in government securities.

6. RBI should **maintain adequate forex reserves and exchange-rate stability** while avoiding excessive market intervention.
7. Overall, monetary policy should balance external stability, liquidity management and economic growth while keeping sterilisation costs under control the **Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS)**.

Way Forward

1. RBI should use CRR, VRRRs and OMOs flexibly to manage surplus liquidity without imposing excessive sterilisation costs.
2. RBI should gradually unwind its forward dollar positions to absorb excess rupee liquidity in an orderly manner.
3. Future FCNR(B)-type interventions should be undertaken after carefully assessing their costs, returns and impact on liquidity.
4. RBI should coordinate liquidity management with seasonal factors, credit demand, government borrowing and import payments.
5. Banks should channel surplus liquidity towards productive-sector lending rather than excessive investment in government securities.
6. RBI should maintain adequate forex reserves and exchange-rate stability while avoiding excessive market intervention.
7. Overall, monetary policy should balance external stability, liquidity management and economic growth while keeping sterilisation costs under control.

Conclusion: The FCNR(B) swap window has broadly achieved its objectives of **attracting foreign capital, strengthening the balance of payments, providing banking-system liquidity and lowering government borrowing costs**. Although forward-premium and sterilisation costs are significant, they are **temporary and manageable** compared with the estimated surplus and wider macroeconomic benefits. Therefore, the FCNR(B) intervention can be viewed as a **net-positive and prudent measure for financial stability**, particularly amid global liquidity tightening and volatile capital flows.

Question: The FCNR(B) swap window has been presented as a measure that strengthened India's external position while creating manageable liquidity and sterilisation costs. Discuss.

Source: Business Line

What is PERM, why does it matter for Indian workers?

Source: The post **"What is PERM, why does it matter for Indian workers?"** has been created based on **"US suspends Cognizant's Green Card filings: What is PERM, why does it matter for Indian workers?"** published in "Indian Express" on 11th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3-Economy

Context: PERM, or Program Electronic Review Management, is a system through which US employers generally obtain labour certification before sponsoring a foreign worker for an employment-based Green Card. The process seeks to ensure that employing a foreign worker permanently does not adversely affect the jobs, wages and working conditions of US workers.

About Program Electronic Review Management

1. PERM is an **employer-driven process** in which the US employer files the labour certification application on behalf of the foreign worker.
2. Before filing the PERM application, the **employer must obtain a prevailing wage** determination for the concerned position.
3. The employer must **undertake prescribed recruitment** to demonstrate that employing a foreign worker will not adversely affect the employment opportunities of US workers.
4. Once the US Department of Labor certifies the application, the employer can proceed to the subsequent **stages of the employment-based Green Card process**.
5. The date on which the Labour Department accepts the labour certification application generally becomes the worker's priority date, which determines their position in the Green Card queue.
6. The priority date is particularly important for Indian workers because demand for employment-based Green Cards from India is much higher than their availability.

Difference between PERM and H-1B

1. The H-1B is **a temporary, non-immigrant work** visa that allows US employers to employ foreign professionals in speciality occupations.
2. PERM, in contrast, **is part of the process through which an employer seeks permanent residency** for a foreign worker.
3. The H-1B therefore **provides a temporary employment pathway,** whereas PERM facilitates the transition towards an employment-based Green Card.
4. The **two processes can operate simultaneously** because an Indian professional may work in the US on an H-1B visa while their **employer separately sponsors them for a Green Card through PERM.**
5. A suspension of PERM filings by itself **does not cancel an employee's existing** H-1B status or an already-issued Green Card.

Implications for Indian Workers

1. The **suspension of Cognizant's PERM filings** can delay the Green Card process for employees whose cases have not yet reached the PERM filing stage.
2. Such **employees cannot obtain a new priority date** and therefore cannot move forward in the employer-sponsored Green Card process while the suspension continues.
3. The **impact is particularly serious for Indian workers** because they already face a substantial backlog in employment-based Green Card categories.
4. In the September **2026 U.S.A Visa Bulletin, the EB-2 category for India** was listed as unavailable for final action, while the EB-3 final-action date was January 1, 2014.
5. Country-wise **limits on employment-based** Green Cards further contribute to **the prolonged waiting period** faced by Indian applicants.
6. The suspension **can create difficulties for some H-1B workers approaching the normal six-year limit** because certain extensions beyond six years depend on timely progress in the labour-certification process.
7. Workers who **already have approved petitions** and are waiting because an immigrant visa number is unavailable are in a different position and may, subject to applicable rules, qualify for H-1B extensions of up to three years at a time.

8. The issue is significant for **Indian professionals because Cognizant had more than 2,50,000 employees** based in India at the end of 2025, meaning that Indian workers could constitute a significant share of those affected by prolonged restrictions.

Broader Significance

1. The action against **Cognizant is part of a broader U.S.A crackdown** on employment-based immigration and increased scrutiny of the H-1B and PERM programmes.
2. U.S.A authorities **are investigating allegations** such as fraudulent filings, wage undercutting and displacement of American workers.
3. The **increased scrutiny is particularly important for India** because Indian professionals constitute a large share of H-1B beneficiaries and employment-based Green Card applicants.
4. Prolonged restrictions could **affect the career mobility of Indian IT professionals** and create greater uncertainty for Indian technology and IT services companies operating in the US.

Way Forward

1. U.S.A should **ensure that immigration enforcement remains transparent** and targeted at genuine violations without unnecessarily disrupting legitimate Green Card applications.
2. U.S.A authorities **should provide timely clarification regarding the allegations, duration and scope of the PERM suspension** so that affected workers and employers can plan accordingly.
3. India **should engage diplomatically with the U.S.A to seek predictable, fair and transparent procedures** for Indian professionals using H-1B and employment-based Green Card pathways.
4. Indian IT companies **should strengthen their compliance mechanisms and ensure accurate wage** reporting, recruitment practices and documentation to prevent allegations of fraud or misuse of immigration programmes.
5. Indian professionals **should develop advanced skills in areas** such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, semiconductors and other emerging technologies to improve their global employability.
6. India should **create more high-value employment opportunities domestically** so that skilled professionals have attractive career options within the country.
7. Both countries **should maintain regular institutional dialogue on skilled mobility** because the movement of professionals can promote technological cooperation, innovation and economic growth in both countries.

Conclusion: PERM is an important pathway through which the temporary employment of foreign professionals can eventually lead to permanent residency in the U.S.A. The suspension of PERM filings does not automatically terminate existing H-1B visas, but it can delay Green Card applications and create additional uncertainty for workers approaching H-1B time limits. Therefore, a balanced approach combining strict action against fraudulent practices with predictable immigration procedures is necessary to protect genuine workers while addressing legitimate U.S.A labour-market concerns.

Question: What is PERM certification in the U.S.A immigration system? How is it different from the H-1B visa, and what are its implications for Indian workers? Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express]

Should the Use of Gen AI Be Banned Among Younger Students in Schools?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education **And GS Paper 3-** Science and Technology

Introduction

Generative AI is rapidly entering children's learning and digital environments through schools, educational apps, search engines and games. It can support **personalised learning, creativity and teachers**, but excessive dependence may affect **independent thinking, problem-solving and human interaction**. Younger students are still developing their cognitive abilities, making these concerns more important. The debate, therefore, is not only about banning AI, but also about whether schools should allow **age-appropriate, supervised and responsible use**.

Benefits of Generative AI for Younger Students

1. **Personalised Learning:** AI can explain difficult concepts according to a child's learning needs, speed and preferred way of learning.
2. **Interactive Learning:** AI-enabled tools can use quizzes, stories, games and other activities to make classroom learning more engaging than rote learning.
3. **Creative Learning:** Generative AI can help children create stories, artwork, music and software, even when they have limited technical skills.
4. **Teacher Resources:** AI can help teachers prepare worksheets, assessments, quizzes and slide decks, reducing preparation time and supporting classroom teaching.
5. **Better Teaching Methods:** AI can suggest different ways to explain a concept when a child does not understand the teacher's first explanation.
6. **Learning Support:** AI-based tools can record, transcribe and assess activities such as reading, helping students identify areas that need more practice.
7. **Accessibility:** Generative AI can offer new ways for children with disabilities to interact with digital systems and participate in learning.
8. **Support for Teacher Shortages:** India's Central and State governments are commissioning AI pilot projects in government and rural schools, especially where quality teachers are in short supply.

Risks of Generative AI for Younger Students

1. **Loss of Independent Thinking:** When AI directly completes homework, children may stop thinking for themselves and lose opportunities to develop reasoning skills.
2. **Loss of Learning Struggle:** Ready-made answers can remove trial and error, logical thinking and the satisfaction of solving a problem independently.

3. **Over-Reliance on Technology:** Frequent dependence on AI for thinking or synthesising ideas can make children rely on technology instead of developing their own mental abilities.

4. **Wrong Information:** AI can produce false or made-up information, so teachers need to check its outputs before using them for classroom learning.

5. **Bias and Unfair Outputs:** AI systems can contain algorithmic bias and may produce different results for users, including errors linked to language or accents.

6. **Harmful Content:** Generative AI can produce misleading, inappropriate or dangerous content, while AI-generated deepfakes can also be used to target children.

7. **Privacy Risks:** Children may share personal information while interacting with AI systems, raising concerns about how their data is collected and used.

8. **Influence on Children:** Human-like AI systems can affect children's perceptions, social behaviour and understanding, while biased outputs may also influence their views.

9. **Digital Inequality:** Unequal access to AI can widen existing inequalities, leaving some children without the same opportunity to benefit from the technology.

Initiatives and Safeguards Taken So Far

1. **New York Moratorium:** New York City announced a one-year moratorium on most generative AI tools for public school students up to Class 8 during the 2026–27 academic year.

2. **Snapchat Safety Measures:** Snapchat introduced tools to detect references to violence, sexual content, drugs, child sexual abuse, bullying and hate speech in its AI chatbot.

3. **WEF AI for Children Toolkit:** The World Economic Forum's AI for Children toolkit provides guidance to technology companies and parents on the responsible use of AI for children.

4. **UNICEF Child-Centred AI Guidance:** UNICEF's updated guidance provides 10 requirements for protecting children while using AI:

- **Regulation and oversight** of AI systems used for children.
- **Safety** from harmful AI content and interactions.
- **Data and privacy protection** for children.
- **Non-discrimination and fairness** in AI systems.
- **Transparency, explainability and accountability** in AI decisions and outputs.
- **Respect for human and child rights** through responsible AI practices.
- **Protection of children's best interests, development and well-being**.
- **Inclusion of and for children** in AI systems and their development.
- **Preparation and skills** to help children understand and use AI.
- An **enabling environment** for child-centred AI.

Way Forward

1. **Age-Appropriate Restrictions:** Younger students need stronger restrictions on AI use because their cognitive abilities and learning habits are still developing.

2. **AI as a Learning Assistant:** Schools should use AI to support teachers and students, but it should not replace teachers or direct human interaction.

3. **Protect Independent Learning:** AI should not be used for tasks where the main objective is independent thinking, problem-solving or developing basic skills.

4. **Teach AI Literacy:** Children should understand the benefits, limitations and risks of AI, rather than simply being kept away from it.

5. **Verify AI Outputs:** Teachers and students should check AI-generated information because these systems can produce inaccurate or biased answers.

6. **Protect Children's Data:** Schools and AI providers should ensure that children's personal data is collected and processed safely, with clear purposes.

7. **Strengthen Regulation:** Governments should develop clear rules covering safety, privacy, fairness, transparency and accountability for AI used by children.

8. **Continue Research:** Policymakers should study the long-term effects of generative AI on children and involve children, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in future planning.

Conclusion

Generative AI can improve learning and support teachers, but unrestricted use may weaken **independent thinking, human interaction and child safety**. A complete ban may not address children's growing exposure to AI outside school. The better approach is **age-appropriate and supervised use**, with teachers remaining central, strong safeguards protecting children, and AI used mainly to support rather than replace human learning.

Question for practice:

Discuss the benefits and risks of using Generative AI among younger students in schools.
Source: The Hindu

Regulation of RUPPs

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Political parties.

Introduction

A recent investigation found that **six Gujarat-based RUPPs received around ₹1,700 crore in donations in 2023-24**, despite limited electoral participation. The amount exceeded the ₹1,480 crore received by five nationally recognised parties other than the BJP. These findings, along with poor financial disclosure among

Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs), have raised concerns over **political funding, transparency and misuse of party registration**.

RUPPs: Meaning and Legal Framework

1. **Meaning of RUPPs: Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (**RUPPs) are parties registered with the **Election Commission but not recognised as national or state parties** due to insufficient electoral performance.

2. Legal Framework:

- **Registration under Section 29A:** Political parties are registered with the Election Commission under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, after scrutiny of their documents.
- **Application within 30 days:** A political group must apply for registration within **30 days of its formation**, along with its name, constitution, leadership details, objectives and organisational information.
- **Democratic commitment:** The party must submit an affidavit confirming that its constitution follows **democratic principles** and does not promote discrimination or violence..
- **Electoral rights:** RUPPs can **contest elections and undertake political activities**, but their unrecognised status limits their electoral privileges compared with recognised parties.

3. Benefits Available to RUPPs

- **Tax exemption:** RUPPs can receive **tax exemption on eligible donations** under the prescribed provisions, subject to compliance with financial requirements.
- **Electoral facilities:** RUPPs can obtain a **common symbol for Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections** and use **20 star campaigners** during election campaigns.
- **Financial obligations:** RUPPs must disclose donors contributing above ₹**20,000 annually**, while donations above ₹2,000 must be received through **cheques or bank transfers**.

Major Concerns Related to RUPPs

1. **Sharp rise in income:** ADR recorded a **223% rise in RUPP income during FY 2022-23**, with declared income exceeding ₹**2,316 crore** among the sampled parties.
2. **Poor financial disclosure:** Of **2,764 RUPPs**, only **739 submitted financial records**, leaving over **73% without financial information** available to the Election Commission.
3. **Gujarat funding mismatch:** Five Gujarat-based RUPPs reported ₹**2,316 crore between 2019 and 2024**, while collectively receiving only **22,000 votes** during that period.
4. **Limited electoral presence:** These five Gujarat parties fielded only **17 candidates** across two Lok Sabha and one Assembly election, and **none won.**

5. **Inactive RUPPs:** India had more than **2,800 RUPPs**, but only around **750 contested the 2024 general elections**, leaving many as so-called "letter pad parties".

6. **Financial misuse risks:** Poor compliance and weak transparency can make inactive parties an **opaque channel for tax evasion, money laundering and other illegal financial transactions.**

7. **Voter confusion:** Temporary symbols allotted to RUPPs may resemble established parties, creating **confusion among voters**, particularly where literacy levels are lower.

Initiatives Taken to Regulate RUPPs

1. **Periodic delisting by ECI:** The Election Commission periodically publishes lists of **de-listed RUPPs**, with its October 2025 notification containing **over 800 such parties.**

2. **Supreme Court limitation:** In **Indian National Congress v. Institute of Social Welfare (2002)**, the Supreme Court held that the ECI lacks general power to deregister parties.

3. **Exceptional deregistration:** The ECI can deregister a party in exceptional cases such as **fraudulent registration, loss of constitutional allegiance or declaration as unlawful**.

4. **Law Commission proposal:** The **255th Law Commission Report** recommended deregistration where a political party fails to contest elections for **ten consecutive years.**

5. **ECI electoral reform proposal:** In its **2016 electoral reform memorandum**, the ECI proposed amending the RP Act to give it power to deregister political parties.

6. **Financial monitoring:** The Income Tax Department and other enforcement agencies can monitor party transactions and take **strict action against financial wrongdoing.**

7. **Tax exemption reform:** The ECI proposed restricting tax exemptions to parties winning seats, though a **suitable vote-share threshold** is considered a less extreme alternative.

Way Forward

1. Empowering the Election Commission

- **Deregistration powers:** The **Law Commission's 255th Report** recommended allowing deregistration when a political party fails to contest elections for **10 consecutive years.**
- **Legislative amendment:** The ECI's **2016 electoral reform memorandum** proposed amending the Representation of the People Act to empower it to **deregister non-serious political parties.**

2. Strengthening Financial Monitoring

- **Agency-level monitoring:** The **Income Tax Department and other enforcement agencies** should monitor RUPP transactions and take strict action against financial wrongdoing.
- **Digital financial scrutiny:** The existing digital environment can help authorities track transactions and act as a **deterrent against misuse of tax exemptions and political registration.**

3. Linking Tax Benefits with Electoral Support

- **Avoiding an extreme threshold:** Tax exemptions should not be restricted only to parties that **win Lok Sabha or Assembly seats**, as some genuine parties may consistently contest elections without electoral success.
- **Vote-share threshold:** A **suitable vote-percentage threshold**, similar to the 1% threshold used for common symbols, should be prescribed for RUPPs to avail tax exemptions on donations.

4. Avoiding Mere Electoral Compliance

- **Preventing token participation:** Deregistration alone may not solve the problem if parties simply contest elections to fulfil statutory requirements and continue misusing **tax exemptions and political registration**.

5. Centralised Financial Disclosure

- **Digital disclosure portal:** A **centralised portal** should require political parties to upload financial and operational information, including income statements, donor records and candidate details, in standardised formats.

Conclusion

RUPPs provide space for **political participation**, but weak financial disclosure and limited electoral activity can create opportunities for misuse. **Stronger ECI powers, transparent funding and better financial monitoring** are needed to prevent tax evasion, money laundering and misuse of political registration. At the same time, **proportionate eligibility rules** should protect genuine smaller parties and preserve political pluralism.

Question for practice:

Examine the need for effective regulation of Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) in India.

Source: The Hindu ; **adrindia**

Eyes on the road: on India and road traffic fatalities

Source: The post **"Eyes on the road: on India and road traffic fatalities"** has been created based on **"Eyes on the road: on India and road traffic fatalities"** published in "The Hindu" on 12th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2-Governance

Context: India faces a serious road safety crisis. Despite having only **1% of the world's vehicular fleet, India accounts for around 11% of road traffic fatalities.** Therefore, road safety requires a systemic approach rather than focusing only on individual behaviour.

Major Challenges

1. High Contribution of Vulnerable Road Users: In 2024, **two-wheeler riders accounted for 46.2%** and **pedestrians for 20.6%** of road deaths. Thus, safety measures focused only on enclosed vehicles cannot address the majority of fatalities.

2. Poor Compliance with Safety Measures: Widespread non-compliance with **helmets, seat belts, rear-seat belts and child restraint systems** increases the severity of crashes. Victims may be ejected from vehicles or suffer fatal secondary collisions inside vehicles.

3. Speeding as a Major Cause: Speeding is the dominant recorded violation associated with fatalities. Therefore, reducing opportunities for vehicles to reach dangerously high speeds can potentially produce greater gains.

4. Weak Enforcement Capacity: Actual policing remains inadequate, partly because of **chronic shortages in traffic police cadres**.

5. Unsafe Road Environment: Roads are not always designed on the assumption that **human errors will occur**. Accident-prone locations and physical conditions that contribute to crashes require systematic correction.

6. Inadequate Emergency Response: Improving **timely access to trauma care** is essential for reducing deaths after crashes.

7. Weak Public Safety Culture: India lacks a strong public culture that consistently **reinforces safe behaviour and discourages unsafe behaviour**.

Way Forward: Safe System Approach

1. Safer Road Design: Governments should identify and fix **accident-prone locations** and create physical environments that compensate for human error.

2. Comprehensive Speed Management: A national strategy should focus on **limiting opportunities for vehicles to accelerate to high speeds**.

3. Better Vehicle Safety: Manufacturers should be encouraged to install **tamper-proof seat-belt reminders** and prevent unsafe modifications after purchase.

4. Protection of Children: Children's exposure to **two-wheeler traffic** should be reduced, along with better use of child restraints and rear-seat belts.

5. Stronger Enforcement and Trauma Care: Traffic-police capacity should be strengthened and **post-crash emergency and trauma services** improved.

Conclusion: The **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019** created several mechanisms for improving road safety, but the data have not shown improvement at the scale required. Hence, judicial intervention alone cannot solve the problem. A sustained reduction in road mortality requires a **Safe System approach combining enforcement, safer infrastructure, vehicle safety, speed management, public awareness and trauma care**.

Question: Road traffic fatalities in India cannot be addressed merely through stricter enforcement or judicial intervention. Discuss the need for a comprehensive and 'Safe System' approach to road safety in India.

Source: The Hindu

ISRO's 'privatisation' move: What India's space policy says

Source: The post **"ISRO's 'privatisation' move: What India's space policy says"** has been created based on **"ISRO's 'privatisation' move: What India's space policy says"** published in "The Hindu" on 12th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2-Governance

Context: Several employee associations of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have raised concerns over the increasing role of private players in the space agency's core activities. The concerns followed a statement by IN-SPACe Chairperson Pawan Goenka that ISRO would eventually stop manufacturing launch vehicles and operating the spaceport currently under development.

Introduction

India's space sector has undergone significant reforms since **2020**, with the establishment of **IN-SPACe** and the *Indian Space Policy, 2023*. The objective is to **expand India's space ecosystem and increase its share in the global space economy**, rather than privatise ISRO.

Key Features of the Space-Sector Reforms

1. Research-Oriented Role for ISRO: ISRO is expected to focus on **research, new technologies, applications and advanced missions**, while gradually moving away from manufacturing operational space systems.

2. Promotion of Private Sector: Private entities are allowed to undertake **end-to-end space activities**, including satellites, launch services, ground infrastructure, communication, remote sensing and navigation.

3. Role of IN-SPACe: IN-SPACe acts as an interface between ISRO and private entities. It promotes private participation, provides authorisation, facilitates technology transfer and creates an **enabling environment for industry**.

4. Commercial Role of NSIL: NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of ISRO, is responsible for **commercialising publicly developed space technologies** and providing launch services to Indian and international customers.

Technologies and Activities Being Transferred

1. Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV): The SSLV was operationalised in **2024** and designed with industry participation in mind. HAL won the 2025 bid to manufacture SSLVs and eventually commercialise them.

2. Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV): PSLV became the first launch vehicle to be commercialised in **2022**, with manufacturing of five vehicles awarded to a **HAL-L&T consortium**. Further technology transfer to industry is being pursued.

3. LVM3 and Spaceport: The commercialisation of **LVM3** is being pursued, while IN-SPACe has also initiated the process of handing over the upcoming **Kulsekarapattinam spaceport** for private **operation and management, with ISRO providing technical support.**

Need of Private Participation

1. Low Global Market Share: Despite being a major space-faring nation, India's share in the global space economy is **less than 2%**. Private participation can help expand this share.

2. Rising Private Investment: Investment in India's private space sector increased nearly **sixfold**, from $100.5 million in 2021-22 to $618.5 million by March 2026.

3. Expanding the Space Economy: India aims to expand its space sector from around **$9 billion in 2026 to $40–45 billion over the next decade**.

Concerns

1. Loss of Critical Expertise:
India needs to preserve **in-house expertise within ISRO**, particularly for strategic requirements and advanced scientific missions.

2. Nascent Private Sector:
The private space sector is still at an early stage and currently cannot compete with ISRO in terms of expertise and capabilities.

3. Workforce Concerns:
ISRO employee associations have raised concerns about the transfer of core processes to private entities and its implications for the existing workforce.

Way Forward

1. Preserve Strategic Capabilities: ISRO should retain expertise necessary for **strategic needs and advanced scientific missions** such as Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan and the Bharatiya Antariksh Station.

2. Ensure Gradual Technology Transfer: Private entities should receive adequate **technical guidance, training and handholding** during the technology-transfer process.

3. Focus ISRO on Core Research: ISRO should increasingly concentrate on **new technologies, scientific missions and human spaceflight**, while private industry undertakes routine commercial activities.

4. Strengthen Public-Private Partnership: A balanced partnership among **ISRO, IN-SPACe, NSIL and private entities** can expand India's space ecosystem while protecting strategic capabilities.

5. Balance Commercialisation with National Interest: Commercialisation should proceed without compromising **national security, strategic autonomy and India's long-term scientific capabilities**.

Conclusion: India's space reforms represent **expansion and commercialisation rather than privatisation of ISRO**. A balanced approach, where private players undertake routine commercial activities while ISRO focuses on **strategic, scientific and advanced technological missions**, can strengthen India's space capabilities and help achieve a larger share of the global space economy.

Question: India's space-sector reforms seek to expand private participation while retaining ISRO's strategic and scientific role. Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express]

The BRICS Bank — An Alternative That Wasn't

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Introduction

BRICS created the New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) to provide developing countries with alternatives to the World Bank, IMF and dollar-dominated financial system. However, after a decade, these institutions remain much smaller and closely linked to the existing financial architecture. BRICS has therefore moved towards building a parallel financial system and greater multipolarity, rather than replacing the Bretton Woods system (global financial system centred on the World Bank and IMF).

Background: Need for an Alternative Financial Architecture

1. **Western dominance:** The post-Second World War financial system remains centred on the **World Bank and IMF**, where developing countries have limited influence over major decisions.
2. **Global South's demand:** BRICS seeks greater representation because of concerns over **IMF conditionality, dollar dominance and Western influence** in global financial decision-making.
3. **Creation of NDB:** Established in **2015**, the NDB was intended to provide development finance with equal governance, fewer political conditions and greater use of local currencies.
4. **Creation of CRA:** The **$100-billion Contingent Reserve Arrangement** was created in 2015 to provide members with financial support during crises without depending entirely on the IMF.
5. **De-dollarisation objective:** BRICS also sought to increase **local-currency trade and financing** to reduce exposure to U.S. monetary policy and exchange-rate volatility.

Development So Far: Growth of the BRICS Financial Architecture

1. **Expansion of NDB:** The NDB has grown from **five founding members to eleven**, reflecting wider developing-country interest in alternative development financing.
2. **Rising project financing:** By the end of **2025, NDB approvals reached about $42.9 billion across 139 projects**, covering infrastructure and social-development needs.
3. **Development projects:** NDB financing includes the **Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS, Chinese offshore wind power, Brazilian water services and Durban port modernisation**.

4. **Alternative governance:** The **five founding members have equal voting power**, giving the NDB a more balanced governance structure than institutions where voting power is linked more closely to economic weight.

5. **Local-currency lending:** Nearly **one-quarter of NDB funding** is now in local currencies, including the Chinese yuan, Indian rupee and South African rand.

6. **Broader currency diversification:** Around **65% of intra-BRICS trade is reportedly conducted in local currencies**, while some China-related energy transactions have also shifted towards the renminbi.

Present Status: Complement, Not Replacement

1. **Limited financial scale:** The NDB's **$42.9-billion project approvals** remain far below the scale of the World Bank, which commits roughly **$100 billion annually**, showing that the NDB is not yet a comparable financing institution.

2. **Smaller capital base:** The NDB has an authorised capital of **$100 billion**, compared with the much larger capital resources associated with the World Bank and IMF.

3. **Complementary relationship:** The NDB itself describes cooperation with other multilateral development banks, including **co-financing opportunities with the World Bank Group**, showing that it currently works alongside existing institutions.

4. **Continued dollar financing:** The NDB continues to issue **U.S.-dollar bonds alongside local-currency bonds**, showing that dollar financing remains an important part of its funding model.

5. **Western market dependence:** The NDB accesses international capital markets and its bonds carry ratings from agencies such as **S&P and Fitch**, keeping its financing connected to the wider global financial system.

6. **Russia case:** In **March 2022, the NDB put new transactions in Russia on hold** following the restrictions imposed after the invasion of Ukraine, showing the importance of maintaining international compliance and financial access.

Limitations: Why a Genuine Alternative Has Not Emerged

1. **Structural dependence:** The NDB follows much of the **same financial model as the World Bank**, raising funds through international capital markets and remaining part of the existing global financial architecture rather than creating a separate system.

2. **CRA's weak autonomy:** The **$100-billion CRA has never been activated**, and members seeking more than **30% of their allocation must first enter an IMF programme**, directly limiting its independence.

3. **Institutional weakness of CRA:** The CRA has **no permanent staff, independent surveillance capacity or research wing**, reducing its ability to operate as a full-fledged alternative to the IMF during financial crises.

4. **Divergent national interests:** BRICS members do not share one position on de-dollarisation; **India rejects a common BRICS currency, South Africa considers it risky, while China favours gradual internationalisation of the yuan**.

5. **Limited collective response:** When the U.S. threatened a **10% tariff surcharge** against countries aligning with "anti-American" BRICS policies, the bloc did not give a collective response, showing the limits of its financial coordination.

6. **Reform rather than replacement:** The **2024 Kazan and 2025 Rio declarations** called for a more adequately resourced, quota-based IMF, indicating that BRICS still seeks a greater role within the existing system rather than its complete replacement.

7. **Persistent Western financial dominance:** The U.S. holds **16.49% of IMF voting rights**, and the **85% supermajority requirement** gives Washington an effective veto over major IMF decisions, which BRICS has not been able to overcome.

8. **Rhetoric–reality gap:** BRICS speaks of reducing Western financial dominance, yet its institutions continue to use **dollar financing, Western credit ratings and IMF-linked mechanisms**, making the project more complementary than transformative.

Way Forward

1. **Expand local-currency financing:** BRICS can increase local-currency lending and settlements to gradually reduce dependence on **dollar financing and exchange-rate risks**.

2. **Develop alternative payment systems:** BRICS should work towards reliable alternatives to **SWIFT** to support cross-border transactions and reduce dependence on Western-controlled financial infrastructure.

3. **Create BRICS credit-rating agencies:** A credible **BRICS-based credit-rating system** can reduce dependence on Western agencies and help attract investment to developing economies.

4. **Strengthen the CRA:** BRICS should give the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement** stronger independent surveillance, research and crisis-response capacity so it can function with less IMF dependence.

5. **Increase NDB's scale:** The NDB should expand its **project financing and local-currency portfolio** to make its role more significant in development financing.

6. **Pursue gradual de-dollarisation:** BRICS should focus on **gradual financial diversification**, as members have different economic interests and do not seek an abrupt challenge to the dollar.

7. **Balance national and collective interests:** BRICS members should give greater priority to **common financial objectives** while managing their individual economic and geopolitical interests.

8. **Build supply-chain resilience:** BRICS should cooperate on **critical minerals, rare earths and resilient supply chains** to reduce vulnerabilities from concentrated global supplies.

Conclusion

BRICS has **not replaced the Bretton Woods system**, as the NDB and CRA remain connected to existing financial markets and institutions. However, growing local-currency financing, alternative payment mechanisms and stronger development cooperation can gradually increase the **financial autonomy of the Global South**. BRICS' realistic path is therefore to build a **parallel and more multipolar financial architecture**, rather than abruptly dismantling the existing order.

Question for practice:

Evaluate whether the BRICS Bank has emerged as a genuine alternative to the Bretton Woods system.
Source: [The Hindu]

Adapting Cooling Policy to India's AI Ambitions

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure **Introduction**

India's rapid AI expansion is driving large-scale growth of hyperscale data centres, but their high heat generation creates a parallel cooling challenge. Cooling now affects **electricity demand, water use, grid stability and infrastructure costs**. The **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)** provides an important base, but it must evolve to address AI-driven cooling requirements while supporting sustainable and efficient digital infrastructure.

India's Rapid AI Infrastructure Expansion

1. **Rapid data-centre growth:** India's data-centre capacity is projected to exceed **12 GW by 2030**, rising sharply from around **1.5 GW in 2025**.
2. **Rising electricity requirement:** Data centres could require around **26.3 GW of electricity by 2031–32**, equal to nearly **6.7% of projected national consumption**.
3. **Higher AI rack density:** Traditional racks used **5–15 kW**, while modern AI racks can exceed **120 kW**, sharply increasing heat removal requirements.
4. **Rapid GPU power growth:** GPU power has risen from about **700W in 2022** to around **1,200W**, making conventional cooling increasingly inadequate.
5. **Cooling as a major energy load:** Cooling can consume **30–50% of data-centre electricity**, making efficient thermal management essential for expanding computing capacity.
6. **AI workload expansion:** AI workloads are expected to drive at least **75% of future Indian data-centre growth**, making cooling capacity central to digital expansion.

Emerging Challenges: Energy, Water and Infrastructure Pressures

1. **Persistent water demand:** Even advanced cooling systems that reduce water use cannot eliminate cooling-related water requirements, creating pressure in water-stressed regions.
2. **Round-the-clock electricity demand:** Data centres operate continuously, while solar generation falls after sunset, creating a need for **firm power** to support uninterrupted AI workloads.

3. **Competing cooling demand:** India is expected to add **130–150 million room air conditioners between 2025 and 2035**, increasing household cooling demand alongside AI data-centre requirements.

4. **Peak grid pressure:** Extreme heat can sharply increase cooling demand, creating additional stress on electricity systems when both data centres and households require reliable power.

5. **Unequal cooling burden:** Poor households can spend up to **8% of their income on cooling electricity**, compared with **0.2–2.5% for high-income households**, making cooling efficiency an equity issue.

6. **Regional resource pressure:** Rapid AI infrastructure growth can intensify local pressure on **electricity and water resources**, especially in urban regions already facing scarcity.

Why India's Existing Cooling Policy Needs to Evolve

1. **ICAP's existing framework:** The **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)**, introduced in 2019, provides a 20-year roadmap for sustainable cooling across buildings, cold chains, refrigeration and transport.

2. **Existing policy targets:** ICAP aims to reduce **cooling demand by 20–25%** and **cooling energy requirements by 25–40% by 2037–38**, providing a broad base for sustainable cooling.

3. **AI-era policy gap:** ICAP was formulated before hyperscale AI infrastructure became significant, so **AI data centres were not recognised as a distinct cooling sector**.

4. **Higher cooling intensity:** AI workloads use high-density GPUs that generate much more heat than conventional computing, requiring advanced cooling systems beyond ICAP's traditional applications.

5. **Need for sector-specific standards:** Future cooling policy should set **Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE), cooling-efficiency and water-efficiency benchmarks** for AI data centres.

6. **Climate and resource alignment:** AI expansion needs to follow the **"People, Planet and Progress"** approach by balancing computing growth with energy security and environmental sustainability.

Emerging Solutions: Efficient Technologies and Integrated Planning

1. **Direct-to-chip cooling: Direct-to-Chip (D2C) liquid cooling** removes heat directly from high-power chips and is more efficient than conventional air-based cooling.

2. **Immersion cooling for high-density AI:** Immersion cooling places computing equipment in a cooling liquid, allowing high-power AI servers to manage heat more efficiently than conventional air cooling.

3. **Heat recovery:** Recovering waste heat from data centres can improve resource efficiency and extend ICAP's focus on sustainable cooling technologies.

4. **Water-efficient cooling:** Data centres can use different grades of water, including lower-quality water where suitable, reducing dependence on high-quality freshwater resources.

5. **Efficient infrastructure design:** New AI campuses should be designed around **100 kW-plus rack densities, liquid cooling and renewable-powered infrastructure** rather than retrofitting older facilities.

6. **Geographic resource matching:** Data-centre locations should consider regional availability of **renewable energy, water, land, climate conditions and grid capacity**.

7. **City-level planning:** ICAP's implementation across **250 Indian cities** provides a base for linking cooling planning with geographic decisions on future AI-centre locations.

Way Forward

1. **Make data centres an ICAP sector:** Future versions of ICAP should explicitly recognise hyperscale data centres and define cooling requirements for AI infrastructure.

2. **Link AI with firm clean power:** Long-term renewable energy combined with storage can help meet data centres' continuous demand while reducing pressure on the wider electricity system.

3. **Strengthen cooling standards:** Minimum efficiency standards should cover cooling systems, PUE and water use so that digital infrastructure expands without unnecessary resource consumption.

4. **Support indigenous innovation:** Indian companies should develop cooling solutions suited to local conditions instead of depending entirely on imported technologies designed for different markets.

5. **Improve distribution capacity:** Stronger distribution companies are needed to support grid upgrades and reliable power delivery as AI and household cooling loads increase.

6. **Use private investment strategically:** Creditworthy data-centre operators can provide long-term demand that helps finance **renewable energy and storage projects** benefiting wider electricity users.

7. **Coordinate public and private action:** Government should set standards and de-risk infrastructure, while investors and innovators take risks on new cooling and energy technologies.

Conclusion

India's AI ambitions require not only more computing capacity but also efficient management of the heat, electricity and water that support it. Updating **ICAP** to recognise AI data centres, promoting efficient cooling and planning infrastructure around regional resources can reduce future pressures. India must therefore align **AI growth, sustainable cooling and reliable power** to build a competitive and resource-efficient digital economy.

Question for practice:

Discuss the need to adapt India's cooling policy to support its growing AI and data-centre infrastructure sustainably.

Source: [Businessline]

At BRICS, India must bank on the NDB

Source: The post **"At BRICS, India must bank on the NDB"** has been created based on **"At BRICS, India must bank on the NDB"** published in "The Hindu" on 14th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- International Relations

Context: BRICS has expanded significantly in recent years. While its members accounted for **20% of global GDP and 11% of IMF voting share in 2011**, the expanded grouping today represents nearly **40% of global GDP and 55% of the world's population**, without a comparable increase in IMF voting share.

Challenges within BRICS

1. Lack of Common Geopolitical Identity: Members differ on the nature of BRICS, with some favouring an **anti-West orientation**, while countries such as India, Brazil and South Africa prefer to view it as **non-West rather than anti-West**.

2. Risk of Strengthening China: India needs to maximise BRICS' potential without strengthening **Beijing's overall strategic position**.

3. Problem of De-dollarisation: India cannot fully support the **Beijing-Moscow de-dollarisation push**, particularly given the importance of India-U.S. relations and existing strains in bilateral ties.

New Development Bank as an Opportunity

1. Tangible BRICS Institution: The **NDB**, established in 2015, is one of BRICS' most concrete economic instruments, created to finance **infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in emerging and developing economies.

2. Limited Scale of Operations: Despite a decade of existence, the NDB has approved only **139 projects worth around $43 billion**, with only about **$20 billion disbursed**.

3. Comparison with AIIB: The **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** has 111 approved members and committed around **$69 billion across 350 projects**, supported by a AAA credit rating, showing the NDB's relatively limited scale.

4. Importance for India: The NDB has already benefited India through commitments of nearly **$10 billion across 32 projects**, including metro systems and the **Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor.**

Concerns Regarding the NDB

1. Capital Constraints: Increasing paid-up capital is difficult because some founding members, particularly **Russia**, face severe financial and geopolitical constraints.

2. Impact of Sanctions: Sanctions have affected the NDB's credit standing and dollar funding costs. The bank has provided **no new credit to Russia since March 2022** to protect its AA/AA+ credit rating.

3. Voting Structure: Equal voting shares among the founding members make capital expansion difficult, while new members can be admitted only if the founders' collective voting share remains at least **55%.**

4. Uneven Local-Currency Lending: Although the NDB has committed to increasing local-currency lending, such lending is heavily skewed towards the **Renminbi**, including the recent issuance of a **¥7 billion Panda bond**.

Way Forward for India

1. Strengthen NDB Capital: India should push for greater **capitalisation and membership expansion** of the NDB to increase its lending capacity and reach more developing countries.

2. Promote Rupee Bond: India should push the NDB to complete its **long-delayed rupee bond**, with the bank already planning a rupee bond programme of around **₹25,000 crore over five years**.

3. Expand Local-Currency Lending: India should promote wider use of **member countries' local currencies** in NDB lending and borrowing. This can reduce dependence on the dollar without seeking to replace it as the principal currency for trade invoicing.

4. Diversify Local-Currency Financing: India should ensure that local-currency financing does not become excessively concentrated in the **Renminbi**, thereby maintaining greater balance within the NDB.

5. Make NDB Comparable to Other Multilateral Banks: The NDB should expand its operations to reach more **emerging markets and developing countries**, making it comparable with other major multilateral development lenders.

Conclusion: BRICS need not become an **anti-Western bloc** to remain relevant. By strengthening the **NDB through greater capital, wider membership and diversified local-currency lending**, India can promote development-oriented multilateralism while avoiding excessive dependence on either the **dollar or Chinese-led financial mechanisms**. This can help BRICS emerge as a more effective economic grouping without compromising India's strategic autonomy.
Source: The Hindu

How new rules are set to change your online shopping experience

Source: The post **"How new rules are set to change your online shopping experience"** has been created based on **"How new rules are set to change your online shopping experience"** published in "Indian Express" on 14th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: The rapid growth of e-commerce has created new consumer concerns such as misleading discounts, manipulated search results, hidden charges, dark patterns and misuse of consumer data. To address these issues, the **Department of Consumer Affairs** has amended the **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020** through the **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026**. The new rules will come into force on **January 1, 2027**.

Key Amendments

1. Greater Price Transparency: Whenever a price reduction is announced, platforms must display both the reduced price and the **prior price**, defined as the lowest price at which the product was offered during the preceding **30 days.**

2. Fair Search Results: E-commerce platforms cannot manipulate search results in a manner that **misleads consumers or reduces the relevance of results** to their search query.

3. Clear Disclosure of Sponsored Listings: Paid or sponsored products must be identified through **clear and prominent disclosures**, enabling consumers to distinguish advertisements from genuine search results.

4. Regulation of Dark Patterns: Platforms must comply with the **2023 Guidelines on Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns**, conduct a **yearly self-audit** and prominently display a certificate of compliance. Dark patterns include false urgency, basket sneaking, subscription traps, drip pricing and disguised advertisements.

5. Strengthened Consumer Grievance Redressal: Every e-commerce entity must provide the complainant with a **copy of the complaint recorded by its grievance officer.**

6. Integration with National Consumer Helpline: Every e-commerce entity must become a partner in the convergence process of the **National Consumer Helpline (NCH)**. This is significant as **5,11,196 out of 17,71,622 NCH grievances in 2025 were related to e-commerce**, accounting for around **29%**.

7. Better Seller and Product Information: Platforms must provide information such as **best-before/use-before dates, return and refund policies, warranty, delivery and payment details**, enabling informed purchasing decisions.

8. Protection of Consumer Information: Consumer information cannot be used for specified purposes without **express and affirmative consent.**

9. Regulation of Bundled Fees: Platforms cannot impose **bundled fees for services unrelated to the e-commerce platform**, except for the specified loyalty or membership programme provision.

10. Disclosure for Imported Goods: For imported products, platforms must disclose the **importer's details and country of origin**.

Significance

1. Protects Consumer Interests: The amendments seek to protect consumers from **misleading practices, hidden costs and manipulative digital interfaces**.

2. Promotes Transparency: Price, search rankings, sponsored listings and product information become more transparent, helping consumers make **informed choices.**

3. Strengthens Accountability: Self-audits, grievance documentation and integration with the NCH increase the **accountability of e-commerce entities**.

4. Balances Regulation and Ease of Doing Business: The rules aim to create a **transparent and balanced regulatory framework** without imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens on businesses.

Potential Impact

1. Greater Consumer Empowerment: Consumers will be able to make **better-informed purchasing decisions** because of clearer information on prices, sellers, products and advertisements.

2. Reduction in Misleading Practices: Regulation of **fake discounts, dark patterns, manipulated search rankings and hidden charges** can reduce unfair trade practices.

3. Stronger Accountability: Mandatory complaint records, annual self-audits and NCH integration will make platforms **more accountable to consumers**.

4. Better Data Protection: The requirement of **affirmative consent** can provide consumers greater control over the commercial use of their information.

5. Improved Trust in E-Commerce: Greater transparency can increase **consumer confidence and trust** in digital marketplaces.

6. Level Playing Field for Businesses: Common disclosure and transparency requirements can create a **more balanced regulatory environment** for businesses operating in the digital marketplace.

7. Compliance Burden on Platforms: At the same time, e-commerce entities may face **additional compliance, auditing and disclosure requirements**, particularly smaller businesses and platforms

Conclusion: The **2026 amendments** strengthen the existing consumer-protection framework in response to evolving digital business practices. By combining **transparency, accountability, fair business practices, data-consent safeguards and stronger grievance redressal**, the rules seek to create a more **consumer-centric and trustworthy e-commerce ecosystem** while supporting innovation and Ease of Doing Business.

Question: The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026 seek to make India's digital marketplace more transparent and consumer-centric. Discuss the key provisions and their significance.

Source: **Indian Express and PIB**

Terror's changing face, India's counter-terror strategy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Security

Introduction

The **9/11 attacks** marked a major shift in global counter-terrorism and changed how states responded to terrorist threats. Terrorism has since become more **decentralised, technology-driven and difficult to detect**. India has faced this changing threat along with persistent cross-border terrorism and internal security gaps. Since **2014**, India has moved from reactive restraint towards **zero tolerance, proactive deterrence, stronger institutions, intelligence-led prevention and international cooperation**.

Evolution of the Terrorism Threat

1. **Decentralised networks:** Terrorism has shifted from large organisations under central leaders to **smaller, autonomous entities**, making detection and prevention more difficult.
2. **Lone-wolf attacks:** Individuals can now carry out attacks with limited organisational support, creating new challenges for conventional intelligence methods.
3. **Technology as a terror tool: Drones, cyber capabilities and artificial intelligence** are increasingly being used by terrorist groups for new forms of attacks.
4. **Digital recruitment:** Social media, encrypted platforms and the dark web are being used for **propaganda, recruitment, financing and coordination**.
5. **Rise of self-radicalisation:** ISIS created new risks through online extremist propaganda and recruitment of individuals capable of conducting low-intensity attacks.
6. **Changing financing methods:** Terrorist networks increasingly use **hawala, cryptocurrencies and concealed financial channels**, requiring stronger financial intelligence.

India's Early Struggle with Terrorism

1. **Kashmir challenge:** Cross-border terrorism expanded in **Kashmir during the early 1990s**, while India lacked a clearly defined comprehensive counter-terror strategy.
2. **Terror beyond Kashmir:** The **1991 Rajiv Gandhi assassination** showed that India also faced terrorism from organisations operating beyond its immediate conflict zones.
3. **Internal security gaps:** The **1993 Mumbai blasts**, which killed over 250 people in 13 coordinated explosions, exposed weaknesses in terror detection.
4. **Further urban attacks:** The **1998 Coimbatore blasts** showed that terrorist groups could conduct coordinated attacks in different parts of the country.
5. **Pakistan-based networks:** The **1999 IC-814 hijacking** exposed the direct role of Pakistan-based terrorists and forced India to release terrorists including Masood Azhar.
6. **Parliament attack:** The **2001 Parliament attack** triggered Operation Parakram, but nuclear escalation prevented direct military punishment of Pakistan.
7. **Continued attacks:** Attacks in **Akshardham, Varanasi, Pune and Delhi**, followed by 26/11, demonstrated the continuing threat despite security responses.
8. **Reactive approach:** India largely relied on **warnings, diplomatic pressure and restraint**, even when evidence linked attacks to Pakistan-based networks.

Turning Point: From Restraint to Decisive Action

1. **Policy change after 2014:** The government formed in **May 2014** adopted a **zero-tolerance approach**, seeking to dismantle the wider terror ecosystem rather than merely respond to attacks.

2. **Surgical strikes:** After the **2016 Uri attack**, India conducted cross-border strikes on September 28–29, establishing a new willingness to impose costs.

3. **Pre-emptive deterrence:** The Uri response showed that India was prepared to target terrorists before they could infiltrate and attack Indian territory.

4. **Balakot operation:** Following the **2019 Pulwama attack**, the IAF struck a JeM camp at Balakot, crossing Pakistani airspace for the first time in such an operation.

5. **Operation Sindoor:** After the **2025 Pahalgam attack**, India struck LeT and JeM leadership and headquarters and Pakistani military assets.

6. **Act-of-war position:** India declared that future **cross-border terrorism from Pakistan would be treated as an "act of war"**.

7. **Nuclear restraint rejected:** India also stated that Pakistan's nuclear capability would no longer prevent it from responding to terrorism.

8. **Strategic doctrine:** The approach shifted from **managing terrorism to imposing direct costs on its sponsors, networks and infrastructure**.

India's Comprehensive Counter-Terror Framework

1. **UAPA empowerment:** The **2019 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) amendment** allowed individuals to be designated as terrorists and strengthened investigative powers against terrorist organisations.

2. **Expanded NIA mandate:** The **2019 National Investigation Agency (NIA) amendment** expanded investigation powers over terrorism, cyber terrorism and offences outside India affecting Indian interests.

3. **BNS reform:** The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**, effective from July 2024, formally defines terrorist acts and provides stringent punishment.

4. **NIA capacity:** NIA's budget rose from **₹91.32 crore in 2014–15 to ₹394.66 crore in 2024–25**, alongside expanded branches, special courts and training.

5. **Integrated intelligence:** The **MAC-SMAC (Multi-Agency Centre- Subsidiary Multi-Agency Centre) system** enables real-time intelligence sharing among central and state security agencies.

6. **Data integration: NATGRID and CCTNS** (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems) connect multiple databases and agencies, helping identify suspects, terror networks and financing trails.

7. **Technology-driven response: CyMAC (Cyber Multi-Agency Centre), CCTNS 2.0 and AI-enabled analytical systems** have strengthened cyber monitoring and threat detection.

8. **Terror-financing action: PMLA** (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) mechanisms and specialised efforts have strengthened the tracing, freezing and confiscation of terror-linked assets.

9. **PRAHAAR framework: PRAHAAR, launched in February 2026**, consolidates prevention, rapid response, whole-of-government coordination and whole-of-society participation.

International Counter-Terrorism and Strategic Cooperation

1. **Global financial cooperation:** India has strengthened coordination with **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** and created the Combating Financing of Terrorism Cell to disrupt terrorist funding.
2. **No Money for Terror(NMFT) :** India hosted the **third NMFT Ministerial Conference in November 2022**, focusing on financial intelligence, legislation and international cooperation.
3. **CCIT advocacy:** India continues to seek adoption of the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)**, first proposed at the UN in 1996.
4. **UN designation:** India secured the **UN designation of Masood Azhar in May 2019**, enabling international travel restrictions, asset freezes and arms embargoes.
5. **Tahawwur Rana extradition: Rana's extradition in April 2025** strengthened India's ability to investigate the wider 26/11 conspiracy.
6. **Counter-terror partnerships:** India has Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism with **27 countries and five multilateral forums**, including SCO, BRICS, BIMSTEC, EU and QUAD.
7. **INTERPOL coordination: BHARATPOL**, launched in January 2025, connects Indian law-enforcement authorities with the CBI's INTERPOL coordination system.
8. **Diplomatic pressure:** India has used international forums to raise the cost for states and organisations that provide **safe havens, support or financing to terrorists**.

Outcomes of the Counter-Terrorism Transformation

1. **Fewer terror incidents:** Terrorist incidents declined from **7,217 during 2004–2014 to 2,242 during 2014–2024**, showing a major improvement in the security environment.
2. **Sharp Kashmir decline:** Terrorist-initiated incidents fell from **228 in 2018 to 12 in 2025**, reflecting stronger preventive and operational capabilities.
3. **Lower civilian deaths:** Civilian casualties declined from **55 in 2018 to 28 in 2025**, while security-force fatalities fell from 91 to 16.
4. **Reduced stone-pelting:** Organised stone-pelting fell by **over 87%** from its 2010–2014 average and remained near-zero since 2022.
5. **Return of normalcy:** Organised strikes and shutdowns declined from **52 in 2018 to zero from 2023 through April 2026**.
6. **Development momentum:** Improved security conditions supported development in Jammu and Kashmir, with **63 major projects worth about ₹80,000 crore approved; over ₹51,000 crore invested and 53 projects completed**.

7. **Economic revival:** Jammu and Kashmir recorded **over 2.3 crore tourist arrivals in 2024**, alongside increased investment and employment.

8. **Public confidence:** The combined gains in security, development and normal public life strengthened **Vishwas, Vikas and Jan-Kalyan**.

9. **Preventive success:** Intelligence-led operations and stronger coordination helped foil multiple ISIS-inspired plots and maintain very low levels of hinterland terrorism.

Way Forward

1. **Eliminate remaining networks:** Security agencies should continue dismantling the remnants of terrorist networks, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir.

2. **Prevent infiltration:** India should use intelligence capabilities and operational experience to take **pre-emptive action against emerging threats and launch pads**.

3. **Strengthen intelligence:** Real-time information sharing among central, state and field agencies should remain central to preventing terrorist attacks.

4. **Expand de-radicalisation:** A nationwide programme should bring vulnerable youth into the mainstream and reduce the appeal of terrorist organisations.

5. **Disrupt terror financing:** India should continue tracing and blocking **hawala, cryptocurrency and other financial channels** used by terrorist networks.

6. **Counter emerging technologies:** Security agencies must continuously adapt to the use of **drones, cyber tools, encrypted communication and AI** by terrorists.

7. **Deepen international cooperation:** India should strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation against terrorist financing, safe havens and cross-border networks.

Conclusion

India's counter-terrorism journey has moved from **reactive restraint to proactive deterrence and a comprehensive security architecture**. Stronger laws, institutions, intelligence systems, technology and international cooperation have reduced terrorist violence and improved public security. However, terrorism continues to evolve through new networks, technologies and financing methods. India therefore needs to remain **adaptive, intelligence-led and coordinated** while continuously dismantling terrorist networks and their support systems.

Question for practice:

Discuss the changing nature of terrorism and the evolution of India's counter-terrorism strategy since 9/11.
Source: The Hindu; PIB

The Evidence Gap in Dole Politics

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

Introduction

Dole politics refers to recurring **cash transfers, subsidies and free services** used to provide immediate welfare support. In India's poor and informal economy, such support can help households facing unstable incomes. However, the growing use of these measures creates concerns about **fiscal sustainability, targeting and their impact on public goods**. The key gap is the lack of clear evidence on **who benefits, what changes, and whether these schemes create lasting welfare gains**.

Rise of Dole Politics in India

1. **Election promises and implementation:** Election promises often become difficult to fulfil because they require **public money, administrative capacity, public acceptance and changes in existing priorities**.
2. **Complete policy cycle:** A welfare promise requires **agenda setting, consultation, policy formulation, resource mobilisation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and correction**, rather than only announcing a scheme.
3. **Growing welfare commitments:** Dole politics now includes **monthly cash transfers, free electricity, free bus travel, subsidised food and utility subsidies** across States.
4. **Expansion of women's transfers:** Unconditional cash transfers to women increased from **two States in 2022-23 to 12 States in 2025-26**, showing their growing role in welfare policy.
5. **Growing fiscal scale:** States were estimated to spend ₹**1.68 lakh crore**, about **0.5% of GDP**, on unconditional cash transfers to women in 2025-26.
6. **Major State commitments:** West Bengal budgeted ₹**36,000 crore**, Tamil Nadu ₹**14,412 crore**, and Assam ₹**5,000 crore**for major women-focused transfer schemes.

Major Gains of Dole Politics in India

1. **Significant income support:** Transfers form **11–24% of monthly income for women daily-wage workers and 11–87% for self-employed women**, showing their importance for vulnerable households.
2. **Immediate financial relief:** Cash assistance helps poor households manage **unstable incomes and immediate financial needs**, especially in an informal economy.
3. **Support for vulnerable households:** Transfers can soften financial pressures faced by households when regular income is uncertain or insufficient.
4. **Support for women:** Women-focused transfers provide direct financial assistance and can strengthen their control over household expenditure, making the design of such schemes socially important.

Concerns with Dole Politics in India

1. **Permanent fiscal commitments:** A transfer that begins as relief can become a **long-term expenditure commitment** when governments do not review its continuing cost and purpose.

2. **Pressure on public priorities:** Large recurring transfers can compete with spending on **health centres, childcare, government schools and better employment opportunities**, which provide more durable welfare.

3. **Unclear targeting:** Governments need to establish **who should receive benefits, what baseline data supports eligibility, and whether schemes should be targeted or universal.**

4. **Weak outcome assessment:** Governments often do not clearly show how transfers are expected to affect **consumption, debt, nutrition, schooling, health spending, labour supply or women's bargaining power**.

5. **Lack of expenditure data:** An ADB study prepared for the **16th Finance Commission** found that India lacks a systematic dataset on government expenditure on cash-transfer schemes.

6. **Risk of unemployment traps:** Poorly designed unemployment benefits may reduce incentives to seek work and leave people dependent on support without escaping poverty.

7. **Duplication and exclusion:** Multiple schemes may provide several benefits to one family while others remain excluded, weakening the fairness and purpose of welfare delivery.

8. **Weak policy consultation:** Policies developed without involving beneficiaries and other stakeholders may be economically sustainable but fail to reflect user needs and gain wider acceptance.

Way Forward: Towards Evidence-Based Welfare

1. **Pre-rollout welfare assessment:** Every large recurring transfer should specify its **objective, eligibility, expected coverage, five-year fiscal cost, alternatives, leakage and exclusion errors** before implementation.

2. **Wider stakeholder consultation:** Governments should consult **beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders** and consider the social benefits and costs before finalising major welfare policies.

3. **Beneficiary participation:** People affected by a policy should have a role in its design so that programmes reflect actual needs and remain acceptable to beneficiaries.

4. **Stronger delivery institutions:** Governments should build delivery capacity and ensure **transparent implementation, efficient service delivery, monitoring and evaluation**.

5. **Outcome-based evaluation:** Household surveys should measure changes in **consumption, debt, health spending, schooling, mobility, work incentives, household expenditure control and well-being.**

6. **Independent scrutiny: Anonymised microdata** should be made available for independent research to assess whether welfare schemes achieve their stated objectives.

7. **Better scheme coordination:** Welfare programmes should be linked with other policies to prevent **duplication and multiplicity of benefits**, while ensuring that deserving households are not excluded.

8. **Better political commitments:** Political parties should prioritise **transparent services, citizen participation, community audits, public mobility, disaster protection and individual rights**, rather than relying mainly on dole promises.

Conclusion

Cash transfers can provide important support in a poor and informal economy. However, recurring welfare commitments need **clear objectives, fiscal assessment and measurable outcomes**. Better monitoring and independent evaluation can help governments identify what works and correct weak schemes. This can make welfare spending more **effective, transparent and accountable.**

Question for practice:
Evaluate the benefits and concerns of dole politics in India and suggest measures to make welfare schemes more evidence-based and accountable.
Source: [The Hindu]

EVM totalisers protect both votes and voters

Source: The post **"EVM totalisers protect both votes and voters"** has been created based on **"EVM totalisers protect both votes and voters"** published in "Hindustan Times" on 15th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity & Governance

Context: The Supreme Court sought the Centre's response on the use of **EVM totalisers as a "fall-back option"** in elections. The issue is significant for strengthening the **secrecy of the ballot and ensuring free and fair elections**, as booth-wise results can potentially reveal the voting preferences of particular areas.

Introduction

The right to vote is a fundamental pillar of electoral democracy. However, free and fair elections require not only the freedom to cast a vote but also protection from intimidation, coercion and consequences arising from the choice made by a voter.

Significance of EVM Totaliser

1. **Protection of the secret ballot:** The secret ballot is an essential component of free and fair elections because voters should be able to choose their representatives without fear of consequences.
2. **Prevents identification of booth-wise voting patterns:** A totaliser machine cumulatively counts votes from multiple booths rather than displaying the results of individual booths.

3. **Protects voters from political reprisals:** Booth-wise results combined with modern data analysis can reveal voting patterns at an aggregate level. This may enable political actors to identify areas that voted against them. A totaliser can reduce this possibility.
4. **Reduces fear and coercion:** Political representatives can potentially influence the allocation of developmental works. The source notes that roads, electricity and other developmental benefits could be denied to groups perceived as having voted against a representative.
5. **Protects genuine voter choice:** Fear of reprisals may encourage voters to support the candidate whom they believe is more likely to win rather than the candidate they genuinely prefer. Protecting ballot secrecy therefore helps voters exercise their choice freely.
6. **Strengthens democratic representation:** When voters are protected from post-election consequences, the relationship between voters and representatives can remain closer to a representative-constituent relationship rather than becoming a patron-client relationship.
7. **Provides an additional safeguard in the EVM era:** The totaliser performs a function similar to scrambling physical ballots before counting, a practice used earlier to prevent the identification of voting patterns.

Challenges

1. **The use of totaliser machines has remained under judicial consideration.** Public interest litigation seeking their mandatory use has been pending before the Supreme Court for the last 12 years.
2. **Political parties may lack the necessary political will to introduce totaliser machines.** This makes judicial intervention important for strengthening the secrecy of voting patterns.
3. **Modern data analysis can potentially reveal voting patterns even when the ballot remains formally secret.** Booth-wise counting can make it possible to identify how particular areas or groups have voted.
4. **Voters may face the fear of reprisals for voting against a particular candidate or political party.** Such fear can influence voters to support the candidate whom they believe is more likely to win rather than the candidate they genuinely prefer.

Way Forward

1. **Totaliser machines should be used to cumulatively count votes from multiple booths.** This can make it difficult to identify the voting pattern of individual booths and thereby strengthen ballot secrecy.
2. **The electoral system should protect voters from the consequences of their electoral choices.** Voters should be able to support the candidate they genuinely prefer without fearing administrative or developmental reprisals.
3. **Judicial intervention can be considered to strengthen the protection of ballot secrecy.** This becomes important when political parties lack sufficient willingness to introduce necessary safeguards.
4. **The secrecy of the ballot should remain meaningful in the age of EVMs.** This is necessary to ensure that free and fair elections provide voters with genuine freedom to choose their representatives.

Conclusion: EVM totalisers can strengthen Indian democracy by ensuring that voters are not only free to cast their votes but are also protected from the consequences of their electoral choices. By safeguarding the secrecy of voting patterns, they can reinforce **free choice, voter security and the integrity of free and fair elections**.

Question: What is the significance of EVM totaliser machines in ensuring free and fair elections in India? Discuss how they can strengthen the principle of secret ballot.

Source: [Hindustan Times]

India must build, not just trade

Source: The post **"India must build, not just trade"** has been created based on **"India must build, not just trade"** published in "The Tribune" on 15th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Context: India's economic engagement with China has witnessed a major transformation. While China used foreign investment and trade as instruments for industrialisation and technological development, India increasingly used them for services and market development. This experience highlights the need for India to focus on **building domestic industrial capabilities rather than merely expanding trade**.

India-China Economic Relationship

1. **India-China trade has changed significantly since 1991.** India's exports to China were less than $1 billion in 1990-91, but bilateral trade had reached around $76 billion by 2011-12.
2. **The nature of trade has remained different for both countries.** China increasingly supplied capital goods and industrial inputs to India, while India mainly exported primary products such as ores and cotton.
3. **China developed a much larger manufacturing base than India.** Since 1991, China's manufacturing sector became about eight times larger, while its high-value product sector became around 50 times larger.
4. **China used foreign direct investment as an instrument of industrialisation.** Foreign investment helped China develop manufacturing, acquire technology and progressively build its own technological capabilities.
5. **India used foreign direct investment differently.** India largely used FDI as an instrument of services and market development rather than as an instrument for building manufacturing capabilities.

Lessons India Can Learn from China

1. **India needs a stronger industrial policy.** The experience of China suggests that economic growth should be accompanied by deliberate efforts to develop domestic industrial capabilities.
2. **India should build technological capabilities.** Instead of remaining dependent on imported technology and industrial inputs, India needs to develop enterprises capable of controlling their own technological development.
3. **Trade policy should support industrial development.** Trade policy should not merely focus on opening markets but should also contribute to building domestic manufacturing and technological capabilities.
4. **India needs to learn from China's use of FDI.** China integrated FDI into its manufacturing sector, whereas India's FDI has been more strongly integrated into services and market development.
5. **India should focus on high-value manufacturing.** The expansion of high-value products and manufacturing capabilities is necessary for India to become a strong economic power.

Challenges

1. **India has developed significant dependence on imported industrial inputs.** This dependence can weaken domestic manufacturing capabilities and make industrial development more difficult.
2. **Past economic policies did not adequately build industrial capabilities.** The article argues that the industrial policy followed after the 1991 reforms did not produce the desired industrial transformation.
3. **India's economic policy has often been influenced by free-market thinking.** The article argues that economic policies under successive governments were influenced by economists associated with US capitalist ideology.
4. **India faces stronger competition from China.** China has developed much greater manufacturing and technological capabilities, making it difficult for India to compete merely through trade.
5. **India needs to create sufficient employment opportunities.** Economic growth must translate into better jobs, incomes and social security for citizens rather than being measured only through GDP growth.

Way Forward

1. **India should align its trade policy with industrial policy.** Trade policy should directly contribute to the development of domestic manufacturing and technological capabilities.
2. **India should use FDI strategically for industrialisation.** Foreign investment should help create manufacturing capabilities, transfer technology and develop domestic enterprises.
3. **India should encourage enterprises to control their own technology.** Building indigenous technological capabilities will help Indian firms become competitive and reduce excessive dependence on foreign technology.
4. **India should develop high-value manufacturing sectors.** Greater emphasis should be placed on sectors that can generate technological capabilities, employment and economic power.
5. **India should pursue a long-term industrial strategy.** The objective of becoming a developed economy by 2047 requires sustained efforts to build competitive industries and technological capabilities.
6. **Economic growth should remain connected with citizens' welfare.** India's economic strategy should focus not only on GDP growth but also on creating jobs, improving incomes and strengthening social security.

Conclusion: China's experience demonstrates that **trade and foreign investment can become powerful instruments of industrialisation when they are integrated with a clear industrial strategy**. India therefore needs to move from an approach focused primarily on trade, services and markets towards one that builds **manufacturing capacity, technological capabilities and globally competitive Indian enterprises**. This will be essential for India to achieve sustainable economic strength and its development goals by 2047.

Question: India's experience with China shows that trade alone cannot ensure economic transformation. Discuss the need for India to focus on industrial capacity and technological development along with trade.

Source: The Tribune

Understanding double deflation: What it does and why it matters

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3 - Indian economy

Introduction

India's **revised GDP series** has brought renewed attention to double deflation as a method for measuring real economic activity. The method separately adjusts output and intermediate consumption for price changes, unlike single deflation. This is important because output and input prices may move differently, affecting real GVA estimates. It also explains why the implicit GVA deflator can move differently from familiar indices such as CPI, WPI and PPI.

Understanding Deflation

1. **Current-price value:** A **nominal value** is measured at the prices prevailing in the current period, so it reflects the value of goods and services at those prices.

2. **Constant-price value:** A **real value** is measured at the prices of a fixed base period, so the effect of price changes is removed.

3. **Meaning of deflation: Deflation is the process of converting nominal values into real values** by adjusting them for changes in prices.

4. **How deflation works:** An appropriate **price index** is used to adjust a nominal value for price changes and obtain its real or volume value.

Single Deflation and Its Limitations

1. **Single Deflation Approach**: Single deflation utilizes a single price index to deflate nominal gross value added estimates into constant price figures.

2. **Price Movement Assumption**: This method assumes that output prices and intermediate input prices move together continuously without any significant divergence.

3. **Divergence Vulnerability**: Single deflation fails when input and output prices diverge sharply, leading to heavily distorted real growth metrics nationwide.

4. **Absence of Input Tracking**: The traditional single index framework completely ignores individual price variations occurring within diverse intermediate goods and industrial production supplies.

5. **Overestimation Risks**: Assuming parallel price movements can artificially inflate national income statistics during periods characterized by highly volatile raw input costs.

6. **Data Simplification Errors**: Relying on one price index simplifies statistical calculations but introduces substantial measurement errors in volatile macroeconomic environments

Double Deflation: Concept and Measurement

1. **Core concept:** Double deflation separately adjusts **output and intermediate consumption** for their respective price changes, removing the assumption that their prices move together.

2. **Output deflation:** Current-price output is adjusted using an appropriate output price index to obtain **real output**.

3. **Intermediate consumption deflation:** Current-price intermediate inputs are separately adjusted using suitable prices for the goods and services used in production.

4. **Real GVA calculation: Real GVA is calculated as real output minus real intermediate consumption**, giving the volume-based value added.

5. **International recognition:** The **UN System of National Accounts** describes real GVA as output in volume terms less intermediate consumption in volume terms, making double deflation internationally recognised.

Data Requirements and Role of Price Indices

1. **Need for detailed data:** Double deflation needs detailed information on both output and intermediate-use items, making it more data-intensive than single deflation.

2. **Inter-industry linkages:** An industry's output can become another industry's input, such as **coal for electricity and manufacturing** or cotton yarn for textiles.

3. **Role of PPI:** Output PPI (Producer Price Index) covers intermediate-use products as well as final-use products, supporting separate deflation of production items and inputs.

4. **Item-level mapping:** In India, output and input items from the latest **Annual Survey of Industries** (**ASI) data are mapped with item-level PPI**, allowing more granular deflation.

5. **Sources of estimates:** Manufacturing estimates use **MCA-21 (Ministry of Corporate Affairs database)** for private corporations, **annual reports** for public corporations, and **ASUSE (Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises)** and **PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey)** for the unincorporated sector.

Concerns and Challenges in Double Deflation

1. **Data availability:** Detailed and timely output and input data are difficult to obtain across all sectors, limiting wider application of double deflation.

2. **Changing input structures:** Input baskets can change because of **technology, imports, quality changes and shifts in sourcing patterns**, affecting price measurement.

3. **Input-mapping difficulties:** Correctly matching input items with suitable price indices is difficult, especially where industries use diverse production inputs.

4. **Sectoral coverage:** Services and sectors lacking suitable producer-price information create additional difficulties in applying double deflation consistently.

5. **PPI limitations:** PPI requires adequate coverage, reliable data, updated weights and changing production information to remain useful for national-accounting purposes.

Benefits and Significance of Double Deflation

1. **Better volume measurement:** Separately deflating output and intermediate consumption gives a more realistic measure of underlying production volumes.

2. **Captures relative prices:** The method directly captures differences between output-price and input-price movements, which single deflation can miss.

3. **Improves GVA estimates:** It provides a better measure of real GVA when input prices and output prices move in different directions.

4. **International comparability:** Double deflation is used for industry-level volume GVA estimation in countries and regions including the **US, Japan, UK, Canada, Australia and Eurozone**.

5. **Better statistical framework:** Richer survey, administrative and price data allow national accounts to measure real economic activity with greater detail and consistency.

India's Approach under the Revised GDP Series

1. **Use in the new GDP series:** The revised GDP series uses **double deflation for agriculture and manufacturing**, while volume extrapolation is used for the remaining sectors.

2. **Manufacturing focus:** Manufacturing has detailed double-deflation estimates because of its **input-intensive nature** and the availability of rich ASI and price data.

3. **Extent of application:** Of **30 manufacturing compilation categories**, double deflation is applied to **28 categories** broadly corresponding to combinations of two- and three-digit NIC industries.

4. **Exceptions: Food products and pharmaceutical products** use volume extrapolation because of difficulties in mapping their input items.

5. **Move towards PPI:** The move towards **PPI** is important because its greater granularity and coverage can better match the valuation principles used in national accounts.

6. **Implicit GVA deflator:** The **implicit GVA deflator** is a measure of the overall price change reflected in GVA, calculated as **Nominal GVA ÷ Real GVA × 100**.

7. **Why it behaves differently:** Under double deflation, output and intermediate consumption are deflated separately, so the implicit GVA deflator depends on their **relative price movements and weights**, rather than on one directly observed GVA price index.

8. **Why it can decline:** If **input prices rise faster than output prices**, real GVA can grow faster than nominal GVA, causing the implicit GVA deflator or its growth rate to decline even when CPI, WPI or PPI are rising.

9. **Why CPI or WPI cannot replace it:** CPI, WPI and PPI have different **coverage and weights**, so nominal GDP growth minus CPI or WPI inflation does not necessarily give real GDP growth.

Conclusion

Double deflation improves the measurement of real economic activity by separately accounting for output and input price movements. Its results may differ from CPI or WPI because the implicit GVA deflator emerges from the national-accounts calculation. Its effectiveness therefore depends on detailed, appropriate and consistent data, making better price and input information central to improving GDP measurement.

Question for practice:

Examine the concept of double deflation, its significance in measuring real GVA, and its application in India's revised GDP series.
Source: Business Standard ; Financial Express

Dedicated freight corridor strengthens the foundation of a faster growing India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

India's rapidly growing economy needs faster, cheaper and more reliable movement of goods. Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) provide separate, high-capacity infrastructure for freight trains, reducing pressure on busy railway routes. Their completion can improve freight speed and reliability, free capacity for passenger services, strengthen links between industries and ports, reduce logistics costs and support a more efficient supply chain. Thus, DFCs are emerging as an important foundation for India's manufacturing, trade and long-term economic growth.

Why India Needed Dedicated Freight Corridors

1. **Congested trunk routes:** Howrah-Delhi and Mumbai-Delhi routes operated at about **115–150% of designed capacity**, delaying both freight and passenger movement.
2. **Shared railway infrastructure:** Freight and passenger trains used the same tracks, limiting available capacity and making goods movement slower and less predictable.
3. **Rising logistics needs:** A larger economy requires efficient movement of raw materials, agricultural produce, manufactured goods and export-import cargo across long distances.
4. **Need for better competitiveness:** High transport delays and costs can weaken Indian manufacturing, making reliable freight movement important for domestic and global markets.
5. **Limited freight efficiency:** Conventional routes faced lower average freight speeds, creating a need for dedicated infrastructure that could handle goods trains more efficiently.
6. **Need for future capacity:** India's long-term growth requires freight infrastructure that can handle rising cargo volumes without putting greater pressure on existing railway routes.

Key Features and Network of India's Dedicated Freight Corridors

1. **Two operational corridors:** The **1,337-km Eastern DFC** runs from New Sahnewal to New Sonnagar, while the **1,506-km Western DFC** connects Dadri with Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT).

2. **Dedicated high-capacity infrastructure:** Separate freight tracks allow goods trains to move with greater speed, throughput and reliability while releasing capacity on conventional railway routes.

3. **Double-stack container operations:** The Western DFC supports **double-stack container trains**, allowing more cargo in one movement and improving long-distance rail freight productivity.

4. **Port and industrial connectivity:** Western DFC links northern industrial centres with JNPT, while Eastern DFC serves major bulk freight flows from the mineral-rich eastern region.

5. **Integrated logistics ecosystem:** DFCs form part of a wider network involving **industrial corridors, logistics parks, warehouses, ports and multimodal transportation** infrastructure.

6. **Proposed expansion:** A proposed **2,052-km Dankuni-Surat Dedicated Freight Corridor** would integrate with the Western DFC and enable smoother movement of goods to ports along the western coast.

Benefits of Dedicated Freight Corridors

1. **Faster freight movement:** Average freight speeds on DFCs are **above 50 kmph**, around twice the average speed on non-DFC routes, improving transit reliability.

2. **Higher freight capacity: More than 400 freight trains operate daily**, while double-stack operations increase cargo moved per train without proportional infrastructure expansion.

3. **Decongestion of conventional routes:** Shifting freight to dedicated tracks creates additional paths for passenger and other services on existing railway lines, improving overall capacity utilisation.

4. **Lower logistics costs:** Rail freight costs about **Rs 1.96 per tonne-km**, compared with around **Rs 4 by road**, supporting cheaper long-distance goods movement.

5. **Stronger supply chains:** Better links among factories, warehouses, logistics hubs, markets and ports help companies manage inventories, shipments and production more efficiently.

6. **Manufacturing and export gains:** Faster port connectivity and predictable transit can reduce logistics costs, expand market access and improve Indian manufacturing and export competitiveness.

7. **Benefits for agriculture:** Reliable long-distance transport can connect agricultural production centres with consumption markets and ports, creating better opportunities for agricultural producers.

8. **Greener freight movement:** Electrified, high-capacity rail can support greater rail use for long-distance freight and contribute to more energy-efficient and lower-emission logistics.

Challenges in Maximising the Potential of DFCs

1. **Weak first- and last-mile links:** Freight corridors need standardised and upgraded feeder connectivity so cargo can efficiently enter and leave dedicated freight routes.

2. **Limited terminal integration:** Gati Shakti terminals and multimodal logistics parks need DFC-grade connectivity to convert railway capacity into seamless cargo movement.
3. **Low rail freight share:** Rail carries only about **20% of India's freight**, while road transport still handles most cargo despite higher estimated transportation costs.
4. **Pricing and service gaps:** Competitive freight pricing, including **Gross Tonne-Kilometre (GTKm)-based models and assured transit slots**, is needed to improve rail's attractiveness for cargo users.
5. **Need for stronger port integration:** Better port-rail links are required to fully use the Western DFC's connection with major western-coast cargo gateways.
6. **Capacity and participation needs:** Further DFC expansion and greater **private-sector participation** are needed to match rising freight demand and improve overall logistics efficiency.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen feeder connectivity:** Upgrade peripheral routes and first- and last-mile links so dedicated freight capacity connects smoothly with production and consumption centres.
2. **Expand multimodal infrastructure:** Develop **Gati Shakti terminals and multimodal logistics parks** with direct, high-quality connectivity to DFC routes and major freight centres.
3. **Improve freight pricing:** Introduce competitive and transparent pricing models across cargo categories to make rail freight more attractive and improve its market share.
4. **Offer reliable freight products:** Assured transit slots and better planning tools can improve delivery certainty while allowing better returns from investments in freight rolling stock.
5. **Increase rail's freight share:** Use DFC capacity to encourage a **shift from road to rail**, especially for long-distance bulk and container cargo.
6. **Integrate ports and logistics networks:** Strengthen port-rail integration, industrial connectivity and private participation to maximise the economic value of completed and future freight corridors.
7. **Expand the DFC network:** Develop proposed freight corridors in line with rising cargo requirements and India's ambition to become a larger manufacturing and export hub.

Conclusion

The Dedicated Freight Corridors can strengthen India's growth by making freight movement faster, more reliable and cost-efficient while freeing capacity on existing railway routes. Their full potential will depend on better feeder links, terminals, pricing, port connectivity and multimodal integration. Expanding the network can further support manufacturing, trade, supply-chain efficiency, competitiveness and India's long-term development ambitions towards 2047.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how Dedicated Freight Corridors can strengthen India's logistics efficiency, economic competitiveness and long-term growth.

Source: DD News; **economictimes**