

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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

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How India can counter the Graham Act

Source: The post “How India can counter the Graham Act” has been created based on “How India can counter the Graham Act” published in “Business Line” on 23rd September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: India faces a dual challenge of **high dependence on Russian crude oil and significant dependence on the US export market**. The Graham Act, which authorises tariffs of up to **100% on the five largest importers of Russian oil and gas**, can therefore create pressure on India’s external sector.

Introduction

Graham act is a U.S. law aimed at increasing economic pressure on **Russia and Iran**. It strengthens sanctions targeting Russia’s **political, financial, energy and commercial networks**. Although it does not specifically name India or China, its provisions can **affect major buyers of Russian energy, including India and China**.

Major Provisions and Their Implications for India

1. **The Act allows the U.S. President to impose tariffs of up to 100% on imports from major purchasers of Russian crude oil or natural gas.** If applied to India, this could make Indian exports such as textiles, electronics and engineering goods more expensive in the U.S. market.
2. **The Act targets Russia’s “Shadow Fleet” and other entities involved in transporting Russian oil and evading sanctions.** This could make the purchase, transportation and insurance of Russian crude more difficult or costly for Indian companies.
3. **The Act provides conditional exemptions for countries that meet specified requirements relating to Russian natural-gas imports.** This may provide some flexibility to countries that are taking significant steps to reduce their dependence on Russian gas.
4. **The Act authorizes tariffs of up to 500% on certain Russian-origin goods.** This is intended to increase economic pressure on Russia and could indirectly affect global trade and energy markets.

India’s major vulnerabilities

1. **High dependence on Russian crude:** India imports over **88% of its crude oil**. In July 2026, Russia accounted for **51.1% of India’s crude imports**, worth \$7.27 billion.
2. **Limited diversification so far:** In FY26, India imported **\$40.82 billion of Russian crude**, compared with only **\$9.87 billion of US oil**, showing the continuing dependence on Russia.
3. **Exposure to the US market:** India’s merchandise exports to the US reached **\$87.31 billion in FY26**, accounting for **19.78% of total exports** and generating a bilateral surplus of \$33.86 billion.
4. **Threat to export sectors:** Major exports to the US include **electrical machinery, pharmaceuticals, nuclear reactors, gems and jewellery, and minerals**. Higher tariffs could therefore affect several important sectors.
5. **Pressure on the external account:** India’s merchandise trade deficit widened to **\$86.1 billion in Q1 FY27**. A fall in exports could further widen the deficit and put pressure on the current account.
6. **Oil-price vulnerability:** Brent crude crossed **\$100 per barrel**, while India’s crude basket reached **\$113.91**. The oil and gas import bill rose **36.5% year-on-year to over \$60 billion** during April-August 2026.

7. **Rupee and reserves pressure:** The rupee touched **₹96.84 per dollar**, while foreign-exchange reserves stood at **\$785.7 billion**. However, a substantial part of the recent increase came from a concessional swap window involving over **\$136 billion in borrowed foreign-currency deposits**.

Way Forward

1. **Conclude the India-US bilateral trade agreement quickly** with preferential rather than merely reciprocal tariff arrangements.
2. **Diversify crude sources substantially** to reduce excessive dependence on Russian oil and qualify for the Act's provision relating to significant diversification.
3. **Strengthen genuine foreign-exchange earnings** so that the reserve cushion is supported by sustainable external surpluses rather than borrowing-based inflows.
4. **Diversify export markets** beyond the US to reduce concentration risk and protect Indian exporters from future tariff shocks.
5. **Maintain diplomatic engagement with the US** while pursuing energy diversification rather than relying on Washington's discretion.

Conclusion: India's objective should be to **reduce excessive dependence on any single source of energy or export market**. A combination of energy diversification, a stable India-US trade arrangement, stronger external-sector resilience and wider export markets can enhance India's strategic autonomy.

Question: The increasing dependence of India on Russian crude and the possibility of higher US tariffs pose challenges to India's external sector. In this context, discuss the vulnerabilities created by such dependence and suggest measures India can adopt to safeguard its economic interests.

Source: [Business Line](#)

Cyber resilience in banking sector

Source: The post "Cyber resilience in banking sector" has been created based on "Cyber resilience in banking sector" published in "Business Line" on 24th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: India's banking sector is increasingly dependent on **digital infrastructure, fintechs, technology providers and third-party service providers**. The emergence of AI-enabled and agentic cyberattacks has increased the scale, speed and sophistication of cyber threats, requiring a shift from merely preventing attacks to building **sector-wide cyber resilience**.

Emerging challenges

1. **AI-enabled attacks:** Agentic AI models can autonomously identify vulnerabilities, reducing the time, cost and technical expertise required by attackers.
2. **Expanded attack surface:** Banks are interconnected with **fintechs, NBFCs, technology providers and other third parties**, creating vulnerabilities beyond individual institutions.

3. **Systemic impact:** The 2024 ransomware attack on C Edge Technologies, a core technology provider, temporarily disrupted payment services across about 300 cooperative and rural banks, affecting ATM withdrawals and UPI transactions.
4. **Asymmetric cyber risk:** An attacker needs to exploit only one vulnerability, whereas financial institutions must protect numerous interconnected systems.
5. **Weak AI-risk preparedness:** The RBI's FREE AI Committee Report found that only one-fourth of respondents had formal processes for AI-related incidents or failures. Among 127 entities using AI, only 14% conducted regular audits, 18% maintained audit logs and 14% conducted real-time performance monitoring.
6. **Uneven technological capacity:** Banks, NBFCs and microfinance institutions differ significantly in their technological maturity, operational capacity and financial resources.

Measures to strengthen cyber resilience

1. **Real-time information sharing:** The RBI should operationalise real-time sharing of cyberattack, near-miss and third-party incident information among financial institutions through CSIRT-Fin.
2. **Non-punitive reporting:** Confidential and non-punitive incident reporting can encourage institutions to report vulnerabilities and near-misses, similar to practices in aviation safety.
3. **Create an AI cyber-risk catalogue:** Collective intelligence should be used to develop a common database of AI-enabled cyberattack scenarios, attack vectors, potential impacts and mitigation strategies.
4. **Common resilience standards:** Establish minimum, non-negotiable cybersecurity standards across banking, securities, pensions and insurance, irrespective of institutional size.
5. **Strengthen regulatory frameworks:** The RBI's Model Risk Management guidance and Cybersecurity, Technology: Risk, Resilience and Assurance Framework Directions, 2026 should be implemented effectively, with lessons from incidents, tests and drills continuously incorporated.
6. **Improve basic cyber hygiene:** Strong authentication, access controls, audit logs, continuous monitoring, employee awareness and regular stress testing should remain the foundation of cyber resilience.

Conclusion: AI is changing cyber risk from an institution-specific problem into a sector-wide systemic risk. Therefore, India needs an ecosystem-based approach centred on real-time information sharing, collective intelligence, common resilience standards and continuous learning. The RBI can thereby ensure that financial institutions are not merely prepared to prevent attacks but are capable of withstanding, containing and recovering from them.

Question: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled cyberattacks are creating new vulnerabilities for India's banking and financial sector. Discuss the challenges posed by such attacks and suggest measures to strengthen cyber resilience in the financial sector.

Source: [Business Line](#)

Quality Control and India's Manufacturing Growth

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

India is seeking to expand manufacturing, deepen global value-chain integration and improve the competitiveness of Indian firms. Quality Control Orders (QCOs) have become an important regulatory tool for improving product safety, reliability and manufacturing standards. However, their rapid expansion has also raised concerns about certification costs, input availability, supply-chain disruptions and MSME viability. The policy challenge is therefore to maintain quality standards while ensuring that regulation does not weaken manufacturing scale, efficiency, value addition and international competitiveness.

Evolution of QCOs: From Quality Assurance to Industrial Regulation

1. **Meaning:** A **Quality Control Order (QCO)** is a government order that makes compliance with specified **Indian Standards mandatory** for selected products.
2. **Purpose:** QCOs aim to ensure **product safety, performance and reliability**, while protecting consumers and improving manufacturing quality.
3. **Legal foundation:** QCOs were introduced under the **BIS Act, 2016** to ensure safety, performance and reliability of products sold in India.
4. **Rapid expansion:** QCO coverage increased sharply from **88 products in 2019 to 765 products by December 2024**, expanding their industrial significance.
5. **Wider sectoral coverage:** More than **700 QCOs now cover nearly 100 sectors**, including toys, steel, chemicals, textiles, electronics and industrial inputs.
6. **Shift towards industrial policy:** QCOs have moved beyond targeted quality assurance and now influence manufacturing, imports, investment and India's wider industrial strategy.
7. **Protection against low-quality products:** Mandatory standards aim to reduce exposure to low-quality imports while encouraging domestic manufacturers to improve their production practices.

Importance of QCOs for Manufacturing Competitiveness

1. **Consumer protection:** Mandatory standards help ensure that products meet prescribed requirements for **safety, performance and reliability**, protecting consumers from inferior products.
2. **Higher manufacturing quality:** Quality requirements encourage firms to upgrade production practices and improve the reliability of products manufactured for domestic and international markets.
3. **Fairer competition:** Common quality requirements can reduce competition based mainly on inferior standards and encourage manufacturers to compete through better-quality products.
4. **Industrial upgrading:** Stronger standards can support manufacturing improvement by pushing firms towards better production practices and greater attention to product quality.
5. **Global competitiveness:** Indian products need to become safer, more reliable and competitive if India is to expand its presence in international manufacturing markets.

6. **Scale as the wider objective:** For **Viksit Bharat 2047**, quality regulation must improve standards while allowing Indian manufacturing to achieve greater scale, efficiency and competitiveness.

Major Concerns and Challenges of QCOs

1. **Certification burden:** Domestic and foreign producers must obtain BIS certification, which can involve inspections, testing, documentation and procedures that may take several months.
2. **Foreign supplier difficulties:** Overseas manufacturers have raised concerns about limited acceptance of internationally accredited testing reports, creating additional testing costs and approval delays.
3. **Intermediate-input bottlenecks:** Extending QCOs to raw materials and intermediate goods can restrict access to inputs and create disruptions across downstream manufacturing networks.
4. **Steel-sector disruption:** Certification requirements for steel intermediates created uncertainty for importers and downstream manufacturers, while shipments faced compliance difficulties and possible supply shortages.
5. **MSME vulnerability:** Smaller firms face greater pressure because they often have limited compliance capacity and less ability to absorb certification and input costs.
6. **Firm-level impact:** Chemical-using firms faced different outcomes by size, with larger firms seeing **9.6% higher production but 37% lower GVA**, while smaller firms experienced a **47.6% fall in profitability**.

QCOs and India's Global Value-Chain Integration

1. **Input-side exposure:** Chemical products under QCOs increased to **52 by 2024**, while firms exposed to input-side regulation rose from **11.8% in 2019 to 56.6%**.
2. **Downstream linkages:** Chemicals serve industries such as rubber, plastics, pharmaceuticals and electronics, so input regulations can affect several manufacturing sectors.
3. **Investment decisions:** Companies consider regulatory predictability alongside production costs, infrastructure and market size when deciding where to manufacture and source components.
4. **Trade-partner concerns:** During the **WTO's eighth Trade Policy Review in July 2026**, QCOs and other non-tariff barriers were raised by the EU, US, Brazil, China and Indonesia.
5. **Global supply-chain participation:** Efficient and predictable certification systems are important for India's efforts to attract investment, expand exports and become a reliable manufacturing partner.

Government's Recent Response and QCO Reassessment

1. **Slower expansion:** The pace of QCO expansion slowed considerably towards the end of **2025**, reflecting a change in the government's regulatory approach.

2. **Revocation and suspension:** Several QCOs were revoked or suspended, particularly those covering intermediate goods, because of concerns about input availability, costs and supply-chain disruptions.
3. **Pending reassessment:** More than **600 QCO-covered products** still require reassessment, including important inputs used in chemicals, steel, textiles, machinery, electronics, rubber and plastics.
4. **Transition Facilitation Order:** DPIIT notified the **Transition Facilitation (Quality Control) Order, 2026 on June 25, 2026** to ease certification-related regulatory bottlenecks.
5. **Temporary sourcing flexibility:** Eligible firms facing difficulty obtaining BIS Scheme-I certification can temporarily source specified products from **BIS Scheme-II licensed suppliers** in sectors including toys, footwear and air conditioners.
6. **Controlled access:** Firms can use the transition mechanism only after meeting prescribed eligibility conditions and receiving approval from a committee constituted by DPIIT.

Way Forward

1. **Prioritise intermediate goods:** The next phase of QCO reassessment should focus especially on intermediate inputs because their regulation can affect several downstream manufacturing sectors.
2. **Assess wider effects:** QCOs should be assessed not only for product quality but also for **input availability, costs, competitiveness and domestic value addition**.
3. **Support MSMEs:** Smaller firms need dedicated assistance to meet certification and compliance requirements and manage the additional costs created by mandatory standards.
4. **Use transition periods:** Appropriate exemptions or transition periods can help firms adjust where immediate compliance creates particularly high costs or supply difficulties.
5. **Improve certification efficiency:** Conformity assessment should avoid unnecessary duplication, particularly where equivalent internationally accepted testing practices are available.
6. **Strengthen predictability:** Regulatory implementation should provide adequate preparation time, clear procedures and administrative readiness so that manufacturers can adjust without sudden disruptions.

Conclusion

India needs strong quality standards, but QCOs must support manufacturing rather than constrain it. Their effectiveness should be assessed through quality improvement alongside input availability, value addition, efficiency and competitiveness. A proportionate and predictable framework, with suitable transition support for MSMEs, can help India strengthen product standards while expanding manufacturing scale and deeper integration into global value chains.

Question for practice:

Examine the role of Quality Control Orders (QCOs) in strengthening India's manufacturing competitiveness while addressing concerns related to costs, supply chains and MSMEs.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Dialogue, not agitation, holds key to Ladakh's political future

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

A year after the September 24 violence in Leh, political dialogue between Ladakh's representatives and the Centre continues on constitutional safeguards, democratic representation, land, jobs, culture and environment. The violence, which killed four people and injured dozens, led to a judicial inquiry. Recent discussions have shown progress towards an elected Union Territory-level body, making the present challenge one of converting political demands into durable institutions through dialogue, consultation and consensus rather than renewed confrontation.

Historical Roots of Ladakh's Political Demands

1. **Historical kingdom:** Ladakh was once an independent kingdom on the Silk Route before Dogra forces incorporated it into Jammu and Kashmir in 1834.
2. **Post-Independence governance:** After 1947, Ladakh's Buddhist and Shia communities were governed from Srinagar, creating a political movement demanding direct rule from Delhi.
3. **Union Territory status:** In 2019, Ladakh became a Union Territory, meeting a major political demand but leaving several other grievances unresolved.
4. **Social diversity:** Ladakh covers **60,000 sq km** and includes Tibetan Buddhists, Baltis, Sunnis, Shias, Noorbakhshis and Christian, Hindu and Sikh minorities.
5. **Regional administration:** Leh and Kargil have remained the main administrative centres, reflecting the region's distinct geographical and social interests.
6. **Decentralised governance:** Five new districts are being developed with elected Hill Development Councils, while panchayat elections are also being prepared to deepen local participation.

Developmental Transformation Since 2019

1. **Connectivity expansion:** Roads now reach remote valleys, while sustained border infrastructure investment has significantly improved connectivity across difficult terrain.
2. **Strategic infrastructure:** The **13-km Zojila Tunnel** is nearing completion and is expected to end Ladakh's winter isolation.
3. **Air connectivity:** Nearly **20 flights** reach Leh daily during summer, while a new airport terminal and a second airstrip at Nubra are being developed.

4. **Digital connectivity:** BharatNet is rapidly expanding telecom connectivity, improving communication access in remote villages across the Union Territory.
5. **Electricity and public services:** Grid expansion is reaching remote villages, while schools and public institutions are being made winter-friendly for local communities.
6. **Water and climate resilience:** Nearly every rural household has piped water, while **Him Sarovars** are being built to store meltwater as glaciers retreat.
7. **Livelihood development:** Government support covers **pashmina, apricot, dairy, floriculture and sea buckthorn**, while tourism is also expanding.

Emerging Constitutional, Administrative and Employment Framework

1. **Proposed UT-level body:** A directly elected UT-level body under **Article 371** is proposed with legislative, executive and financial powers.
2. **Local safeguards:** The proposed framework seeks to protect **land, culture, heritage, environment, natural resources and employment** through constitutional and legislative safeguards.
3. **Electoral representation:** Ladakh's representatives have expressed consensus on direct elections through constituencies for forming the proposed UT-level body.
4. **LAHDC coordination:** Ladakh's representatives are to prepare a draft defining power-sharing and institutional relations between Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) and the proposed UT body.
5. **Employment protection:** Ladakh has **95 per cent reservation of local positions**, while nearly **5,000 young people** have received government employment.
6. **Administrative services:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the creation of the **Ladakh Administrative Service and Ladakh Police Service**, with modalities for their implementation to be worked out.

Other Governance Issues and Remaining Challenges

1. **Nautor land framework:** The draft rules do not envisage monetisation of Nautor land but seek to address tenancy and eligible conversion of tenancy rights into ownership, while regularisation remains with elected Hill Councils.
2. **Land-use concerns:** The proposed framework may address difficulties involving permissible land use and access to institutional finance for landholders.
3. **Religious and institutional land:** Provisions for monastery and religious institution land are being examined, including measures to reduce burdens on small landholders.
4. **Statehood and Sixth Schedule:** Statehood and Sixth Schedule inclusion remain important demands, even as recent discussions increasingly focus on practical constitutional safeguards.

5. **Constitutional process:** Constitutional amendments require **broad political consensus, stakeholder consultation and parliamentary consideration** before safeguards can be formally established.
6. **Internal differences:** Differences within the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) concern the sequencing and implementation of proposed institutions, creating delays in the process.
7. **Post-violence issues:** Withdrawal of cases and compensation for families affected by the September 24 incident remain under consideration by the administration.

Way Forward

1. **Continue dialogue:** The Centre and Ladakh's representatives should sustain negotiations and use emerging consensus to develop workable constitutional and institutional arrangements.
2. **Finalise institutions:** The proposed UT-level body should receive clearly defined powers, electoral arrangements and representation suited to Ladakh's requirements.
3. **Clarify responsibilities:** The relationship between the proposed UT body and LAHDCs should be clearly defined to prevent overlapping administrative responsibilities.
4. **Strengthen local participation:** Recruitment reforms, reservation provisions and dedicated administrative and police services should expand opportunities for Ladakh's youth.
5. **Protect local interests:** The final framework should safeguard **land, jobs, culture, heritage, natural resources and Ladakh's fragile environment**.
6. **Maintain peaceful engagement:** Political differences should be pursued through dialogue, consultation and consensus to avoid renewed tensions and strengthen democratic institutions.

Conclusion

Ladakh's political future depends on converting its demands into durable constitutional and democratic institutions. Continued dialogue can help build consensus on representation, land, jobs, culture and environmental protection. A clear institutional framework, stronger local participation and peaceful consultation can address unresolved concerns while preserving democratic processes and supporting development. The focus should therefore remain on negotiated and sustainable solutions.

Question for practice:

Discuss why sustained political dialogue and institutional reforms are important for addressing Ladakh's political demands and securing its future.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Effect of a wider EPFO net

Source: The post “Effect of a wider EPFO net” has been created based on “Effect of a wider EPFO net” published in “Business Line” on 25th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: The Union Cabinet raised the **mandatory EPFO wage ceiling from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per month on 16 September 2026**, effective from 17 September. The move is expected to bring **more than 51 lakh additional workers** under provident fund, pension and insurance coverage.

Key Implications

1. **Wider social security:** The higher ceiling will extend **PF, pension and insurance protection** to workers earning between ₹15,000 and ₹25,000.
2. **Long-pending revision:** The ceiling had remained unchanged since **September 2014**. The Supreme Court had also directed the Centre and EPFO in January 2026 to consider its revision.
3. **Covers typical salaried workers:** In 2025, average monthly earnings of regular salaried workers were **₹24,217 for men** and **₹18,353 for women**. Thus, the new ceiling covers a significant section of existing salaried workers.
4. **Formalisation of existing jobs:** A worker earning ₹20,000 who was previously outside mandatory EPF coverage will now be automatically covered. **The nature of the job remains unchanged; only its legal and social-security treatment changes.**
5. **Increase in nominal ceiling:** The ceiling has increased by **66.7%** from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000. However, this represents roughly **4.3% annualised growth over 12 years**, below the 2024–25 nominal wage growth of **5.8% for men** and **7.2% for women**.
6. **Government expenditure:** The estimated government outgo is **₹11,339 crore annually** and **₹56,696 crore over five years**, strengthening workers' retirement security.

How it can generate new jobs

1. **EPFO enrolment is an output, not an employment outcome:** An increase in EPFO membership shows that workers have been brought under formal social security. It does **not necessarily show that new jobs have been created**.
2. **Limited share of regular employment:** Regular wage/salaried employment constituted only **23.6% of the workforce in 2025**, although it increased from 22.4% in 2024.
3. **Self-employment remains dominant:** **56.2% of workers were self-employed** in 2025. A large part of this workforce does not have a conventional employer-employee relationship and therefore remains outside EPFO's coverage.
4. **Large existing EPFO base:** EPFO already had **7.98 crore contributing members across 7.68 lakh establishments**. The additional 51 lakh therefore represents an expansion of coverage within the existing wage economy.
5. **Employment absorption remains a challenge:** India's overall unemployment rate was **5% in August 2026**, while urban unemployment was **6.8%**. Since regular salaried employment is concentrated in urban areas, wider EPFO coverage cannot solve the problem of workers who are unable to find regular employment.

Way Forward

1. India needs to combine **social-security expansion with creation of new regular jobs**.
2. Greater emphasis is required on **labour-intensive manufacturing, MSMEs and employment-generating services**.
3. Skill development should be aligned with actual labour-market demand.
4. Employment policy should distinguish between **formalisation of existing jobs and creation of additional jobs**.
5. EPFO enrolment should be assessed along with **new-job creation, employment quality and labour-force absorption**.

Conclusion: The wider EPFO net is an important step towards **formalisation, worker protection and retirement security**. However, **51 lakh additional EPFO enrolments cannot by themselves demonstrate the creation of 51 lakh new jobs**. India therefore needs both **greater protection for existing workers and sustained creation of new regular employment opportunities**.

Question: The expansion of the EPFO coverage can strengthen formalisation and social security, but EPFO enrolment should not be equated with job creation. Discuss.

Source: [Business Line](#)

The next phase of Make in India

Source: The post “**The next phase of Make in India**” has been created based on “**The next phase of Make in India**” published in “**Business Line**” on 25th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: Make in India was launched in **2014** with the objective of making India a major manufacturing hub by promoting production **for India and for the world**. Over the last twelve years, it has evolved from an initiative into a broader manufacturing ecosystem supported by **ease of doing business, infrastructure development, digital and tax reforms, investment, PLI schemes and innovation**.

Achievements of Make in India

1. Improved Ease of Doing Business

- a. India has reduced more than **47,000 compliances** as of November 2025 through simplification, digitisation, decriminalisation and removal of redundant compliances.
- b. The **National Single Window System** has integrated approvals across **32 Central Ministries and 34 States/UTs**, covering more than **686 Central and 7,498 State approvals**.
- c. The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026** has further strengthened trust-based governance by decriminalising **717 provisions** and amending **784 provisions across 79 Central Acts**.

2. Expansion of Infrastructure

- a. The development of **Dedicated Freight Corridors, Industrial Corridors, Sagarmala and Bharatmala** has improved connectivity between production centres and markets.

- b. The expansion of **ports and airports**, along with **PM Gati Shakti**, has **strengthened integrated logistics planning and helped reduce logistics costs**.

3. Digital and Tax Reforms

- a. The introduction of **GST** has created a more integrated national market and facilitated the movement of goods across states.
- b. Platforms such as **ONDC and the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** have strengthened India's digital commerce and logistics infrastructure.
- c. Thus, India's digital public infrastructure is increasingly supporting its physical manufacturing ecosystem.

4. Increase in Foreign Investment

- a. India has liberalised FDI norms in sectors such as **defence, railways, insurance, construction and space**, thereby improving access to global capital, technology and expertise.
- b. FDI inflows increased to **₹49.46 lakh crore during 2014–24**, compared with **₹25.40 lakh crore during the previous decade**.

5. Success of the Production Linked Incentive Scheme

- a. As of June 2026, the **PLI schemes** have attracted **₹2.58 lakh crore in investment**, generated **₹23.79 lakh crore in production and sales**, and contributed to **₹15.53 lakh crore in exports**.
- b. The PLI schemes have also supported more than **14.57 lakh direct and indirect jobs**.
- c. In the electronics sector, production reached **₹13.11 lakh crore in FY 2025–26**, while electronics exports reached **₹4.24 lakh crore**.
- d. In the automobile sector, the Auto PLI scheme has attracted **₹45,477 crore in investment** and generated more than **67,000 jobs**.

6. Development of Semiconductor and Industrial Ecosystem

- a. The **India Semiconductor Mission**, with a recently announced outlay of **₹1.27 lakh crore**, aims to strengthen India's semiconductor ecosystem and deepen the value chain.
- b. The **BHAVYA Scheme**, with an outlay of **₹33,660 crore**, aims to establish **100 world-class industrial parks** during FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31.
- c. These industrial parks can provide common infrastructure and help MSMEs achieve greater scale and competitiveness.

7. Support to MSMEs and Startups

- a. **ECLGS 5.0** aims to facilitate an additional credit flow of **₹2.55 lakh crore**, thereby supporting businesses facing financial pressures.
- b. The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** has facilitated procurement of more than **₹20 lakh crore** through over **three crore orders**.
- c. **Startup India** has enabled more than **2.5 lakh recognised startups**, which have generated over **25 lakh jobs**.
- d. Nearly half of these recognised startups have emerged from **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities**, thereby promoting entrepreneurship beyond major urban centres.

8. Promotion of R&D and Innovation

- a. **The ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund** aims to promote private-sector research, deep-tech development and high-impact innovation.
- b. This initiative can help India move beyond **scale and assembly towards technology-led manufacturing, stronger intellectual property creation and greater domestic value addition.**

9. Greater Global Market Access

- a. India has signed **nine FTAs covering 38 countries in six years**, thereby expanding preferential market access for Indian manufacturers.
- b. These agreements can help Indian companies diversify export destinations, integrate more deeply into **global value chains** and increase production for international markets.

Challenges

1. Limited Domestic Manufacturing Depth

- a. Although India has expanded its final assembly capabilities, it still needs to deepen domestic manufacturing of **components, raw materials, precision parts and capital goods.**
- b. Greater domestic value addition is necessary to make manufacturing more resilient and competitive.

2. Weak Linkages between Large Industries and MSMEs

- a. Stronger linkages between large **Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)** and MSME suppliers are required to develop efficient domestic supply chains.
- b. This can help MSMEs become an integral part of large manufacturing ecosystems.

3. Need for Export-Oriented Manufacturing Clusters

- a. India needs specialised manufacturing clusters equipped with **plug-and-play infrastructure, testing laboratories, logistics facilities and worker housing.**
- b. Such clusters can reduce logistics costs and help Indian manufacturers achieve economies of scale.

4. Technology Gap

- a. Indian manufacturing needs to move beyond **cost competitiveness towards technology competitiveness.**
- b. Greater adoption of **AI, automation and Industry 4.0** is required to improve productivity, quality and efficiency.

5. Limited R&D and Intellectual Property Creation

- a. India needs greater private-sector investment in **research and development, deep technology and innovation.**
- b. Stronger R&D capabilities are essential for developing high-value products and increasing domestic technological capabilities.

6. Under-utilisation of FTAs

- a. Signing FTAs alone cannot ensure higher exports because Indian industries also need to effectively utilise the preferential market access provided by these agreements.
- b. Greater awareness, better standards, quality improvement and stronger export capabilities are therefore required.

7. Difficulty in Technology Adoption by MSMEs

- a. Many MSMEs require greater support to adopt **AI, automation, predictive maintenance, digital twins and AI-based quality control**.
- b. Without wider technology adoption, MSMEs may find it difficult to remain competitive in increasingly technology-driven global markets.

Way Forward

1. Deepen Domestic Value Addition

- a. India should promote domestic production of **components, raw materials, precision parts and capital goods** to reduce dependence on external sources.
- b. Stronger supply-chain linkages should be developed between large industries and MSMEs to increase domestic value addition.

2. Develop Export-Oriented Manufacturing Clusters

- a. India should develop world-class manufacturing clusters with **plug-and-play infrastructure, testing laboratories, logistics facilities and worker housing**.
- b. These clusters should focus on sectors such as **electronics, textiles, auto components, chemicals and engineering**.

3. Continue Trust-Based Governance

- a. India should continue **Non-Financial Regulatory Reforms (NFRR)** and legislative decriminalisation under the **Jan Vishwas framework**.
- b. Regulatory simplification should be accompanied by greater transparency and accountability.

4. Promote Smart Manufacturing

- a. The government should support MSMEs in adopting **AI, automation and Industry 4.0 technologies**.
- b. Shared Industry 4.0 facilities can be developed within manufacturing clusters to make advanced technologies accessible to smaller firms.
- c. Technologies such as **predictive maintenance, digital twins and AI-based quality control** should be encouraged to improve manufacturing efficiency.

5. Build Human Capital for Industry 4.0

- a. Workers should be reskilled and upskilled for **human-machine collaboration**.

- b. Skill-development programmes should be aligned with emerging technologies and the changing requirements of modern manufacturing.

6. Strengthen R&D and Innovation

- a. The **RDI Fund** should be effectively utilised to promote private-sector R&D, deep-tech innovation and intellectual property creation.
- b. The **AI Mission should be linked with manufacturing** to encourage the development of technology-driven production capabilities.

7. Maximise the Benefits of FTAs

- a. Indian industries should be supported in effectively utilising existing FTAs and accessing international markets.
- b. Improvements in **product standards, quality, logistics and export capabilities** can help Indian firms integrate more deeply into global value chains.

Conclusion: Make in India has evolved from a policy initiative into a broader manufacturing ecosystem supported by infrastructure, PLI schemes, digital reforms, investment, startups and innovation. The next phase should focus on deeper domestic value addition, export-oriented clusters, stronger R&D and smarter manufacturing through AI and Industry 4.0. This approach can help India move from being primarily a large-scale assembly and manufacturing destination towards a technology-driven global manufacturing hub.

Question: “Make in India has evolved from an initiative into a national manufacturing mission.” Discuss its major achievements, challenges and the way forward for strengthening India’s manufacturing competitiveness.

Source: [Business Line](#)

Policing the Line Between Publicity and Justice

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Governance

Introduction

Police publicity can support investigations by helping identify persons, trace fugitives and recover missing children. However, photographs of arrested persons can spread rapidly through social media, sometimes before they appear before a magistrate. This raises concerns about **legal authority, privacy, dignity and the presumption of innocence**. The central issue is to distinguish disclosure that serves a genuine investigative need from publicity that presents an accused as guilty before trial.

Why Police Publicity Matters

1. **Public Assistance in Investigation:** Publishing photographs can help police obtain information from citizens when they need identification, witnesses or other investigative leads.
2. **Tracing Wanted Persons:** Photographs and reward notices can help locate wanted persons and fugitives, including those whose trails have gone cold for years.

3. **Recovery of Missing Children:** Public circulation of photographs can assist in identifying and recovering missing children through wider public participation.
4. **Supporting Limited Police Capacity:** Public cooperation can extend police investigative efforts when a **thinly stretched police force** cannot independently reach all potential sources of information.
5. **Crime Prevention and Public Order:** Disclosure can serve legitimate purposes such as **crime prevention, public order and law-and-order requirements** when public assistance is genuinely needed.
6. **Rewards as an Investigative Tool:** Reward announcements can encourage people to provide information about wanted persons and support efforts to trace them.

Existing Legal and Constitutional Framework

1. **No Single Governing Statute:** India has no single statute that expressly permits or prohibits police from publishing photographs of accused persons.
2. **BNSS Proclamation of Absconders: Section 84 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023** allows courts to proclaim absconders and publish proclamations in newspapers after a warrant fails.
3. **Photographs in Court Proclamations:** Section 84 does not expressly mention photographs, but attaching them has become settled practice because photographs can help secure the person's appearance.
4. **Investigation-Stage Disclosure:** Publicity during investigation relies on general investigative powers and established police practices rather than a specific provision expressly authorising social-media publication.
5. **Hue and Cry Notices:** State Police Manuals contain pre-Independence **"Hue and Cry Notice"** provisions whose broad descriptions can plausibly cover photographs and rewards.
6. **Reward Regulations:** State Police Regulations under the **Police Act, 1861** generally govern rewards, with sanctioning authority ranging from the **Station House Officer to the State government**.
7. **Identification Act, 2022:** The **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022** regulates taking, storing and using measurements including photographs, but does not authorise their public circulation.
8. **Article 21 and Presumption of Innocence:** Constitutional protection of **privacy, dignity and reputation**, along with the presumption of innocence, places important limits on how accused persons may be publicly presented.
9. **Emerging Media-Briefing Framework:** The **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)** prepared a draft media-briefing manual in July 2024, and the Supreme Court in January 2026 directed States to evolve appropriate policies.

Judicial Interpretation of Police Publicity

1. Madhya Pradesh High Court:

- **On Article 21:** In *Arun Sharma v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2020)*, the court held that **privacy, reputation and dignity** are protected under Article 21.
- **No Public Display of Accused:** The court found no legal justification for publicly displaying photographs of accused persons, including history-sheeters, even inside police stations.
- **Limits on Executive Instructions:** The court held that police authorities cannot use executive instructions to override fundamental rights without adequate legal authority.
- **Public Shaming as Deterrence:** The court rejected public shaming as a valid deterrent and stressed that criminal justice must respect **human dignity and constitutional values**.

2. Rajasthan High Court:

- **On Humiliation:** The Rajasthan High Court described the public display of arrested persons in degrading circumstances as “**institutional humiliation**”, highlighting the harm caused by such exposure.
- **Presumption of Innocence:** Courts have emphasised that an arrested person remains an **accused, not a convict**, until guilt is established through a fair trial.

3. Supreme Court:

- **On Media Trials:** The Supreme Court has cautioned that selective police disclosures can influence public opinion and contribute to a **media trial**, as police do not determine guilt.
- **On Media Briefings:** In January 2026, the Supreme Court directed States to develop appropriate **police media-briefing policies** based on the Police Manual for Media Briefing prepared by the amicus.

Legal and Constitutional Limits on Police Publicity

1. **Presumption of Innocence:** An arrested person remains an accused until guilt is established through a fair trial, so arrest alone cannot establish criminality.
2. **Article 21 Protection:** **Privacy, dignity and reputation** are protected under Article 21 and remain relevant even when a person is accused of an offence.
3. **Irreversible Reputational Harm:** Publicly displaying an accused person's photograph can cause serious harm that may continue even if the person is later acquitted.
4. **Digital Permanence:** Social-media circulation is **permanent and searchable**, making the consequences of premature publicity difficult to reverse.
5. **Juvenile Protection:** A juvenile in conflict with law cannot be identified except in the child's best interest and with permission of the **Juvenile Justice Board**.

6. **Sexual-Offence Survivor Protection:** The identity of a sexual assault survivor is protected by law and therefore cannot be disclosed through police publicity.

Balancing Investigative Necessity with Individual Rights

1. **Legitimate Investigative Purpose:** Public disclosure can support **crime prevention, public order, law-and-order purposes, identification, tracing absconders and finding witnesses.**
2. **Public Assistance as a Police Tool:** Photographs and notices can enable citizens to provide information that police may not obtain through their own limited resources.
3. **Police Achievement Publicity:** Disclosure becomes problematic when photographs are released mainly to **showcase arrests or police achievements** rather than to meet an investigative need.
4. **Investigation Versus Publicity:** The central distinction is between disclosure required to assist an investigation and disclosure that mainly creates a public narrative around an accused.
5. **Adult Accused as the Grey Area:** The most difficult question concerns the **ordinary adult who has been accused and arrested but has not yet been tried.**
6. **No Outright Ban:** A complete prohibition on public assistance would be unwarranted because photographs and wanted notices can genuinely help investigations.

Way Forward

1. **Uniform National Protocol:** India needs a **codified and uniform national protocol** governing police media briefings and public disclosure.
2. **Clear Legal Basis:** The framework should clearly specify when police can publish photographs instead of relying on inherited practices and broad administrative powers.
3. **Proportionate Disclosure:** Disclosure should be based on **necessity and proportionality**, rather than convenience or publicity.
4. **Blackout Categories:** The framework should maintain strict protection for **juveniles and sexual-offence complainants.**
5. **Time-Bound Takedown:** Published material should be reviewed and removed once the investigative purpose ends or an accused is **discharged or acquitted.**
6. **Uniform State Policies:** Common standards should apply across States to prevent different practices for similar situations.
7. **Necessity Test:** Before releasing a photograph, police should ask whether the disclosure is **necessary for the investigation or merely convenient to the narrative.**

Conclusion

Police publicity can support investigation, but unchecked exposure can damage **dignity, reputation and the presumption of innocence**. India needs a **clear, uniform and legally backed framework** that permits necessary public assistance while preventing prejudicial publicity and protecting vulnerable persons. Ultimately, police disclosure should serve **justice and investigation, not public judgement before trial**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the need to balance police publicity with the rights and dignity of accused persons in India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Should permanent membership and veto powers of the UNSC be abolished?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Introduction

The **UN Security Council (UNSC)** is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, but its structure gives five permanent members (P5) special voting powers. A P5 veto can block substantive action, raising concerns about sovereign equality and collective security. France has proposed voluntary restraint on veto use during genocide, crimes against humanity and large-scale war crimes. This has renewed the question of whether the veto should be abolished or made more accountable and responsible.

UNSC: Role, Structure and Veto Power

1. **Role of UNSC:** The UNSC is responsible for **maintaining international peace and security** and can adopt binding decisions, sanctions, peacekeeping measures and other actions.
2. **Composition:** The Council has **15 members**, including five permanent members (P5)—**China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States**—and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.
3. **Veto power:** A single P5 member can block the adoption of a **substantive resolution**, even when the remaining members support the proposed action.
4. **Basis of the system:** The arrangement reflects the idea that an international organisation cannot effectively function if it takes decisions directly against the **fundamental interests of major powers**.
5. **Core controversy:** The veto creates a tension between sovereign equality and the special decision-making power of the P5, making its reform a central issue.
6. **Veto and humanitarian crises:** Veto use has raised concerns when it prevents collective action during **genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and major conflicts**.

Why is UNSC Reform Being Demanded?

1. **Changing global realities:** The UNSC's present structure reflects the **1945 power distribution**, while contemporary international politics involves wider and more diverse centres of power.

2. **Conflict-related paralysis:** Vetoes can prevent collective action during serious conflicts, as seen when **Russian and Chinese vetoes restricted UNSC action during the Syrian civil war**.
3. **Humanitarian concerns:** The debate has intensified around situations involving **genocide, crimes against humanity and large-scale war crimes**, where delayed action can create serious humanitarian consequences.
4. **Sovereign equality versus power:** The UN formally promotes **sovereign equality**, but the veto gives five states a special position in decisions affecting international peace and security.
5. **Need for broader reform:** **UNSC reform should address** veto use, permanent membership, new permanent members, non-permanent representation and the Council's overall structure.

Understanding Permanent Membership and Veto Power

1. **Permanent membership:** The **P5 hold permanent seats** on the UNSC, unlike ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.
2. **Purpose of the arrangement:** The system rests on the idea that an international organisation cannot effectively survive if it takes decisions directly against the **fundamental interests of major powers**.
3. **Veto and Charter:** The term "**veto**" is not specifically used in the UN Charter; the power emerged through the arrangements governing Security Council decision-making.
4. **Question of expansion:** Reform also raises whether **new permanent members should receive veto powers**, especially if permanent membership itself is expanded.

The Debate over Abolishing Permanent Membership and Veto

A. Arguments Supporting Abolition

1. **Greater equality:** Abolishing permanent membership could make UNSC decision-making more consistent with the principle of **sovereign equality among UN members**.
2. **Democratic representation:** Removing fixed permanent seats could make the Council more **representative of the wider international community**.
3. **Reduced paralysis:** Removing veto powers could reduce the ability of a single permanent member to **block collective action on major security issues**.
4. **Greater accountability:** Without special veto privileges, major powers would face greater pressure to justify their positions within a **more equal decision-making system**.

B. Arguments Against Abolition

1. **Major-power interests:** Major powers may not accept UNSC decisions that directly affect their **fundamental national interests**, limiting the practical value of abolition.

2. **Political stability:** Removing permanent membership could make the Security Council **less stable and predictable**, as commitments and priorities could change with membership.
3. **Continuity:** Permanent membership provides **continuity in major security decisions**, whereas rotational membership could bring less experienced countries into crucial decision-making.
4. **Charter amendment:** Complete abolition would require **difficult amendments to the UN Charter**, making such structural change challenging.

Alternatives to Complete Abolition

1. Voluntary Restraint on Veto

- **French-Mexican initiative:** Launched in 2015, it seeks P5 restraint from using vetoes during genocide, crimes against humanity and large-scale war crimes.
- **Growing support:** 128 states support the declaration, with 21 joining in the previous four months, while the United Kingdom has joined France among the P5.

2. Accountability after the Use of Veto

- **Liechtenstein Initiative:** Adopted by the UNGA in 2022, it requires the General Assembly to meet within 10 working days after a veto.
- **Explanation of veto:** The permanent member using the veto must **explain and defend its decision before the UNGA**, keeping the issue open for discussion.

3. Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Code of Conduct

- **Responsible voting:** The ACT initiative asks UNSC members, including non-permanent members, not to block credible action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- **Focus on mass atrocities:** It seeks responsible voting particularly when Security Council action is designed to **prevent or halt serious international crimes**.

4. Broader UNSC Structural Reform

- **Membership expansion:** Structural reform can consider expanding both **permanent and non-permanent membership** to make the Council more representative.
- **Geographical representation:** Greater representation of different regions can address concerns about the **unequal distribution of decision-making power**.
- **Veto for new members:** Expansion also raises the question of whether **new permanent members should receive the same veto power** as the existing P5.

Key Challenges to Veto Reform

1. **P5 disagreement:** The five permanent members have **different positions on UNSC reform**, and none is proposing to eliminate its existing veto.
2. **National interests:** Permanent members may continue using the veto when they consider their **fundamental national interests** to be involved.
3. **Charter amendment:** Beyond political disagreement, changing the existing veto arrangement requires a **formal amendment to the UN Charter**, making structural reform particularly difficult.
4. **Membership disagreements:** Expanding permanent membership creates difficult questions about **which countries should receive permanent seats**.
5. **Different conflict interpretations:** UN members have different interpretations of conflicts, creating difficulties in applying concepts such as **humanitarian crisis and international law** consistently.
6. **Politicised criteria:** Conditions such as **human rights records, peacekeeping contributions or adherence to international law** could themselves become subjects of political disagreement.

Way Forward

1. **Responsible veto use:** P5 members should promote **restraint in using vetoes**, particularly during genocide, crimes against humanity and large-scale war crimes.
2. **UNGA accountability:** The General Assembly should continue providing a platform where a permanent member must **explain and defend its veto**.
3. **Better representation:** UNSC reform should improve **permanent and non-permanent representation** and address geographical imbalances.
4. **Incremental reform:** Voluntary restraint and accountability mechanisms can be pursued **before attempting difficult Charter-level changes**.
5. **Wider consensus:** Sustainable reform requires greater agreement among the **P5 and other UN members** on the future structure and functioning of the UNSC.

Conclusion

The veto reflects the power structure that shaped the UN in **1945**, but its use can create paralysis during major humanitarian crises. Complete abolition faces political and legal difficulties, while voluntary restraint and greater accountability offer incremental alternatives. **UNSC reform therefore involves balancing sovereign equality, effective collective security, representation and the continuing interests of major powers.**

Question for practice:

Examine whether the permanent membership and veto powers of the UNSC should be abolished or reformed.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Revisiting India's nuclear doctrine without revising it

Source: The post “Revisiting India's nuclear doctrine without revising it” has been created based on “Revisiting India's nuclear doctrine without revising it” published in “The Hindu” on 26th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

Context: India's nuclear doctrine, operationalised in 2003, is based on **credible minimum deterrence, No First Use (NFU), and massive retaliation**. Although the core principles have remained largely unchanged, India's security environment has undergone significant strategic, technological and geopolitical changes.

Key features of India's nuclear doctrine

1. India follows a policy of **credible minimum nuclear deterrence**.
2. It maintains a **No First Use (NFU)** posture, while retaining the option of nuclear retaliation following a major biological or chemical attack.
3. The doctrine emphasises **massive retaliation** in response to a nuclear attack.
4. Its implementation has been supported by **survivable second-strike capability**.
5. The doctrine has contributed to **continuity, predictability and strategic stability** for more than two decades.

Reason behind the change in strategic environment

1. **China and Pakistan have moved closer strategically**, creating a more complex security environment for India.
 - a. **China has expanded and modernised its nuclear forces** and strengthened military infrastructure along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.
 - b. **Pakistan has diversified its nuclear capabilities**, including the development of **tactical nuclear weapons**, partly intended to offset India's conventional advantages.
2. **Emerging technologies** such as artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, space-based surveillance, hypersonic weapons and ballistic-missile defence are shortening decision-making timelines.
 - a. These technologies have increased the vulnerability of **command-and-control networks** and complicated assumptions about assured retaliation.
3. The **Indo-Pacific has become an area of great-power competition**, while the international system is becoming more multipolar and geopolitical competition is widening.

Need for review without revising the doctrine

1. India's existing doctrine has provided **continuity, predictability and strategic stability** for more than two decades.
2. A review does not necessarily mean changing the core principles of **credible minimum deterrence, NFU and massive retaliation**.
3. India needs to examine whether its **nuclear capabilities are sufficiently survivable and credible** in the changing technological environment.
4. Greater attention is required to **second-strike capabilities**, so that India retains the ability to retaliate even after an adversary's first strike.

5. India needs to strengthen **command, control and communication systems** to ensure reliable decision-making during a crisis.
6. **Early-warning systems and surveillance capabilities** need to be strengthened to cope with shorter decision-making timelines.
7. India also needs greater **cyber resilience** because cyber vulnerabilities could affect nuclear command-and-control systems.
8. The continuing relevance of existing concepts should be examined in the context of **China's expanding nuclear capabilities and Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons**.
9. The issue of **massive retaliation** also deserves scrutiny because Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons could create situations in which India would face difficult response options.
10. At the same time, changing the doctrine itself could create **greater uncertainty and instability**, whereas strengthening supporting capabilities can improve deterrence without altering declared policy.

Way Forward

1. India should **modernise its nuclear delivery systems** and strengthen their survivability.
2. India should improve **command-and-control, early warning, surveillance and cyber-resilience capabilities**.
3. Regular doctrinal reviews should examine the changing **technological, strategic and geopolitical environment**.
4. Nuclear policy should remain aligned with India's broader **diplomatic objectives and strategic autonomy**.
5. India should maintain a balance between **restraint and credible deterrence**, ensuring that its declared policy is backed by adequate capabilities.

Conclusion: India's nuclear doctrine is a **policy instrument, not an immutable doctrine**. Therefore, regular review of its assumptions and supporting capabilities is necessary. **Reviewing the doctrine is not the same as revising it**; India can strengthen credible deterrence and strategic stability while retaining the core principles of its existing nuclear policy.

Question: India's nuclear doctrine has remained largely unchanged for over two decades despite significant changes in the strategic environment. Discuss why India needs to review its nuclear capabilities without necessarily revising its core nuclear doctrine.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 and States' Opposition to it

Source: The post "**Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 and States' Opposition to it**" has been created based on "**Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 and States' Opposition to it**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 26th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: Mining is an important source of revenue for several mineral-rich states. The **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026** seeks to restrict specified state levies on mineral

rights and mineral-bearing land and establish greater uniformity in the fiscal burden on mining. The issue has created a debate over **state revenues, mining-sector costs and fiscal federalism**.

Provisions of the new law

1. The law seeks to **restrict states from imposing specified levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing land**.
2. It seeks to establish a **uniform national framework** for major mineral-related taxation.
3. The law will **extinguish unpaid or unrecovered dues** arising from such levies imposed before it comes into force.
4. The government argues that excessive state-level levies can **increase the cost of key minerals**, thereby increasing inflation and infrastructure costs.
5. The Mines Ministry has stated that around **14 levies in the mineral sector will continue**, but their combined burden should not exceed a certain percentage.
6. The percentage will be decided **after consultation with the states**.

Reasons behind states opposing the law

1. The amendments override key financial aspects of the **Supreme Court's July 25, 2024 ruling**, which upheld states' exclusive power to tax mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands.
 - a. The 2024 judgment had also allowed states to **stagger payment of dues over 12 years from April 1, 2026**, after waiving interest and penalties for the period before July 25, 2024.
2. Mineral-rich states fear a **significant reduction in their own-source revenue**, particularly because mining contributes substantially to their non-tax receipts.
 - a. In 2024-25, mineral and petroleum receipts constituted about **23% of Odisha's revenue receipts, 13% of Jharkhand's and 5% of Chhattisgarh's**, according to the figures cited in the article.
3. Odisha's Opposition has alleged that the law could result in **annual revenue losses of around ₹12,000 crore and arrears of about ₹1 lakh crore**.
4. Jharkhand has also expressed concern because mineral-bearing land cess is an important source of its revenue.
5. States have also raised a broader concern about **fiscal federalism**, as taxation powers are an important component of their financial autonomy.

Centre's rationale

1. The Centre argues that **multiple and excessive levies** can increase the fiscal burden on mining companies.
2. A more predictable taxation framework could provide **greater certainty for mining investment**.
3. The government also argues that controlling the cumulative burden of levies can prevent an excessive increase in the prices of essential minerals.
4. Industry representatives have similarly argued that greater certainty regarding the fiscal burden could help the **mining sector and investment climate**.

Federalism dimension

1. The issue reflects the constitutional balance between **Union regulation of mines and minerals and the financial powers of states**.

2. The Supreme Court's 2024 judgment dealt specifically with the distribution of legislative powers concerning taxation of mineral rights, including **Entry 50 of the State List**.
3. Restricting state levies can affect the **fiscal autonomy of mineral-rich states**.
4. At the same time, excessive and fragmented levies can increase costs for industries and create uncertainty in the mining sector.
5. Therefore, the issue requires a balance between **national economic interests, investment certainty and states' fiscal autonomy**.

Way Forward

1. The Centre should undertake **extensive consultation with mineral-rich states** before determining the overall ceiling on mineral-sector levies.
2. A transparent mechanism should be developed to address the **revenue concerns of affected states**.
3. The framework should maintain a balance between **reasonable taxation and the competitiveness of the mining sector**.
4. Any changes affecting states' taxation powers should be implemented with due regard to the **constitutional scheme of fiscal federalism**.

Conclusion: The mining law represents a conflict between two legitimate objectives: **ensuring a predictable and cost-efficient mining regime and protecting the revenue autonomy of states**. A cooperative approach involving the Centre, states and the mining sector can help reconcile these objectives while strengthening India's federal fiscal framework.

Question: The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026, has triggered concerns among mineral-rich states. Discuss the provisions of the law, reasons for opposition by states and its implications for Indian federalism.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

The case for accountable lottery regulation in India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Introduction

Lotteries occupy a difficult space between individual choice, social harm and public revenue. While they can disproportionately affect poorer households and encourage compulsive gambling, outright prohibition may shift persistent demand towards illegal operators, causing revenue loss, enforcement burdens and weaker consumer protection. India therefore faces a policy choice between prohibition and accountable regulation. The issue requires balancing consumer safeguards, State taxation and regulatory powers, legitimate livelihoods, federal autonomy and transparent use of lottery revenues.

Status and Legal Framework of Lotteries in India

1. **Limited State Participation:** A March 2023 Lok Sabha reply identified only nine States operating lotteries—Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim and West Bengal.
2. **Union Legislative Authority:** Entry 40 of the Union List gives Parliament legislative competence over lotteries organised by the Government of India or a State.
3. **State Taxation Power:** Entry 62 of the State List empowers States to levy taxes on betting and gambling, including gambling taxes applicable to lotteries.
4. **Regulatory Framework:** The Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 allows States to organise lotteries subject to Section 4 conditions, while Sections 5 and 6 provide powers to prohibit non-compliant lotteries.
5. **Constitutional Position:** The Supreme Court treats gambling, including State-organised lotteries, as *res extra commercium*, placing it outside the protections of Articles 19(1)(g) and 301.
6. **Inter-State Restriction:** Section 5 of the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 empowers a State to prohibit lotteries organised by other States, subject to the interpretation given by the Supreme Court in *B.R. Enterprises v. State of U.P. (1999)*.
7. **Taxation Clarity:** The Supreme Court held that lottery transactions are not subject to Central service tax, while States retain their taxation power under Entry 62, reducing uncertainty over Centre–State taxing powers.

Why Prohibition is Not a Sustainable Solution

1. **Persistent Demand:** Prohibition cannot automatically remove demand for lotteries, creating a gap between legal restrictions and actual consumer behaviour.
2. **Black-Market Expansion:** Bans can shift players towards smuggled tickets, matka, satta and offshore portals, where audits, age checks and fraud protection are weaker.
3. **Revenue Loss:** Prohibition can reduce lottery surplus and GST revenue while increasing enforcement costs for governments.
4. **Livelihood Disruption:** Legitimate lottery vendors, including poor and disabled persons, can lose income when legal lottery sales are replaced by underground markets.
5. **International Evidence:** Nearly four-fifths of countries permit lotteries, while regulated systems commonly direct lottery surpluses towards education, health, welfare, sports or infrastructure.
6. **Choice with Safeguards:** Like regulated financial markets, lotteries can preserve adult choice while using disclosure, regulation and penalties for fraud, with stronger safeguards for games of chance.

Key Challenges in Accountable Lottery Regulation

1. **Regressive Financial Impact:** Lotteries can disproportionately affect poorer households by encouraging them to spend scarce income on highly uncertain rewards.
2. **Compulsive Behaviour:** Rapid draws, instant games, large jackpots and loss-chasing can encourage compulsive play and distort perceptions of risk.
3. **Weak Consumer Protection:** Credit sales, opaque odds and manipulative advertising can increase financial harm and reduce informed decision-making.
4. **Illegal-Operator Risks:** Underground operators may use cash agents and mule accounts, without secure prize funds, proper audits or effective remedies against fraud.
5. **Federal Regulatory Conflict:** States directly control their own lotteries but have less control over lotteries from other States operating within their territory.
6. **All-or-Nothing Constraint:** The Supreme Court, in *B.R. Enterprises v. State of U.P. (1999)*, held that a State can ban lotteries from other States only if it also stops organising its own lottery, creating an all-or-nothing rule.

Reforming the Regulatory Framework

1. **Allow States to Ban Outside Lotteries:** Parliament should amend Section 5 of the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 to allow a State to prohibit lotteries organised by other States even if it continues to operate its own lottery.
2. **Ensure Uniform Treatment:** A destination State should either admit all outside lotteries or exclude all of them, preventing selective discrimination among States.
3. **Enable Common Lotteries:** A proposed Section 4A in the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 could allow two or more States to jointly establish a lottery through an agreement, pooling players, prizes, technology and operating costs.
4. **Strengthen Consumer Safeguards:** Regulation should address age restrictions, transparent odds, advertising practices, secure prize funds and fraud protection.
5. **Prefer Direct Operation:** Section 4 of the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 permits direct State sales, while departmental operation can improve transparency and reduce excessive dependence on marketing intermediaries.
6. **Protect Local Livelihoods:** Retail distribution can involve small vendors, persons with disabilities, women's self-help groups and cooperatives, widening legitimate livelihood opportunities.
7. **Maintain Tax Certainty:** Clear allocation of taxation powers between Centre and States can reduce disputes and give lottery operators more predictable compliance requirements.

Lessons from International and Indian Models

1. **Public-Operator Model:** Nearly 70% of lottery jurisdictions use government bodies, statutory authorities or State-owned companies to operate lotteries, while private firms may provide retail or technology services.
2. **Concession Model:** Some systems allow the State to retain regulatory control while granting operating rights to a private concessionaire.
3. **Federal Cooperation:** The U.S., Canada, Australia and Germany use jurisdiction-based systems where States or provinces retain autonomy while cooperative lotteries pool players and prizes.
4. **Destination-State Consent:** Cross-border lottery sales generally require the destination jurisdiction's consent or participation in a cooperative arrangement.
5. **Kerala's Public Model:** Kerala earned ₹2,883.80 crore in FY 2023-24, including ₹1,129.71 crore lottery surplus and ₹1,754.09 crore State GST, while using lottery surpluses for health and welfare.
6. **Broader Regulatory Lesson:** India can combine State autonomy, public operation, consumer safeguards and transparent revenue use instead of relying only on prohibition.

Conclusion

India needs a lottery framework that combines **social protection with accountable regulation**, rather than relying only on prohibition. Clearer Centre-State taxation rules, stronger consumer safeguards, regulated inter-State cooperation and transparent public operation can reduce illegal-market risks while protecting legitimate livelihoods and State revenue. A balanced framework should therefore focus on **responsible participation, regulatory accountability and transparent public benefit**.

Question for practice:

Discuss the social, economic, legal and regulatory dimensions of lottery regulation in India and suggest measures to strengthen its accountability.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Don't Export Tomorrow's Wheat Surplus Today

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- issues of buffer stocks and food security

Introduction

India has a strong wheat stock position and renewed export opportunities after easing restrictions. However, the current surplus comes from the harvested crop, while the next crop is yet to be sown and faces rainfall deficits, water stress, El Niño and heat risks. At the same time, global disruptions and rising prices are creating demand for Indian wheat. The core issue is whether India should export today's surplus before knowing the size of tomorrow's harvest with confidence.

Current Wheat Surplus and Export Opportunity

1. **High central stocks:** Central Pool wheat stocks reached **57.8 MMT**, including 22 MMT carry-forward stocks and 35.8 MMT fresh procurement during 2026-27.
2. **Procurement has strengthened:** Wheat procurement rose to **35.76 MMT**, compared with about 30 MMT last year, improving current domestic availability.
3. **Stocks exceed food-security needs:** The government requires about **21 MMT** for welfare schemes and another **7.5 MMT** as buffer stock, leaving substantial stocks above these needs.
4. **Exports have been reopened:** India moved from restricted wheat exports to a more open regime after allowing **2.5 MMT each in February and April**.
5. **Export parity has improved:** Rising international prices have made Indian wheat competitive in Bangladesh, with delivered prices of about **\$305–326 per tonne**.
6. **Domestic prices remain manageable:** Delhi wholesale wheat prices increased only **1.7% in the past month**, while Open Market Sales can help control lean-season price pressure.
7. **Current surplus needs distinction:** A large buffer stock reflects present availability, but it does not guarantee that the next harvest will create another exportable surplus.

Climate and Production Risks to the Next Wheat Crop

1. **Rainfall deficit is widespread:** The monsoon is around **15% below normal**, creating different levels of water stress across major wheat-producing regions.
2. **Punjab and Haryana face groundwater pressure:** Large rainfall deficits may be managed through irrigation, but greater groundwater use can increase aquifer stress and state power-subsidy costs.
3. **Rajasthan faces sharper water stress:** Rajasthan has about **25% lower rainfall** and reservoir storage around **31% below normal**, reducing its water cushion before rabi sowing.
4. **Bihar faces pre-sowing concerns:** Bihar has received around **35% less rainfall**, raising concerns about soil moisture before sowing and groundwater recharge.
5. **El Niño increases uncertainty:** NOAA expects **El Niño to continue through January–March 2027**, while climate projections indicate higher chances of below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures.
6. **Warm winter can reduce yields:** Early temperature increases during **March grain filling** can shorten the crop's effective winter period and reduce wheat yields.
7. **Production risk remains uncertain:** These conditions do not indicate crop failure, but they reduce the margin available to absorb an adverse weather shock.

Implications for India's Food and Cereal Security

1. **Rice cannot provide a full cushion:** Rice prices are already **7–8% higher**, while kharif rice acreage has declined by nearly **17 lakh hectares**, limiting its ability to absorb a wheat shock.

2. **Water stress affects the cereal basket:** Weak reservoirs and an unfavourable weather outlook could constrain rabi and summer rice recovery, increasing pressure on overall cereal availability.
3. **Domestic welfare needs remain large:** The government needs about **21 MMT of wheat** for the Public Distribution System and other welfare schemes, apart from the 7.5 MMT buffer requirement.
4. **Open Market Sales can manage domestic supply:** The government can sell excess wheat through the **Open Market Sales Scheme** to maintain availability and control prices during the lean period.

Global Demand and Lessons from Past Export Restrictions

1. **Black Sea disruptions support demand:** Continued disruption in Russia-Ukraine grain trade has pushed importing countries towards alternative suppliers, increasing opportunities for Indian wheat.
2. **Bangladesh is a major nearby market:** Bangladesh imports more than **7 MMT of wheat annually**, and India supplied nearly **70%** of its purchases before the 2022 export ban.
3. **Regional purchases have resumed:** Bangladesh has booked over **200,000 tonnes**, while Sri Lankan importers recently purchased around **60,000 tonnes** from India.
4. **Indian exports may expand:** USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service expects Indian wheat exports to rise to around **2 MMT in 2026-27**, more than four times the previous level.
5. **Global prices have improved competitiveness:** Chicago wheat futures rose by more than **14% in one month**, helping Indian wheat achieve export parity, especially with Bangladesh.
6. **2022 showed production uncertainty:** Wheat production estimates were cut from **111.3 MMT to 106.4 MMT** after an unusually hot March, forcing India to prohibit exports soon after promoting them.
7. **Sugar shows how surplus can reverse:** The government first expanded sugar exports expecting comfortable availability, but weaker production later led India to allow **duty-free imports of 1 MMT of raw sugar** in August 2026.
8. **Policy reversals hurt reliability:** Abrupt changes from export promotion to restrictions can weaken India's credibility as a dependable agricultural supplier, as seen in wheat and sugar.

Way Forward

1. **Keep exports calibrated:** India should maintain an adjustable export window instead of committing the entire present surplus to overseas markets.
2. **Link exports with crop assessment:** Export quantities should be reviewed as **sowing, rainfall, reservoir levels, crop conditions and production estimates** become clearer.
3. **Protect domestic food requirements:** Export decisions must account for welfare schemes, buffer stocks and adequate domestic market supply.

4. **Use the regional market opportunity:** India can expand supplies to neighbouring import-dependent markets when global prices provide viable export parity.
5. **Increase exports after harvest clarity:** If the next wheat crop is strong, India can raise exports later without risking domestic availability.
6. **Preserve policy flexibility:** Since wheat exported today cannot be recovered after a poor harvest, India should retain the ability to respond to changing production conditions.

Conclusion

India has enough wheat to support calibrated exports, but current stocks cannot guarantee next season's surplus. Weather risks, pressure on the wider cereal basket and past export reversals require flexibility. India should **protect domestic food security while keeping exports open. Shipments should expand only after the next harvest confirms a durable surplus and supply outlook.**

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges and considerations involved in India's decision to export wheat amid uncertainties over the next harvest.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Prioritise insurance distribution reforms

Source: The post "Prioritise insurance distribution reforms" has been created based on "Prioritise insurance distribution reforms" published in "Business Line" on 28th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: IRDAI released a **consultation paper on distribution reforms on September 23**, acknowledging that the 2023 reforms had not fully achieved their objectives of improving customer benefits and insurance penetration. The proposed reforms focus on **commission structures, underserved markets, expense classification and customer-oriented conduct.**

Key Issues in Insurance Distribution

1. The existing distribution system tends to favour **urban and salaried customers**, while underserved rural and small-town markets receive less attention.
2. Commission payouts vary significantly across distribution channels, with **brokers and corporate agents receiving substantially higher commissions** than individual agents.
3. Despite the growth in premium volumes, there has not been a corresponding increase in the **number of insured lives.**
4. The existing remuneration system gives limited financial recognition to **customer retention, quality of advice, servicing and favourable claim experience.**
5. Raising the minimum educational qualification for new agents from **Class 10 to Class 12** could reduce the availability of agents in rural areas.
6. The existing system can also encourage **short-term acquisition, mis-selling, dark patterns and compulsory product bundling.**

Proposed Reforms

1. IRDAI proposes **hard, all-inclusive commission caps** after finding that the 2023 system of board-approved commission policies had not achieved its intended objectives.
2. The proposed framework recognises that **agents tied to one insurer should receive higher remuneration** than multi-tied distributors because of their greater role in solicitation.
3. Additional commission incentives are proposed for **rural and small-town insurance business** to expand coverage in underserved markets.
4. The article proposes an additional **10% incentive for first-time life insurance policyholders**, which could help increase the number of insured lives.
5. The **Public Insurance Registry (PIR)** could be used to identify first-time policyholders once it becomes operational, while proposal forms and IIB records could be used in the interim.
6. Genuine social-security benefits such as **gratuity, group term life and health cover** should be kept outside direct commission caps.
7. Expenses related to **long service, sustained performance, persistency, premium collection, local servicing and agency development** should be treated as operating expenses where appropriate.
8. Instead of raising the educational qualification alone, the quality of agents could be improved through **better training and higher qualifying standards**.

Improving Customer-Centricity

1. The remuneration system should reward **long-term customer service, persistence, retention and quality of advice**, rather than focusing mainly on new-policy acquisition.
2. Commissions can be linked to **effort and complexity**, while higher renewal commissions can encourage long-term policy persistency.
3. Measures to curb **mis-selling, dark patterns and compulsory product bundling** can strengthen customer protection.
4. Better distribution practices can help achieve **lower net costs, greater transparency and improved post-sales service**.

Way Forward

1. Insurance distribution reforms should balance **lower acquisition costs with the sustainability of the individual-agent network**.
2. Greater focus should be placed on **rural, small-town and first-time insurance customers** to bridge the protection gap.
3. Commission structures should encourage **good conduct and long-term customer relationships** rather than short-term sales.
4. The regulatory framework should be refined **gradually and thoughtfully** while keeping customer value at its centre.

Conclusion: India's insurance sector needs to move beyond growth in premium volumes towards **wider coverage and more insured lives**. A balanced distribution framework that promotes **affordability, wider access, good conduct and customer value** can contribute to the goal of **"Insurance for All by 2047."**

Question: Insurance penetration in India remains inadequate despite growth in premium volumes. Discuss the key issues in insurance distribution and the reforms proposed to make the sector more inclusive and customer-centric.

Source: [Business Line](#)

Should voting be a fundamental right?

Source: The post “Should voting be a fundamental right?” has been created based on “Should voting be a fundamental right?” published in “The Hindu” on 28th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: A recent controversy has renewed attention to the right to vote and electoral-roll integrity, following reported differences within the Election Commission over electoral procedures and voter additions/deletions.

About Universal Adult Suffrage in India

1. The right to vote is the foundation of representative democracy as it enables citizens to participate in choosing their government.
2. India adopted **universal adult suffrage** from the outset, thereby ensuring democratic equality irrespective of gender, caste, religion, education or property.
3. **Article 326 of the Constitution** provides for elections on the basis of adult suffrage.
4. The inclusive nature of Indian democracy ensured that citizens could participate in elections irrespective of their **gender, caste, religion, education or property**.
5. **Sukumar Sen**, the first Chief Election Commissioner, introduced election symbols to make elections accessible to a largely illiterate electorate.
6. The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** governs the preparation and revision of electoral rolls, while the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** regulates election conduct, candidature and electoral offences.
7. The Supreme Court, beginning with **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)**, recognised democracy as part of the **basic structure of the Constitution**.

Constitutional and legal status of the right to vote

1. **Constitutional basis:** Article 326 provides for elections on the basis of adult suffrage. Articles 325 and 326 together provide the constitutional framework governing electoral participation.
2. **Not a Fundamental Right:** The Constituent Assembly had considered placing the right to vote among Fundamental Rights, but the proposal was ultimately rejected.
3. **Statutory right:** In **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006)**, a Constitution Bench held that the ‘right to elect’ is a **statutory right under Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, and is neither a Fundamental nor a Constitutional Right.
4. **Judicial debate:** Although the larger Bench position in *Kuldip Nayar* continues to prevail, Justice Ajay Rastogi’s dissent in **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023)** viewed the right to vote as connected with Article 19(1)(a) and reflecting the essence of Article 21.
5. **Democratic significance:** Despite its statutory status, courts have regarded voting as an **inseparable part of democracy** because it enables citizens to shape governance.

Importance of accurate electoral rolls

1. **Protects ‘one person, one vote’:** Errors such as wrongful deletions, duplicate entries and inclusion of ineligible persons can lead to impersonation, disenfranchisement and dilution of legitimate votes.

2. **Ensures electoral integrity:** Section 21 of the RPA, 1950 empowers the Election Commission to prepare and revise electoral rolls, while Article 324 gives it the responsibility of superintendence, direction and control of elections.
3. **Ensures inclusion:** Section 19 of the RPA, 1950 provides for registration of citizens aged 18 years or above who are ordinarily resident in a constituency and not otherwise disqualified.
4. **Prevents systemic exclusion:** The reported Goa episode, where **97 eligible voters were reportedly excluded** due to limitations in the ECINet software, highlights the importance of effective correction mechanisms and administrative accountability.
5. **Requires institutional safeguards:** The 2023 law provides for the functioning of the Election Commission, including provisions concerning its decision-making and allocation of business. Where Commissioners differ, matters are decided by majority.

Way Forward

1. The debate over elevating the right to vote from a statutory to a Fundamental Right needs careful constitutional consideration.
2. Electoral systems should provide **effective mechanisms to correct wrongful deletions** and prevent technological systems from becoming barriers to voter participation.
3. Greater transparency and accountability in electoral administration are necessary as technology increasingly mediates the relationship between the voter and the ballot.

Conclusion: Universal adult suffrage gave India an inclusive democratic foundation. However, democracy becomes meaningful only when every eligible citizen can actually exercise the right to participate. Therefore, **accurate electoral rolls, accountable electoral administration and effective safeguards against wrongful exclusion** are essential for preserving electoral integrity and democratic participation.

Question: Discuss the constitutional and legal status of the 'right to vote' in India. Why is the accuracy of electoral rolls crucial for strengthening democracy?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Kashmir as India's Gateway to Eurasian Opportunity

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

Introduction

India's large youth population offers a major demographic opportunity, but this advantage depends on education, skills, employment and meaningful opportunities for young citizens. Jammu and Kashmir faces the same youth aspirations, alongside conflict, political uncertainty and economic isolation. Its natural resources, skilled traditions, strategic location and historical links with Central Asia create scope for wider economic integration. Reimagining Kashmir as a gateway to Eurasia can connect local talent, trade and enterprise with wider Indian and regional markets.

From Demographic Potential to Economic Opportunity

1. **Demographic dividend requires employment:** India's youthful population becomes an economic advantage only when young citizens receive education, skills, gainful employment and meaningful opportunities.
2. **India's demographic window:** Unlike China, where decades of low fertility have accelerated ageing, India has a large population entering the workforce.
3. **Aspiration-reality gap:** Smartphones have expanded young Indians' awareness of global lifestyles, education, work and travel, while tangible opportunities remain limited.
4. **Education-employment mismatch:** Higher education has expanded, but meaningful employment has not kept pace, making degrees less reliable pathways to financial security.
5. **Youth frustration:** Rising aspirations combined with limited opportunities can produce protests around recruitment, unemployment, examination irregularities and test-paper leaks.
6. **Infrastructure requirement:** India must create economic opportunities and infrastructure needed to convert its large youth population into productive human capital.
7. **Time-bound demographic window:** Demographic advantage is not permanent, making timely expansion of employment and productive opportunities essential for the next generation.

Kashmir's Youth and Untapped Economic Potential

1. **Shared youth aspirations:** Kashmiri youth seek **economic independence, dignity, opportunity and a secure future**, similar to young people elsewhere in India.
2. **Historical constraints and perception:** Conflict, political uncertainty and economic isolation have restricted youth opportunities, while a security-centric view has limited recognition of their potential.
3. **Natural resource base:** Jammu and Kashmir has substantial **hydroelectric potential, mineral resources and tourism assets**, creating several foundations for economic activity.
4. **Geographical significance:** Kashmir's location gives it strategic importance beyond its natural resources, creating scope for stronger links between South Asia, Central Asia and wider Eurasia.
5. **Existing economic strengths:** Agriculture, horticulture, craftsmanship, hospitality and tourism provide an established base that can support newer forms of economic activity.
6. **Changing value creation:** Research, design, digital services, creative work and specialised skills are becoming more important as modern economies generate value beyond physical production.
7. **Local talent opportunity:** Knowledge and digital work can allow people in Kashmir to serve customers, organisations and audiences outside the region.

Kashmir's Historical Role as a Eurasian Crossroads

1. **Historic crossroads:** Kashmir historically connected the Indian subcontinent with **Central Asia, Tibet and wider Eurasia** through important caravan routes.

2. **Connectivity beyond commerce:** These routes carried people, ideas, philosophies, literature, cultures and skills, showing that connectivity can build broader economic and social ecosystems.
3. **Craft traditions:** The arrival of **Shah-i-Hamadan** is traditionally associated with Persian and Central Asian craftsmen who enriched Kashmir's celebrated handicraft traditions.
4. **Historical role as a bridge:** India can gradually restore Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh's historical role as a bridge between South Asia, Central Asia and the wider Eurasian region.
5. **Changing strategic approach:** Connectivity planning needs to look beyond the immediate constraints created by the Line of Control and Line of Actual Control.
6. **Historical lesson:** Kashmir's past shows that connectivity can create economic ecosystems by linking the movement of goods with people, ideas, skills, culture and knowledge.

Reimagining Kashmir as India's Gateway to Eurasia

1. **Gateway to Central Asia:** Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh can potentially serve as India's northern economic gateway, improving access to Central Asian markets and attracting trade, investment and tourism.
2. **Reviving trade corridors:** Historically important routes can be gradually developed into modern economic corridors where political, diplomatic and security conditions are favourable.
3. **Employment across sectors:** Land corridors can create opportunities in construction, transport, warehousing, hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture, logistics, finance, technology and services.
4. **Wider geographical impact:** Unlike air connectivity, whose benefits often concentrate around limited nodes, land corridors can spread economic activity across wider routes.
5. **Wider market access:** Digital connectivity can allow Kashmir's professionals, creators and enterprises to reach customers and audiences beyond the region.
6. **Creative economy:** Crafts, design, art, food, culture and heritage can be documented, developed and presented through digital media for wider audiences.
7. **Technology and entrepreneurship:** AI, digital commerce, innovation, semiconductor and chip-design initiatives in India show how technology and enterprise can create new products and services.
8. **Knowledge economy institutions:** Universities, businesses, innovation centres, research facilities, finance and workspaces can help local ideas move towards practical use.

Way Forward

1. **Parallel roadmaps:** India needs an **infrastructure roadmap and diplomatic roadmap together**, because cross-border connectivity depends on physical links and sustained engagement.
2. **Engagement with Pakistan:** Where feasible, India can explore confidence-building measures and trade connectivity while recognising the political and security conditions surrounding such routes.

3. **Dialogue with China:** India can pursue practical dialogue on trans-Himalayan connectivity where economic interests and security concerns can be reconciled.
4. **Pilot corridors:** Instead of opening every route at once, India should begin with selected corridors where security and diplomatic conditions are most conducive.
5. **Progressive expansion:** Successful pilot corridors can be expanded gradually on the basis of practical experience and changing conditions.
6. **Regulated connectivity:** Security need not automatically oppose connectivity; properly regulated links can increase economic interdependence and potentially strengthen incentives for stability.
7. **Regional economic benefits:** Improved connectivity can bring investment, tourism and commerce to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh while giving Indian businesses greater access to Central Asian markets.
8. **Enabling ecosystem:** Skills, research, finance, guidance, digital infrastructure and market access can help local talent build knowledge-based, creative and technology enterprises.

Conclusion

Kashmir can turn its historic location into a modern economic advantage by combining connectivity, diplomacy, skills and technology. Wider links with Eurasian markets can expand trade, investment and employment, while digital and knowledge-based activities can connect local talent with distant markets. Building on existing strengths can create new opportunities for youth and strengthen Kashmir's role in India's wider Eurasian economic engagement.

Question for practice:

Discuss how Kashmir can emerge as India's gateway to Eurasian economic opportunities through connectivity, youth potential and regional integration.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

The paradox of de-Sinification in global production

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Constitution of India

Introduction

Global production is being reshaped by geopolitical tensions, tariffs and national-security concerns, but the change goes beyond shifting factories. Firms must also examine the suppliers, technologies, skills and relationships embedded deep within production networks. This creates the paradox of de-Sinification: foreign firms seek to reduce dependence on China, while Chinese firms expanding overseas seek to carry or recreate the ecosystem supporting their competitiveness. Thus, changing factory locations is easier than changing the industrial networks that sustain production.

De-Sinification and Its Paradox

1. **Meaning of de-Sinification: De-Sinification** means reducing or eliminating dependence on China for suppliers, technology, production capabilities and deeper supply-chain connections.
2. **Foreign firms' challenge:** Companies reducing Chinese exposure must disentangle themselves from suppliers and capabilities deeply integrated into their existing production networks.
3. **Chinese firms' reverse challenge:** Chinese companies expanding overseas must decide which domestic suppliers and capabilities can travel with them and which must be recreated locally.
4. **Industrial competitiveness:** Firms such as **BYD and Xpeng** depend partly on dense Chinese networks of component makers, engineering capabilities and production relationships.
5. **Choice of localisation:** Overseas expansion can involve taking existing suppliers, developing local suppliers, or combining both approaches, creating different costs and levels of localisation.
6. **Moving target:** China is reducing its own dependence on foreign technology, even as foreign firms try to reduce their dependence on Chinese production capabilities.
7. **CXMT's semiconductor progress: CXMT is the world's fourth-largest DRAM producer**, while still trailing advanced-memory leaders and remaining dependent on foreign chipmaking equipment. **DRAM means Dynamic Random-Access Memory.**

Why Industrial Ecosystems Are Difficult to Move

1. **Beyond identifiable suppliers:** Industrial ecosystems include specialised skills, tooling, production knowledge, logistics networks and long-term relationships between firms.
2. **Accumulated capabilities:** Supplier responsiveness to changing designs and production volumes develops through repeated interaction, making such capabilities difficult to reproduce quickly elsewhere.
3. **Factory relocation gap:** Moving a factory abroad does not automatically transfer the surrounding capabilities and relationships that previously supported efficient production.
4. **Supplier replacement gap:** Replacing one Chinese supplier may reduce direct dependence but does not necessarily remove dependence on the wider Chinese production system.
5. **Ecosystem portability:** Chinese firms therefore face a choice between carrying established networks abroad and gradually building equivalent local capabilities.

Three Emerging Responses to Supply-Chain Restructuring

1. **Diversification:** Firms are spreading production across countries while retaining some Chinese capacity, thereby reducing concentration without fully abandoning China.
2. **Japanese manufacturing diversification:** Japanese electronic-component makers such as **TDK and Murata** are expanding manufacturing in India while retaining significant production in China, showing a **China-plus-one** approach rather than complete relocation.

3. **Local supplier development:** BYD is developing relationships with European suppliers alongside manufacturing capacity in Hungary, linking overseas production with greater regional sourcing.
4. **Partner-based assembly:** Xpeng has chosen local assembly through Magna in Austria, showing how firms can enter overseas markets without immediately recreating the entire production ecosystem.
5. **Host-country localisation:** European policy increasingly seeks jobs, suppliers and industrial capabilities from foreign investment, including proposed “Made in EU” provisions under the Industrial Accelerator Act.
6. **Security-led de-Sinification:** SpaceX’s reported approach seeks zero Chinese exposure by examining suppliers, personnel, equipment and internal systems beyond the country of final production.

The Growing Tension Between Efficiency, Resilience and National Security

1. **Efficiency-resilience trade-off:** China’s supplier depth, scale, skills and manufacturing capabilities remain commercially attractive even as geopolitical risks encourage firms to diversify.
2. **Limits of China-plus-one:** Diversification can reduce concentration risk but does not automatically create durable alternative production networks or determine how much production should move.
3. **Security-driven restructuring:** National security can become more important than commercial efficiency when firms seek to eliminate Chinese connections throughout deeper supply-chain layers.
4. **Verification burden:** Monitoring suppliers and sub-suppliers across several countries increases costs as firms attempt to verify that Chinese exposure has been removed.
5. **Limits of certainty:** Deeper scrutiny can reduce exposure but cannot guarantee that every Chinese connection has been eliminated from international networks.
6. **Rising separation costs:** As firms and governments push efficiency and security further apart, supply-chain separation can become more costly and uncertain.

India’s Opportunity

1. **Manufacturing opening:** Global production restructuring is creating opportunities for India to receive parts of production ecosystems previously concentrated in China.
2. **Domestic supplier capacity:** India needs suppliers that can meet demanding cost, quality and delivery standards if foreign investment is to create deeper industrial linkages.
3. **Supporting infrastructure:** Reliable logistics, skilled workers and access to critical inputs are necessary to convert individual factories into stronger domestic production networks.
4. **Deeper local linkages:** New investments should progressively connect with Indian firms and bring specialised capabilities and intermediate production into the domestic economy.

5. **Capability accumulation:** India's opportunity lies in converting incoming factories into a broader industrial ecosystem rather than simply increasing the number of assembly plants.
6. **Value of Chinese investment:** Chinese investment should also be assessed by the local supplier networks and capabilities it develops, supporting India's own industrial ecosystem.

Conclusion

The future of global production will depend not only on where factories are located, but also on where suppliers, skills and industrial capabilities are built. India can benefit by converting incoming investment into deeper domestic supply networks. At the same time, firms and governments must balance efficiency, resilience and national security, as deeper separation from China can increase costs, complexity and uncertainty.

Question for practice:

Examine the paradox of de-Sinification in global production and its implications for India.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Nepal's flash floods: How can communities rebuild after a disaster?

Source: The post "Nepal's flash floods: How can communities rebuild after a disaster?" has been created based on "Nepal's flash floods: How can communities rebuild after a disaster?" published in "The Hindu" on 29th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: The recent flash floods in **Nepal's Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading districts** destroyed towns, roads, bridges and communication networks. The disaster highlights the need to move beyond immediate rescue and relief towards **decentralised, participatory and rights-based disaster governance**.

Challenges

1. **Disaster viewed only as a natural event:** Disasters are often treated as sudden natural occurrences, ignoring the role of **long-term vulnerabilities, risks and governance failures**.
2. **Weak long-term recovery:** Governments often respond rapidly during emergencies but face difficulties in sustaining commitment to **rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term recovery**.
3. **Centralised approach:** Excessive reliance on central authorities and security forces can undermine the role of **local governments and community organisations**, which understand local conditions better.
4. **Limited community participation:** Affected communities may have a **voice** in relief and reconstruction decisions but often lack the institutional power or resources—the necessary '**teeth**'—to influence outcomes.
5. **Inadequate local resources:** Local disaster-management bodies may lack adequate **human, financial and physical resources**, such as ambulances, hospitals and relief shelters.
6. **Governance-related vulnerabilities:** Decisions regarding the construction and licensing of **hydropower projects, roads and other critical infrastructure** in vulnerable areas can increase disaster risks.
7. **Community priorities overlooked:** Reconstruction often focuses mainly on physical infrastructure without adequately considering **community choices regarding resettlement and recovery**.

8. **Climate and transboundary risks:** Climate change is increasing the importance of disaster preparedness, while disasters along the **Nepal–India border** require cooperation beyond national boundaries.

Way Forward

1. **Decentralise disaster governance:** Empower local governments with adequate **funds, personnel, equipment and decision-making authority**.
2. **Adopt a community-led approach:** Involve ward officials, elected representatives, NGOs and community-based organisations in **relief, reconstruction and resettlement**.
3. **Strengthen accountability:** Ensure **transparency, fairness and responsiveness** in rescue, relief distribution and reconstruction.
4. **Follow a rights-based approach:** Protect the rights of affected communities and ensure that they have both **voice and institutional capacity ('teeth')** to influence decisions.
5. **Risk-sensitive development:** Assess disaster risks before approving infrastructure projects, particularly in **riverine and other vulnerable areas**.
6. **Build local resilience:** Strengthen local emergency infrastructure, including **hospitals, ambulances, shelters and communication systems**.
7. **Promote interdisciplinary planning:** Integrate **climate change, social vulnerabilities, governance and physical hazards** into disaster-management planning.
8. **Enhance transboundary cooperation:** Nepal and India should cooperate on **early warning, disaster preparedness and response** in areas affected by cross-border risks.

Conclusion: The Nepal floods demonstrate that effective disaster management requires more than emergency rescue. A **decentralised, accountable and community-led approach**, supported by adequate resources and risk-sensitive development, can strengthen long-term resilience and reduce future disaster vulnerability.

Question: Disasters are not merely natural events but also result from vulnerabilities and governance failures. Discuss the challenges and way forward in disaster management with reference to Nepal's recent flash floods.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tackling Rare Diseases in India

Source: The post "Tackling Rare Diseases in India" has been created based on "Tackling Rare Diseases in India" published in "The Hindu" on 29th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: Rare diseases individually affect a small number of people, but collectively affect **hundreds of millions worldwide**. India has reported **1,004 rare genetic disorders**. The small market size has historically discouraged pharmaceutical companies from developing such medicines, leading to the term "**orphan drugs**."

About Rare Disease

1. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines rare diseases as debilitating, lifelong conditions that affect one or fewer persons per 1,000.

2. Some commonly recognised rare diseases include **Haemophilia, Pompe disease, Thalassemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia, and Gaucher's disease.**

Status of Rare Disease in India

1. In India, rare diseases are categorised into three groups based on the nature and complexity of available treatment options.
 - a. **Group 1** includes diseases that can be treated with a one-time curative procedure.
 - b. **Group 2** diseases require long-term or lifelong treatment which are relatively less costly and have shown documented benefits, but patients need regular check-ups.
 - c. **Group 3 diseases** are those for which effective treatments are available, but they are expensive and must often continue lifelong. There are challenges in selecting the right beneficiaries for these treatments.
2. It is estimated that **around 6%–8% of India's population lives with a rare disease**, translating to approximately 8.4 - 10 crore people.
3. Currently, **63 rare diseases are included under the National Policy for Rare Diseases**, which was recommended by the Central Technical Committee for Rare Diseases (CTCRD).
4. **Therapies are available for less than 5% of rare diseases**, leading to less than 1 in 10 patients receiving disease-specific care.
5. **Many medicines and therapies for rare diseases are patented**, which makes them **very expensive**.
6. The **market for these drugs is small and the development costs are also high**, so pharmaceutical companies often don't find it profitable to produce them, pushing up prices. Therefore, these drugs are called '**orphan drugs**'

Challenges

1. **Limited commercial incentive:** The small patient population reduces the incentive for pharmaceutical companies to invest in research and development of orphan drugs.
2. **High cost of medicines:** Rare-disease medicines can cost around **₹1 crore or more per patient annually**, making them inaccessible without government support or insurance.
3. **Insufficient financial support:** Although the Government of India provides support of up to **₹50 lakh**, this may not cover the total treatment cost, forcing families to depend on crowdfunding.
4. **Limited availability of drugs:** Existing rare-disease drugs address only around **5% of rare diseases and associated conditions**, leaving most patients without suitable treatment.
5. **Difficulty in clinical trials:** Identifying adequate patient cohorts and determining suitable **clinical endpoints** are major challenges in developing orphan drugs.
6. **Limited participation of Indian patients:** Despite India's large patient population, Indian patients are generally underrepresented in **international orphan-drug clinical trials**.
7. **Small-scale manufacturing:** After approval, producing and distributing medicines in **small volumes at affordable prices while maintaining quality** remains difficult.
8. **Regulatory challenges:** Greater transparency and clearer guidance for drug developers and sponsors can improve the regulatory approval process.
9. **Access versus benefit-sharing:** Patients participating in research should be able to access the resulting medicines. Developing expensive drugs that remain unaffordable locally limits the social benefit of such research.
10. **Global competition:** Countries such as the U.S.A and China are investing heavily in rare-disease drug development, creating both competition and opportunities for international collaboration.

India's Opportunities

1. **Large patient pool:** India's population provides a potentially **large cohort for clinical trials**. Certain communities also have higher prevalence of particular genetic disorders because of **endogamy**.
2. **Patient advocacy networks:** Patient groups and disease-specific registries can help identify suitable participants for clinical research.
3. **Unique genetic diversity:** Indian and diaspora populations possess **unique genetic mutations**, providing opportunities for research into rare diseases.
4. **Strong pharmaceutical manufacturing base:** India has established capabilities in **generics, biosimilars and newer therapies such as CAR-T**, and can manufacture medicines at relatively low cost.

Way Forward

1. **Promote global-Indian collaboration:** Encourage multinational pharmaceutical companies to establish **rare-disease drug-development centres in India** in collaboration with Indian organisations and patient groups.
2. **Increase Indian participation in trials:** Integrate Indian patients into international clinical trials while ensuring that participating communities can benefit from the resulting medicines.
3. **Adopt benefit-sharing:** Drug-development benefits should be shared **fairly and equitably**, including affordable access to medicines in India and the Global South.
4. **Streamline regulation:** Develop clearer regulatory guidance and reduce unnecessary duplication while maintaining **bioequivalence, safety, toxicity, efficacy, pharmacovigilance and manufacturing standards**.
5. **Provide targeted incentives:** Use **production-linked incentives, tax incentives and investment support** to encourage domestic orphan-drug manufacturing.
6. **Support technology transfer:** Facilitate technology transfer and process development through collaboration between pharmaceutical companies and **national laboratories**.
7. **Use Advanced Market Commitments:** The government can commit to purchasing a specified quantity at an agreed price, thereby providing manufacturers with **predictable demand**.
8. **Strengthen public procurement and distribution:** Medicines can be distributed through **Centres of Excellence for Rare Diseases, CGHS and Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras**.
9. **Promote exports:** Incentives can encourage Indian manufacturers to supply affordable rare-disease medicines to **low- and middle-income countries**.
10. **De-risk rather than merely subsidise:** Government policy should reduce the initial financial risks sufficiently to make orphan-drug manufacturing **commercially viable**, rather than simply subsidising companies.

Conclusion: India already possesses the **manufacturing capacity, large patient pool, scientific potential and pharmaceutical expertise** required to enter the rare-disease drug sector. A combination of **affordable access, patient participation, streamlined regulation, targeted incentives, government procurement and international collaboration** can help India move from being the “pharmacy of the world” to becoming a significant producer of **accessible rare-disease medicines**.

Question: Rare diseases pose challenges of affordability, accessibility and limited research. Discuss how India can leverage its pharmaceutical capabilities to develop a globally competitive rare-disease drug industry.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tackling Food Loss and Waste — India's Opportunity

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- issues of buffer stocks and food security

Introduction

Food loss and waste is a major global challenge affecting **food security, climate, natural resources and economic efficiency**. India produces enough food for its 1.4 billion people, yet significant losses occur across the value chain. Reducing these losses can create a **triple win** through stronger nutrition and food security, lower emissions and resource pressure, and better incomes and productivity.

Present Status of Food Loss and Waste in India

1. **National evidence base:** India is the only country with three national post-harvest loss surveys, covering **45, 45 and 54 commodities** during 2005-07, 2012-14 and 2020-22.
2. **Supply-chain coverage:** The surveys cover losses from farm to retail, supporting India's reporting of the **Food Loss Index under the Sustainable Development Goals**.
3. **Data gap:** Existing estimates mainly cover farm and supply-chain losses, while data on **retail, hotels, restaurants and household food waste** remains less developed.
4. **Wholesale waste:** Major wholesale markets can generate **up to 100 tonnes of organic waste daily**, contributing significantly to urban waste streams.
5. **Scale of market waste:** Wholesale markets generate an estimated **3.5 million tonnes of organic waste annually**, showing a major resource-recovery opportunity.
6. **International focus:** September 29 is observed as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, bringing attention to food-system sustainability and climate impacts.

Major Causes of Food Loss and Waste

1. **Post-harvest losses:** Food is lost through weaknesses in **storage, drying, cooling, moisture management and processing** across the value chain.
2. **Spoilage:** Food becomes waste when it **spoils** before reaching consumers, contributing to the large volume of uneaten food globally.
3. **Excess production:** Producing more food than required can create **surplus that may ultimately remain unused**.
4. **Poor meal planning:** Poor planning at the consumption stage can leave **prepared food uneaten**, adding to household food waste.

5. **Supply-chain handling gaps:** Weak movement and management of food across the supply chain can increase avoidable losses before food reaches consumers.

Key Challenges in Reducing Food Loss and Waste

1. **Limited data:** India has stronger evidence on farm and supply-chain losses, but data on **household, retail, hotel and restaurant food waste** remains less developed.
2. **Technology and infrastructure access:** Farmers, producer organisations and small businesses need **affordable access** to improved storage, cooling, drying and moisture-control technologies.
3. **Fragmented policy approach:** Food loss and waste need stronger integration into **agricultural planning, food-processing strategies, climate action and investment decisions**.
4. **Waste-management capacity:** Municipalities and market committees need better **segregation, collection and treatment systems** for organic waste.
5. **Financing gap:** Moving from individual interventions to a connected national approach requires investment directed towards technologies and infrastructure with the greatest impact.

Environmental and Socio-Economic Implications

1. **Food security:** Reducing food losses can strengthen **food security and nutrition** by keeping more produced food available for use.
2. **Resource efficiency:** Lost food also wastes the **land, water, energy and other resources** used to produce it, increasing pressure on natural resources.
3. **Climate impact:** Food loss and waste cause up to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, while methane from food waste has 86 times the warming effect of CO₂ over 20 years.

Initiatives and Emerging Models

1. **FAO-SIDBI partnership:** FAO and SIDBI are linking food-loss hotspots with **drying, moisture control, energy-efficient cooling and storage**, along with financing for SMEs.
2. **Urban food-waste management:** FAO is developing a **Package of Practices** to help cities measure, prevent, reduce, redistribute and valorise food waste.
3. **Waste-to-value model:** A **50-tonne-a-day bio-CNG plant in Surat** has operated for over five years and reportedly reduces methane-related emissions by about **7,500 tonnes annually**.
4. **Food Waste Breakthrough:** Launched at **COP30 in Belém**, the initiative brings governments, businesses and cities together to **halve food waste by 2030** and reduce methane emissions by up to 7%.
5. **Global methane commitment:** More than **60 countries** have pledged to reduce waste-sector methane emissions by **30–35% below 2020 levels by 2030**, while promoting waste prevention, composting and biogas.

6. **International models:** Brazil, Japan, the UK and Kenya demonstrate approaches including **food-waste prevention, surplus-food redistribution and organic-waste recovery**

Opportunities for India

1. **Resource recovery:** India can convert the estimated **3.5 million tonnes of annual wholesale-market organic waste** into compost, biogas, energy and carbon-credit value.
2. **Food security and nutrition:** Reducing losses can make more food available for consumption, strengthening **food security and nutrition**.
3. **Resource efficiency:** Reducing food loss can lower pressure on **land, water and energy** while supporting India's resource-efficiency goals.
4. **Income and productivity:** Better storage, cooling, processing and moisture management can reduce losses while improving **productivity and incomes** for farmers, producer organisations and small businesses.
5. **Circular economy:** Surplus food can be **redistributed**, while unavoidable organic residues can be converted into compost, biogas or energy, creating additional economic value.
6. **Urban opportunity:** Wholesale markets and cities can become centres of **organic-waste recovery**, supported by markets for compost, biogas and other recovered materials.

Way Forward

1. **Prevention-first approach:** Food waste should first be prevented; unavoidable organic waste should then be **segregated and converted into compost, biogas or other useful products** instead of being sent to landfills.
2. **Close data gaps:** India should expand measurement of food waste across households, retail, hotels and restaurants to build a fuller national evidence base.
3. **Target investment:** Finance should prioritise infrastructure and technologies where **food-loss reduction can have the greatest impact**.
4. **Improve accessibility:** Solutions should remain affordable and accessible to **farmers, producer organisations and small businesses**.
5. **Integrate policies:** Food loss and waste reduction should become part of **agricultural, food-processing, urban and climate policy**.
6. **Build a national approach:** India should move beyond individual interventions and connect **data, technology, finance and implementation from farm to market to city**.

Conclusion

India has developed a strong evidence base and workable models for reducing food loss and waste. The next priority is to close data gaps, expand affordable solutions, strengthen organic-waste management and integrate

loss reduction into agricultural, food-processing, urban and climate policies. A coordinated approach can improve food security, resource efficiency, climate action, incomes and productivity across the agrifood system.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges of food loss and waste in India and the opportunities it offers for strengthening food security, resource efficiency and climate action.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Revisiting the Farmer Question

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

India's agriculture sector contributes only about **15–18% of GDP** but employs around **46% of the workforce**, making it central to rural livelihoods despite the economy's shift towards industry and services. Agriculture has also recorded **3.6% average annual GDP growth from 2004–05 to 2023–24** and agricultural exports of around **\$51 billion over the last three years**. Yet small holdings, water stress, climate risks, rising input costs and weak market linkages continue to limit farm incomes.

Major Challenges Facing Indian Agriculture

1. **Small and fragmented landholdings:** About **86% of farmers own less than two hectares**, limiting economies of scale, diversification and technology adoption, and making it difficult to sustain satisfactory farm incomes.
2. **Water stress and groundwater depletion:** Around half of farmed land depends entirely on unpredictable rainfall, while intensive irrigation is depleting groundwater and increasing competition for scarce water resources.
3. **Climate change and rising input costs:** Erratic rainfall, floods, droughts and heat waves cause crop losses, while rising costs of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and fuel reduce farm margins.
4. **Weak agricultural value chains:** Poor storage, processing and fragmented supply chains, along with intermediaries, reduce bargaining power and farmers' share of final value.
5. **Global trade and price pressures:** Small farmers cannot remain insulated from global markets, while low global food-price priorities and external trade pressures can make farm-gate prices less remunerative.
6. **Resource and policy constraints:** Skewed fertilizer subsidies encourage excessive fertilizer use, while public debt can limit governments' financial flexibility for long-term support.
7. **WTO and trade governance pressures:** WTO-related weaknesses and problems with dispute settlement can create difficulties for India in protecting its agricultural interests.

8. **Governance and accountability concerns:** Ineffective leadership and weak responsibility within agriculture departments can reduce the effectiveness of policies at national and state levels.

Major Policy Initiatives for Farmer Welfare

1. **National Commission on Farmers (2004–06):** Constituted under **Prof. M. S. Swaminathan**, the NCF submitted five reports addressing farmer distress, productivity, profitability, sustainability, credit, insurance, markets and access to productive resources.
2. **National Policy for Farmers, 2007:** Formulated largely on the basis of **NCF recommendations**, the policy provided a broader framework for addressing farmers' economic and livelihood concerns.
3. **Inter-Ministerial Committee, 2016:** The Government constituted an **Inter-Ministerial Committee** to implement NCF and NPF recommendations and develop a strategy for **doubling farmers' income**.

Core Recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers

1. **Shift from productivity to farmer welfare:** The NCF treated agricultural distress as an income and livelihood issue and judged policy by farmers' well-being, not only production or yield.
2. **Assured access to productive resources:** Farmers need timely access to land, water, technology, credit, insurance, knowledge and markets; the NCF also proposed placing agriculture in the Concurrent List.
3. **Research, extension and sustainable farming:** Closer research–farmer links should support better farming practices, while efficient water use, conservation farming, soil health and biodiversity should protect long-term productivity.
4. **Stronger agricultural infrastructure and markets:** The NCF proposed irrigation, drainage, water conservation, transport, soil testing, storage, grading, packaging and processing to improve farm competitiveness and market access.
5. **Better bargaining power and price protection:** Direct marketing, wider markets, farmer aggregation, remunerative prices and import protection during global price falls can reduce market vulnerability.
6. **Land and resource-use planning:** Land reforms and a National Land Use Advisory Service can link land-use decisions with ecological, weather and market conditions and protect prime agricultural land.
7. **Farmer-centric contract farming:** The NCF supported contract farming but sought comprehensive agreements covering quality, payment, pricing, withdrawal, calamities and arbitration to prevent farmer exploitation.
8. **Diversified rural livelihoods and social security:** Rural security should include agriculture and allied activities, rural enterprises and non-farm employment, alongside credit, insurance, healthcare and other social support.

Relevance of the NCF Vision in a Changing Agricultural Economy

1. **Incomplete implementation:** Several NCF recommendations have been implemented through separate schemes, but its broader vision of **economically viable farming, risk reduction and stronger farmer bargaining power** remains incomplete.
2. **Integrated policy approach:** The NCF's broader vision requires linking **production, markets, livelihoods, risk management and sustainability** instead of addressing these concerns through separate measures.
3. **Global market integration:** India cannot remain insulated from global markets, but small farmers also cannot be exposed to them without adequate protection from market-related vulnerabilities.
4. **Trade and farmer protection:** Greater global market integration should create opportunities for farmers while protecting small producers through **carefully designed trade safeguards and stronger domestic market capacity**.

Way Forward

1. **Combine income security with productivity:** Agricultural policy should combine remunerative prices, productivity, risk management and farmer aggregation rather than treating production growth as the sole objective.
2. **Strengthen value addition and market access:** Better storage, processing, transportation, direct marketing and value addition can help farmers capture a larger share of agricultural value.
3. **Invest in sustainable infrastructure and research:** Public investment should strengthen irrigation, water conservation, soil health, transport, agricultural research and extension while keeping productivity gains ecologically sustainable.
4. **Improve access to credit and insurance:** Formal credit and insurance should reach small and needy farmers adequately and on time, reducing vulnerability to production and income shocks.
5. **Complete the NCF vision through policy reform:** The task is to update the NCF's approach through long-term reforms connecting resources, production, markets, livelihoods, sustainability and trade safeguards.

Conclusion

India's farmer question requires moving beyond production growth towards **economically viable, sustainable and secure livelihoods**. The NCF provides a broad framework linking productive resources, farmer incomes, risk management, stronger value chains and diversified rural employment. Its vision needs to be updated through **integrated policy, sustainable infrastructure, better market access, farmer aggregation, value addition, credit, insurance and carefully designed trade safeguards**.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the relevance of the National Commission on Farmers' recommendations in addressing the contemporary challenges of Indian agriculture.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Digital agriculture and the problem of exclusion

Source: The post “Digital agriculture and the problem of exclusion” has been created based on “Digital agriculture and the problem of exclusion” published in “Business Line” on 30th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: In recent times, the Digital technologies, including AI, have significant potential to improve **farm productivity and farmers’ incomes sustainably**. However, their true benefits can be realised only when they reach the majority of farmers and are effectively integrated into agricultural practices.

About Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)

1. The Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM) was **launched in September 2024**.
2. It **aims to create a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for agriculture and establish a robust, farmer-centric digital ecosystem in the country.
3. Through **AgriStack, Farmers Registry, Digital Crop Survey, Krishi-DSS and scientific soil mapping**, the Mission aims **to improve access to agricultural services, strengthen evidence-based planning and promote sustainable and efficient agriculture**.
4. The **Mission seeks to make reliable and timely crop-related information available** to farmers and promote innovative digital solutions in agriculture.

Major concerns with Digital Agriculture

1. Land-based definition of farmers

- a. The DAM’s approach to identifying farmers is **closely linked to land ownership**, which can exclude people who cultivate land without owning it.
- b. **Women cultivators and tenant farmers** may therefore remain outside the formal digital agricultural system.
- c. This is significant because women constitute nearly **42% of the agricultural workforce**, while **75% of rural women are employed in agriculture**, but women constitute only around **17% of rural landowners**.

2. Exclusion of tenant farmers

- a. Tenant farmers play an important role in agricultural production but generally cultivate **leased-in land without formal ownership rights**.
- b. They are **often landless or near-landless** and have historically remained outside official farmer registers.
- c. Their exclusion from digital farmer databases can restrict their access to **agricultural credit, subsidised inputs, direct benefit transfers and procurement services**.

3. Lack of uniform farmer identification

- a. The responsibility for identifying farmers is largely left to **State Governments**, without mandatory guidelines.

- b. This **may result in variations in identification practices** and further exclusion of cultivators who do not possess formal land titles.

4. Earlier policy recommendations remain unimplemented

- a. The **National Agricultural Policy (2000)**, **National Policy for Farmers (2007)** and the **Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income (2018)** had highlighted the need to broaden the definition of farmers.
- b. These recommendations also emphasised the need to recognise **women's land rights and delink farmer status from land ownership**.
- c. Building digital infrastructure without resolving these underlying issues may **institutionalise existing forms of exclusion**.

5. Agricultural labourers remain outside the main focus

- a. Landless agricultural workers, who often work under precarious conditions, receive limited attention within the DAM framework.
- b. Many belong to historically marginalised communities, particularly **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**.
- c. Village studies indicate that such workers are often **pluriactive**, and some also work as poor tenant farmers.

6. Risk of technological unemployment

- a. Agricultural digitalisation can increase demand for **skilled workers** while reducing demand for routine manual labour.
- b. Automation **may have a greater labour-displacing impact in countries** where agricultural labour productivity is relatively low.
- c. The **overall impact of digitalisation on rural labour markets** remains uncertain and therefore requires systematic assessment.

7. Lack of institutional support for displaced workers

- a. The DAM does not provide a clear institutional mechanism to **anticipate technological disruption** in rural employment.
- b. There is a need for **reskilling, new skills and alternative employment opportunities** for workers who may be displaced by technological change.

8. Limited access to smartphones and internet

- a. **Access to digital infrastructure** is an essential precondition **for benefiting from digital agriculture**.
- b. According to the **Comprehensive Modular Survey (2025)** of the National Sample Survey Office, only around **half of rural adults** report both owning a smartphone and having internet access within their household.
- c. The **proportion is significantly lower among rural women**, with only **slightly more than one-third** living in households with internet access and owning a smartphone.

9. Digital literacy remains inadequate

- a. Merely possessing a computer or smartphone does not necessarily mean that people can make meaningful use of digital services.
- b. When digital literacy is measured in terms of the ability to use the internet for **informational purposes**, more than **one-fourth of rural households** are digitally illiterate.
- c. Nearly **half of rural adults** report that they cannot use the internet for informational purposes.

10. Gender and social inequalities in digital access

- a. Digital illiteracy is disproportionately higher among **women and marginalised groups**.
- b. Therefore, without targeted interventions, digitalisation may reproduce or deepen the existing **social, economic and gender inequalities** in Indian agriculture.

11. Concerns regarding data governance

- a. Greater dependence on digital platforms and agricultural databases also raises concerns regarding **data privacy and transparency**.
- b. Farmers **need adequate safeguards regarding the collection, use and management** of their personal and agricultural data.

Way forward

1. **Broaden the definition of farmer:** Farmer status should not be dependent solely on land ownership. **Women cultivators, tenant farmers and other actual cultivators** should be incorporated into digital farmer databases.
2. **Ensure inclusive farmer identification:** The Centre should provide **clear and mandatory guidelines to States** for identifying all categories of cultivators.
3. **Bridge the gender digital divide:** Improve women's access to **smartphones, internet connectivity and digital training**. Digital services should be designed in accessible and user-friendly formats.
4. **Strengthen digital literacy:** Promote village-level digital literacy programmes through **SHGs, cooperatives, Panchayats and agricultural extension networks**. Training should focus on meaningful agricultural uses rather than merely basic computer skills.
5. **Protect agricultural workers:** Establish mechanisms to assess the impact of automation on rural employment. Provide **reskilling, upskilling and alternative employment opportunities** to workers affected by technological change.
6. **Ensure data protection and transparency:** Farmers should understand how their agricultural and personal data are collected, processed and used. Strong safeguards for **privacy, consent and transparency** are necessary.
7. **Adopt a holistic approach:** Digital agriculture policy should consider not only farm productivity but also **employment, gender, social inclusion, digital access and rural livelihoods**.

Conclusion: Digitalisation can transform Indian agriculture only when its benefits reach the **entire farming and rural workforce**. Therefore, DAM needs to move from a predominantly **land-based farmer-centric approach to an inclusive cultivator- and livelihood-centric approach**, ensuring that technology becomes a tool of empowerment rather than another source of exclusion.

Question: What are the major challenges associated with the Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), and how can digital agriculture be made more inclusive in India?

Source: [Business Line](#)

Why bond yields are staying high

Source: The post “Why bond yields are staying high” has been created based on “Why bond yields are staying high” published in “Business Line” on 30th September 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-3- Indian Economy

Context: High bond yields have become a global phenomenon. Even though inflation has declined, long-term government bond yields remain high in countries like the US, Europe and Japan. Investors are now looking beyond inflation and focusing on high government debt, borrowing needs and risks of holding long-term bonds. In India, high bond yields are also a concern as they can increase borrowing costs, discourage private investment and affect economic growth.

About Sovereign Bond Yield

1. Sovereign bond yield is **the interest rate paid to the buyer of the bond by the government, or sovereign entity**, issuing that debt instrument.
2. They are **issued by governments to raise capital and are considered risk-free assets**.
3. In India, high yields are being driven by a combination of **inflation expectations, fiscal concerns, monetary policy expectations, liquidity conditions, market risk and global factors**.

Reason behind bond yields remaining high in India and concerns related to it

1. **Inflation expectations:** Rising global crude oil prices are creating concerns about future inflation, which encourages investors to demand higher yields on long-term government bonds.
2. **Higher subsidy burden:** The rising burden of government subsidies creates concerns about fiscal finances and future government borrowing, which can put upward pressure on bond yields.
3. **Expectation of tight monetary policy:** Markets expect monetary policy to remain relatively tight because of inflation concerns, and the hawkish tone of the August 2026 monetary-policy minutes further contributed to higher yields.
4. **High government borrowing and interest burden:** The government has significant borrowing requirements, while interest payments already consume around **37 per cent of its total revenues**. Persistently high yields can therefore increase the government's debt-servicing burden.
5. **High US Treasury yields:** Movements in US Treasury yields influence Indian bond yields because investors compare returns available in India with those available in global markets.
6. **Geopolitical tensions:** Continuing geopolitical conflicts increase uncertainty and risk premiums, which can lead investors to demand higher returns on long-term bonds.
7. **Inadequate capital inflows:** Weak net capital inflows reduce demand for Indian financial assets and can contribute to higher domestic bond yields.
8. **Earlier tight liquidity conditions:** During the second half of FY26, banks faced rapidly increasing credit demand while deposit growth remained sluggish. They therefore liquidated part of their excess Standing Liquidity Ratio and Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) holdings to meet credit requirements.
9. **RBI's foreign-exchange intervention:** RBI's intermittent intervention in the foreign-exchange market absorbed rupee liquidity and contributed to tighter financial conditions.

Why have yields remained high despite improved liquidity?

1. **Improved liquidity has not created sufficient demand for G-Secs:** System-level liquidity crossed ₹10 trillion by September 7, 2026, and excess liquidity remained around ₹5 trillion even after tax payments and RBI's ₹1 trillion OMO sales. However, **banks have not converted all this liquidity into purchases of long-term government securities.**
2. **Banks are concerned about market risk:** Banks are **cautious about buying government securities** because a rise in bond yields causes bond prices to fall, resulting in mark-to-market losses on their existing holdings.
3. **Banks have already suffered MTM losses:** Banks **have experienced losses on their government-securities portfolios in recent quarters**, which has reduced their appetite for taking additional interest-rate risk.
4. **Surplus G-Sec holdings have declined:** Banks **hold government securities mainly because of regulatory requirements** such as SLR and LCR, but their surplus holdings, particularly in the trading book, have already declined.
5. **Stricter market-risk regulations:** RBI has **tightened the market-risk framework for banks' investments under the Basel III framework**, making banks more cautious about holding securities that are sensitive to changes in interest rates.

Impact of high bond yields

1. **High yields increase the government's borrowing cost:** When government bond yields remain high, the government has to pay a higher rate of interest on new borrowing, increasing pressure on public finances.
2. **High yields can discourage private investment:** Government bond yields provide a benchmark for borrowing costs in the economy, so persistently high yields can make loans more expensive for businesses and weaken the emerging private investment cycle.
3. **High yields can reduce household borrowing:** Higher borrowing costs can make non-housing retail loans more expensive, which may encourage households to reduce their borrowing and consumption.
4. **High yields can affect banks:** Banks may face mark-to-market losses on their bond holdings, while weaker demand for retail loans can also affect an important source of their income.
5. **High yields can affect economic growth:** Higher government, corporate and household borrowing costs can reduce investment and consumption and may therefore add to concerns about economic slowdown.

Positive factors

1. India's debt dynamics are relatively better than those of many other countries.
2. The government remains committed to fiscal consolidation.
3. Underlying inflation, excluding food, fuel and precious metals, has remained below 3%.
4. Government supply-management measures have helped keep retail inflation under control.
5. Improved liquidity following FCNR(B) mobilisation provides greater flexibility for monetary and liquidity management.

Policy measures

1. **Calibrated liquidity management:** RBI should manage excess liquidity carefully rather than relying excessively on OMO sales. **14-day or longer-term VRRR** operations could be used as the main liquidity-management instrument.

2. **Forex sell-buy swaps:** A forex sell-buy swap could be used to absorb excess liquidity. It could also allow RBI to opportunistically reduce forward forex liabilities.
3. **Avoid excessive OMO sales:** With yields already moving upward, further OMO sales could put additional upward pressure on yields.
4. **Appropriate monetary-policy calibration:** RBI need not necessarily match every rate move of the US Federal Reserve. India's policy rate has remained relatively high compared with peers.
5. **Tolerate temporary supply-side inflation:** Since **current CPI inflation is largely supply-driven**, monetary policy may tolerate it as long as inflation does not breach the upper limit of the tolerance band.
6. **Clear monetary-policy communication:** RBI should **communicate that protecting the economy from global headwinds** is important. It can also emphasise the possibility of transmission from monetary policy to long-term yields and lending rates.
7. **Fiscal consolidation:** Continued fiscal consolidation is important for **containing concerns regarding government debt and borrowing requirements**. Strategic disinvestment of PSU shares can support this process.
8. **Monitoring global risks:** A **moderation in crude oil prices following an early resolution of the Middle East conflict** could ease inflationary pressures. If crude remains around **\$100 per barrel**, India would need to manage the resulting pressure through its accumulated economic resilience.

Conclusion: High Indian bond yields are therefore **not merely an inflation problem**. They reflect the interaction of **fiscal borrowing, inflation expectations, monetary-policy expectations, bank-level market risk, liquidity management, global yields and geopolitical uncertainties**. A combination of **credible fiscal consolidation, calibrated liquidity management, appropriate monetary-policy communication and careful management of global shocks** can help reduce pressure on the long end of the bond market while protecting growth and financial stability.

Question: Why have sovereign bond yields remained elevated in India despite easing inflation and improved liquidity conditions? Discuss the implications of high bond yields for the Indian economy and suggest suitable policy measures.

Source: [Business Line](#)

What are the provisions of AFSPA?

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Security

Introduction

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has extended Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958 for another six months from October 1, 2026, in parts of Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. In Manipur, the entire State remains a "disturbed area", except the jurisdictions of 13 police stations in five Valley districts. The extension comes amid the continuing security concerns following the ethnic conflict that began on May 3, 2023, which reversed the earlier reduction of AFSPA-covered areas in the State.

AFSPA and the Concept of a "Disturbed Area"

1. **Origin of AFSPA:** A special powers law was first promulgated in 1942 during the Quit India movement. After Independence, AFSPA was enacted in 1958 to address increasing violence in Northeast India.
2. **Purpose of the Act:** AFSPA gives armed forces special legal powers to maintain public order in areas where State authorities face serious insurgency and internal security problems.
3. **Meaning of Disturbed Area:** Under Section 3, an area can be declared disturbed because of differences or disputes between different religious, racial, language, regional, caste or community groups.
4. **Authority to Declare:** The Central and State Governments can declare an area disturbed. For Union Territories, the administrator can also make such a declaration.
5. **Duration of Declaration:** A disturbed-area declaration continues until it is revoked. The Supreme Court has stressed that such declarations should be time-limited and reviewed periodically.
6. **Geographical Application:** AFSPA, 1958 currently applies in parts of the Northeast. Jammu and Kashmir has a separate Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1990.

Major Provisions and Powers under AFSPA

1. **Use of Force:** Armed forces may use force, including lethal force after due warning, against persons acting in contravention of prohibitory orders, subject to the Act.
2. **Arrest Without Warrant:** Personnel can arrest a person without a warrant when the conditions prescribed under AFSPA are met.
3. **Search Without Warrant:** Armed forces can enter and search premises without a warrant, enabling action during security operations.
4. **Restriction on Gatherings:** Armed forces can prohibit gatherings of five or more persons in a disturbed area.
5. **Control of Firearms:** The armed forces can ban the possession of firearms in areas where AFSPA is in force.
6. **Protection from Prosecution:** Prosecution or other legal proceedings for acts done or purportedly done under AFSPA require prior sanction from the Central Government.

Evolution and Present Status of AFSPA in the Northeast

1. Manipur

- **Manipur Before 2023:** AFSPA had operated in Manipur since 1981. Its application was withdrawn from the Imphal municipal area in 2004.
- **Withdrawal During 2022–23:** Between April 1, 2022 and April 1, 2023, AFSPA was withdrawn from all police-station areas in the Manipur Valley because the security situation had improved.

- **Reversal After Conflict:** The ethnic conflict beginning on May 3, 2023 reversed the earlier reduction of AFSPA-covered areas in Manipur.
- **Reimposition in 2024:** On November 14, 2024, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reimposed AFSPA in six police-station jurisdictions across five districts. These included areas where AFSPA had earlier been withdrawn.
- **Centre-State Disagreement:** On November 15, 2024, the Manipur Cabinet recommended that the Centre review and withdraw the notification in public interest.
- **Current Position in Manipur:** From October 1, 2026, the entire State is a disturbed area except 13 police-station jurisdictions in five Valley districts.

2. **Current Position in Nagaland:** AFSPA continues in nine districts of Nagaland. It also continues in areas under 21 police stations across five other districts.

3. **Current Position in Arunachal Pradesh:** AFSPA continues in Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts. It also covers areas under Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district bordering Assam.

4. **Other Northeastern States:** In Assam, disturbed-area notifications are issued by the State Government. AFSPA was withdrawn from Tripura in 2015 and from Meghalaya on April 1, 2018, after 27 years.

Why Does AFSPA Continue in Some Areas?

1. **Insurgency and Security Threats:** AFSPA provides armed forces legal powers to respond to insurgency and serious internal security problems.
2. **Operational Requirement:** Ordinary use of force may require a magistrate's presence. Such presence cannot always be ensured during fast-moving terrorist and insurgent operations.
3. **Border Security:** Northeast India has major strategic importance because it shares borders with five countries, including Myanmar and China.
4. **Nagaland's Political Issue:** AFSPA continues in Nagaland partly because of armed insurgent groups and the unresolved Naga political issue.
5. **Peace Process Uncertainty:** Security officials indicated that uncertainty over the conclusion of the Naga peace process was one reason AFSPA continued in some areas.
6. **Arunachal Pradesh:** Its application remains concentrated in districts affected by insurgent movement and areas adjoining Assam.

Why is AFSPA Controversial?

1. **Extraordinary Powers:** AFSPA gives armed forces powers of lethal force, warrantless arrest and warrantless search that ordinary police do not possess.

2. **Accountability Concerns:** The requirement of prior Central sanction for prosecution has raised concerns about accountability for alleged violations under AFSPA.
3. **Hegde Commission Findings:** The Hegde Commission found all seven deaths in the six cases it examined to be extrajudicial executions. It also reported widespread abuse of AFSPA by security forces in Manipur.
4. **Concerns in J&K:** Over 20 years, the Centre denied prosecution sanctions in all cases recommended by the J&K Government against army personnel under AFSPA.
5. **Army's Position:** The Army has argued that AFSPA helps control insurgency operations and protect the borders. It also helps avoid prolonged court proceedings that could affect military responsibilities.

Judicial and Committee Oversight

1. **Supreme Court Framework:** In *Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India* (1998), the Supreme Court upheld AFSPA's constitutionality while laying down safeguards.
2. **Periodic Review:** The Court said disturbed-area declarations should be time-limited and reviewed periodically, especially after six months.
3. **Minimum Force:** Officials exercising AFSPA powers must use only the minimum force necessary for effective action.
4. **Jeevan Reddy Committee:** The committee recommended repealing AFSPA and incorporating suitable provisions into UAPA. It also recommended grievance cells in districts where armed forces are deployed.
5. **Administrative Reforms Commission:** The Second Administrative Reforms Commission also recommended repeal of AFSPA in its report on public order.
6. **Verma and Hegde Committees:** Their reports stressed the need to address abuses under AFSPA. They also supported measures to address the effective impunity associated with security-force actions.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Accountability:** The government should ensure accountability for human-rights violations while addressing the operational needs of armed forces.
2. **Increase Transparency:** Details of court-martials concerning human-rights violations under AFSPA should be placed in the public domain.
3. **Periodic Review:** Disturbed-area notifications should be reviewed regularly. This can help reduce AFSPA-covered areas when security conditions improve.
4. **Resolve Insurgency Through Dialogue:** The government should pursue dialogue with insurgent groups to address long-running conflicts in the Northeast.

5. **Address Governance Issues:** Socio-political and governance-related issues contributing to insurgency should be addressed alongside security measures.

Conclusion

Balancing Security and Accountability: AFSPA provides special powers to armed forces in areas facing serious security challenges. These powers therefore need accountability, transparency and periodic review. Dialogue with insurgent groups and attention to governance and socio-political issues can address the conditions behind prolonged security challenges. This can help balance security requirements with the protection of citizens' rights.

Question for practice:

Discuss the provisions of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), its application in the Northeast, and the concerns surrounding its use.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Meaning of Reduction in Import Duty on Edible Oils in India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Food security and Indian economy

Introduction

India meets a significant share of its edible-oil demand through imports, making domestic prices vulnerable to global price movements, currency changes and supply disruptions. With international vegetable-oil prices rising and festive-season demand expected to increase, the government reduced the Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on major imported edible oils from September 24. The measure seeks to lower landed costs and provide consumer relief, while raising a policy challenge of balancing affordability, farmer interests, domestic refining and long-term edible-oil security.

Current Status and Price Pressures in India's Edible Oil Sector

1. **High import dependence:** India meets about **two-thirds of its edible-oil requirements through imports**, making domestic prices vulnerable to global prices, currency movements and supply disruptions.
2. **Palm oil dominance:** Palm oil accounted for **7.52 million tonnes, or 46.77% of edible-oil imports**, making India highly exposed to global palm-oil prices.
3. **Global price pressure:** The FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index reached **196.9 points in August**, its highest level since June 2022, driven mainly by palm and soybean oil prices.
4. **Supply vulnerability:** Global weather risks, including possible **El Niño effects in Southeast Asia**, can affect palm-oil production and increase international prices.
5. **Rising import bill:** India's edible-oil import bill is estimated to rise **9% to ₹1.75 lakh crore** in the marketing year ending October, partly due to higher import volumes and a weaker rupee.

Government's Import-Duty Reduction: Rationale and Key Changes

1. **Crude oil duty cut:** BCD on **crude sunflower oil** fell from **10% to Nil**, while crude soybean and palm oil duties fell from **10% to 5%**.
2. **Refined oil duty cut:** BCD on refined sunflower oil was reduced from **32.5% to 22.5%**, while refined soybean and palm oils fell to **27.5%**; peanut and olive oils also saw reductions.
3. **Crude-refined differential:** The government retained a **19.25 percentage-point duty differential** between crude and refined edible oils to support domestic refining.
4. **Price moderation:** Lower import duties are expected to reduce the **landed cost of imported oils**, which can lower domestic prices through the supply chain.
5. **Inflation control:** The measure aims to provide **consumer relief and contain food-price and overall inflationary pressures** arising from higher global edible-oil prices.
6. **Festive-season demand:** The reduction also seeks to improve availability when household demand and requirements from **sweets, snacks, food services and hotels** are expected to increase.
7. **Consumer price transmission:** The Food Ministry directed industry to reduce **Price to Distributors (PTD) and Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs)** in line with lower landed costs.

Impact on Consumers, Farmers and Domestic Industry

1. **Consumer relief:** Lower import duties can reduce landed costs and, if fully transmitted, provide **lower cooking-oil prices** during a period of high demand.
2. **Domestic refining:** Maintaining the crude-refined duty differential encourages imports of crude oil rather than refined oil, supporting **domestic refining and value addition**.
3. **Farmer concerns:** Cheaper imported oils can increase competition for domestic oilseed farmers and may weaken incentives for expanding **soybean, sunflower, groundnut and palm cultivation**.
4. **Self-sufficiency concern:** Farmers have questioned whether cheaper imports are consistent with the government's objective of achieving **self-reliance in edible-oil production**.
5. **Palm-oil substitution:** The edible-oil industry expects greater availability of sunflower and soybean oils to shift some demand from palm oil, whose prices may remain relatively high amid Indonesia's **B50 biofuel mandate** and limited acreage expansion.

Broader Policy Concerns: Affordability, Self-Reliance and Sustainability

1. **Short-term relief vs. self-reliance:** Import-duty cuts can provide immediate price relief, while reducing import dependence requires sustained growth in domestic production and productivity.
2. **Need for diversification:** Heavy dependence on palm oil and a limited group of suppliers makes diversification of both the **edible-oil basket and import sources** important.
3. **Sustainability and affordability:** Certification, traceability and supply-chain changes can raise the cost of sustainable palm-oil sourcing, creating a need for a gradual transition.

4. **Sustainability and competitiveness:** Sustainable sourcing can be linked with India's **processed-food export competitiveness**, rather than being treated only as an additional compliance cost.

Government Initiatives for Greater Edible-Oil Self-Reliance

1. **National Mission on Edible Oils–Oilseeds:** Target to increase primary oilseed production from **39 million tonnes in 2022–23 to 69.7 million tonnes by 2030–31**.
2. **National Mission on Edible Oils–Oil Palm:** Launched in 2021 to expand oil-palm cultivation.
3. **Domestic production target:** Aim to raise edible-oil production to **25.45 million tonnes by 2030–31**, potentially meeting around 72% of projected requirements.
4. **Oil-palm expansion:** Coverage reached **6.2 lakh hectares by November 2025**, while crude palm-oil production reached **3.8 lakh tonnes in 2024–25**.
5. **Market monitoring:** Government intends to monitor international and domestic prices and balance consumer, farmer and industry interests

Way Forward

1. **Diversify import sources:** Reduce vulnerability to disruptions in a limited number of supplier countries.
2. **Broaden the oil basket:** Promote suitable alternative edible oils alongside palm, soybean and sunflower oils.
3. **Improve supply-chain efficiency:** Faster port and customs clearance can reduce logistics costs and partly offset sustainability-related expenses.
4. **Develop sustainable sourcing:** Gradually introduce certification, traceability and responsible sourcing for imported palm oil.
5. **Use India's market power:** As a major importer, India can encourage global suppliers and domestic firms to adopt sustainability standards.
6. **Link sustainability with exports:** Sustainable sourcing should strengthen India's competitiveness in processed-food exports rather than remain only a compliance cost.
7. **Ensure policy balance:** Future duty changes should consider **consumer prices, farmer interests and domestic industry together**.
8. **Ensure benefit transmission:** Strengthen monitoring so reductions in import costs are actually reflected in consumer prices.

Conclusion

The duty reduction can provide short-term relief to consumers, but it cannot by itself reduce India's dependence on global edible-oil markets. Long-term security requires stronger domestic production, diversified supplies, efficient refining and logistics, and gradual adoption of sustainable sourcing. Policy must therefore balance affordable edible oil for consumers with viable returns for farmers, domestic industry and environmental responsibility.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the significance of reducing import duties on edible oils in India in balancing consumer interests, farmer concerns and long-term edible-oil security.

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