



Preface

This compilation attempts to encapsulate crucial editorial analysis published in The Hindu and The Indian Express from July 1 to July 31, 2025, specifically tailored for aspirants preparing for UPSC and various State PSC examinations.

Each editorial is analyzed with a clear focus on the UPSC examination pattern, highlighting significant aspects such as political, economic, social, environmental, and ethical dimensions. Moreover, this analysis emphasizes how editorial insights can be practically leveraged to enrich answers for both Prelims and Mains examinations, aiding aspirants in building a comprehensive, nuanced perspective.

By systematically connecting current affairs with static syllabus topics, this compilation aims to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and contemporary developments. Aspirants will find these analyses instrumental in refining their critical thinking skills, enhancing their understanding of national and global events, and ultimately improving their performance in the examination hall.

We sincerely hope that this dedicated effort supports and empowers you on your journey towards achieving excellence in your civil services preparation.

Best Wishes.

BAPS Pramukh Academy

BAPS Pramukh Academy is not merely a UPSC coaching centre — it is a sacred institution born out of the divine vision of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj to create a spiritually rooted, value-driven bureaucracy for Bharat. Inspired by his profound belief that "Nation-building is not about constructing structures, but about constructing character," the Academy prepares aspirants not only to succeed in India's most prestigious civil services examinations, but to embody the virtues of integrity, humility, empathy, and righteous leadership in public life.

Nestled in green, clean, and serene residential campuses, the Academy offers a uniquely peaceful and disciplined environment that nurtures both academic excellence and moral growth. The residential facilities are thoughtfully designed to support focused preparation — with well-equipped libraries, tech-enabled classrooms, guided study hours, nutritious meals, separate secure hostels for boys and girls, and dedicated spiritual spaces for reflection and meditation. The ambience fosters deep concentration, self-discipline, and enabling aspirants to grow not just in knowledge, but in character.

In addition to its offline foundation, the Academy also runs the 'Pramukh SAMPURN Programme' — a fully online UPSC preparation initiative that brings the same spirit of value-based learning to students across Bharat. This programme ensures that aspirants from remote or financially disadvantaged backgrounds can access high-quality, structured, and holistic civil services preparation from anywhere in the country. Through live classes, recorded lectures, daily mentorship, practice tests, and value-enrichment sessions, the online initiative aims to democratize UPSC coaching while upholding the Academy's commitment to affordability, accessibility, and ethical guidance.

Whether it is through targeted offline batches for UPSC-CSE, GPSC (Class 1-2), and Class-3 Master programmes, or through its online reach, BAPS Pramukh Academy remains steadfast in its mission: to produce not just officers, but officer-saints — servantleaders who carry forward India's administrative legacy with wisdom, compassion, and unwavering moral strength. True to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's timeless words — "Without character, even the most educated person is dangerous to society" every initiative at the Academy is a step toward building a Viksit Bharat through character-first leadership.

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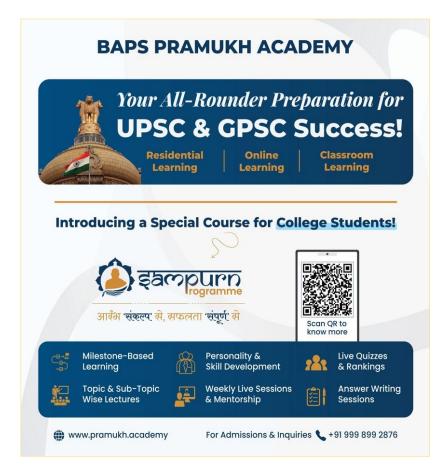


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GST Reform and the Unfinished Agenda of Tobacco Control

Source: Rijo M. John (The Hindu)

Relevant for: GS Paper III – Taxation, Public Health, Governance

Introduction:

Eight Years of GST - A Success with a Caveat

India's GST regime, launched in July 2017, has streamlined indirect taxation and boosted revenue. Yet, it has underperformed in curbing the consumption of harmful goods—especially tobacco. The editorial argues for a more calibrated tax strategy that aligns revenue goals with public health priorities.

Political Dimension: Federalism, Policy Consensus & Lobby Pushback

- 1. **GST Council's inaction on tobacco reform** reflects political economy challenges—particularly resistance from tobacco-growing states and industry-aligned members.
- 2. Tobacco taxation has been treated as a fiscal issue, not a public health mandate, limiting its effectiveness.
- 3. Unlike alcohol and petroleum (kept out of GST for political reasons), tobacco's inclusion under GST requires **stronger policy resolve** from both Centre and States to restructure its tax architecture.
- **4. Illicit trade narratives**, often backed by industry lobbies, distort evidence and delay political consensus on increasing taxes.

"Public health cannot be compromised by political hesitation. The Centre must lead with science-backed reforms."

Economic Dimension: Revenue Gains but Health Externalities Persist

- 1. Gross GST collections reached ₹22 lakh crore in 2024–25, growing at 9.4% YoY—an economic achievement.
- 2. Tobacco contributes a significant share, but taxes remain below WHO recommendations:
 - > 54% for bidis, 64% for cigarettes, 65% for smokeless tobacco
 - > WHO recommends 75%+ tax burden on retail price
- 3. Tobacco imposes a ₹2.4 lakh crore annual burden (2020 estimates) on India's economy due to productivity loss and healthcare spending.
- **4.** Despite health costs far outweighing revenue benefits, **GST remains structured around ad valorem taxes** (price-based), which manufacturers game by offering low-priced products.

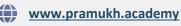
Structural Taxation Flaws

Issue	Implication
Ad valorem-only system	Fails to discourage low-priced tobacco
Lack of specific cess	Inadequate price floor for harmful products
Tax base variability	Industry shifts between bidis, chewables, cigarettes

A mixed tax model (ad valorem + specific unit tax) would stabilize revenue and enhance health outcomes.

Social Dimension: Public Health Equity and Disease Burden

- 1. Tobacco remains India's **leading preventable cause of death**, contributing to cancer, respiratory, and cardiovascular diseases.
- 2. **Poor and marginalised populations** bear the highest burden due to affordability of bidis and chewable forms.
- 3. Women and rural youth are disproportionately affected due to lack of awareness and cheap accessibility.
- **4. WHO Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade**—ratified by India—is yet to be implemented fully. Fiscal policy is a tool for **social justice**. Tax design must be sensitive to health outcomes, not just consumer behavior.





Way Forward: Aligning Tax Design with Public Health

Reform Area	Recommendations
Tax Structure	Add specific/unit-based cess on bidis and chewables
Minimum Retail Price	Introduce floor price for all tobacco products
Revenue Allocation	Earmark cess revenue for NCD prevention and anti-tobacco programs
Regulatory Enforcement	Strengthen track-and-trace to tackle illicit trade
Evidence-Based Policy	Implement 139th PSC recommendation on sin goods taxation

Conclusion

The GST reform remains incomplete without integrating public health priorities into its design. A rational, scientific, and equity-based tobacco taxation policy is essential to curb disease burden and improve India's fiscal and health sustainability.

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper III)

- Q1. "Tobacco taxation under GST must serve as both a revenue mechanism and a public health intervention."
- Q2. Critically examine this statement in light of the structural flaws in India's current GST regime. (250 words)

Prelims Practice MCQ

- Q1. Consider the following statements about tobacco taxation under GST:
 - 1. GST on tobacco is primarily specific unit-based taxation.
 - 2. India meets the WHO recommended 75% tax share in retail price.
 - 3. Tobacco taxation in India is uniform across all products. Which of the above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) None
 - d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: C



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In a Perilous World, India Must Read the Tea Leaves Well

Source: M.K. Narayanan | The Hindu

Relevant for: GS Paper II – International Relations, Security Challenges, Foreign Policy

Introduction: India's Strategic Posture at a Crossroads

The global security environment is increasingly volatile — marked by the Israel–Iran conflict, sharpening US–China rivalry, and renewed China–Pakistan military alignment. In such a climate, India's foreign policy must shed overcautious neutrality and adopt **strategic clarity** rooted in national interest.

POLITICAL DIMENSION: Shifting Diplomacy in a Fragmented World

1. Declining Space for Strategic Ambiguity

- India's reluctance to take clear sides in Israel–Iran, Russia–Ukraine, and China–US conflicts is being interpreted as policy paralysis, not prudence.
- > The **GBU-57 bomb strikes by the US on Iran** signal the erosion of nuclear restraint and the rise of preemptive warfare requiring recalibration of India's deterrent frameworks.

2. India's Balancing Act: Past its Expiry Date?

- > India's "multi-alignment" policy risks being outdated as the world moves towards hard power blocs.
- > Strategic silence on events like Iran's uranium facilities attack or US pressure on China blurs India's global leadership voice.

3. Need for a National Security Doctrine

- > Unlike China's 2023 "New Era" White Paper, India lacks a formal national security document that:
 - ✓ Outlines threat perception
 - ✓ Prioritizes force modernization
 - ✓ Integrates cyber, space, and AI-based defence strategies

ECONOMIC DIMENSION: Diplomacy, Defence, and Tech Access

1. Trade Corridors & Strategic Geography

India is a pivotal link in emerging connectivity projects like IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor) and I2U2. Ambiguity in West Asian positioning may jeopardize investment and trust.

2. Technology Denial Risks

- Fence-sitting may restrict access to critical tech:
 - ✓ AI-based early warning systems
 - ✓ Satellite surveillance collaborations
 - ✓ Defence cyber infrastructure from Quad allies

3. Defence Economics and Preparedness

- > Potential two-front war scenario (China-Pakistan) would strain fiscal capacity for:
 - ✓ Long-range missile defence
 - √ High-altitude deployment forces
 - ✓ Indigenous research in EM (electromagnetic) warfare

SOCIAL DIMENSION: Perception, Diaspora, and National Narrative

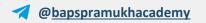
1. Public Perception of Policy Drift

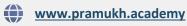
Domestic stakeholders increasingly demand a more assertive foreign posture, particularly after the Galwan clashes and post-Balakot nationalism wave.

2. Diaspora Vulnerability in Conflict Zones

Millions of Indians live in the Gulf, Israel, and Western nations. India's unclear responses to global crises may endanger them in evacuation and political lobbying scenarios.

3. Narrative Vacuum vs. China's Strategic Messaging







While China signals strength with clear messaging (e.g., "peace through strength" doctrine), India's foreign policy lacks coherence in its global storytelling and influence-building.

Way Forward: From Strategic Ambiguity to Strategic Agility

Sector	Strategic Shift Needed
Doctrine Release a National Security Strategy White Paper	
Alignment	Move from neutrality to principled multi-alignment
Institutional	Empower National Security Council & integrate cyber warfare
Military Tech	Invest in AI, EM warfare, and space-based defence systems
Diplomacy	Use Quad, BRICS, SCO for global norm-building

Conclusion

India's geopolitical silence in a chaotic world may undermine its aspirations of global leadership. Strategic clarity, built on technological readiness, defence preparedness, and principled diplomacy, is no longer optional it is essential.

"In geopolitics, the cost of silence is often paid in strategic irrelevance."

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. India's doctrine of strategic autonomy must evolve in response to a fragmenting global order. Critically examine this statement in light of India's posture on recent West Asian and Indo-Pacific developments. (250 words)

UPSC Prelims MCQ

- Q1. Consider the following statements:
 - 1. GBU-57 is a precision-guided tactical nuclear missile.
 - 2. India is part of the IMEC corridor connecting Middle East to Europe.
 - 3. India has officially released a national security doctrine akin to China's "New Era" White Paper. Which of the above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: B

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India in a Perilous World: Time to Rethink Strategic Posture

Source: M.K. Narayanan, The Hindu

Relevant For: GS Paper II – International Relations, National Security, Foreign Policy Doctrine

Introduction: Navigating a Turbulent Geopolitical Landscape

India's foreign policy finds itself at an inflection point. The post-pandemic world is witnessing a dramatic reshuffling of strategic priorities, with **traditional alliances weakening**, **grey-zone conflicts intensifying**, and **global polarisation accelerating**. In such a precarious setting, India must **shift from strategic ambiguity to strategic maturity** anchored in long-term national interest, regional stability, and global leadership aspirations.

POLITICAL ANGLE: From Strategic Autonomy to Strategic Assertion

1. Erosion of the Non-Aligned Template

- > India's traditional diplomatic stance—non-alignment or multi-alignment—is increasingly being perceived as **passive indecision** in a world demanding clear commitments.
- In conflicts like Israel-Iran, Russia-Ukraine, and US-China, India's silence risks eroding its global credibility and moral leadership.

2. National Security Doctrine Vacuum

- > Unlike China, which released a **comprehensive white paper ("New Era" strategy)** outlining its global posture and internal preparedness, India still lacks a **codified National Security Strategy (NSS)**.
- > This absence creates a **strategic disconnect** between foreign policy intent and defence capability planning.

3. Two-Front Challenge: The China-Pakistan Convergence

- Military cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad—especially in missile systems, joint exercises, and drone warfare—poses a growing asymmetric threat.
- > India must reevaluate its **force structure**, **deterrence doctrine**, **and defence modernisation timelines**. Strategic silence is no longer a shield—it may well be a shackle.

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Strategic Posturing in a Geo-Economic World

1. Geo-Economics and Energy Diplomacy

- West Asia is not only a political flashpoint but also India's energy artery.
- Maintaining balance between Iran (energy partner) and Israel/US (strategic tech partners) is becoming increasingly unsustainable without a clear hierarchy of interest.

2. Technology Access and Defence Trade

- > Strategic ambivalence may restrict India's access to:
 - ✓ Critical technologies (AI-driven surveillance, quantum computing, unmanned systems)
 - ✓ **Defence systems** from partners like the US, France, Israel, and Japan

3. Strategic Corridors at Risk

- India's role in connectivity initiatives such as:
 - ✓ IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor)
 - ✓ I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, US)
 - ✓ could be undermined if it fails to define a consistent diplomatic and security stance in West Asia.

SOCIAL ANGLE: National Narrative, Diaspora Security & Public Perception

1. Diaspora Security and Crisis Management

- With a significant Indian population in the Gulf, Israel, and the US, India's indecision in crisis situations may compromise evacuation, protection, and diplomatic influence.
- 2. Public Perception and Strategic Trust









> A foreign policy that avoids clear positions fosters public confusion, undermines trust in leadership, and weakens India's internal strategic culture.

3. Global Image Management

- China uses soft power, white papers, and rapid response diplomacy to project strength.
- India must invest in global narrative-building, aligning policy articulation with principled action.

Geopolitical reputation is built not just on actions, but on the clarity and consistency of inte

Way Forward: Toward a Future-Ready Strategic Doctrine

Strategic Pillar	Action Agenda
Doctrinal Clarity	Release a comprehensive National Security Strategy Document
Defence Readiness	Strengthen AI, cyber, space, and electronic warfare capabilities
Diplomatic Depth	Build issue-based coalitions (QUAD, BRICS, SCO, IMEC)
Tech-Economic Front	Negotiate preferential access to critical tech from partners
Institutional Reform	Empower National Security Council with inter-agency coordination role

Conclusion: From Watchful Silence to Wise Leadership

India can no longer afford the luxury of sitting on the fence. As global crises grow sharper and power rivalries harden, the need for a clear, principled, and proactive foreign policy becomes existential.

"In a fractured world, neutrality without nuance is irrelevance in disguise. India must speak, act, and lead strategically and decisively."

Prelims Practice MCQ

- Q1. With reference to the recent editorial discussion, consider the following:
 - 1. IMEC is a strategic corridor linking India to Europe through West Asia.
 - 2. The GBU-57 bomb used by the US is a deep-earth nuclear weapon.
 - 3. China has formally published a white paper titled "National Security Strategy in the New Era."
 - 4. India has a declared national security strategy document publicly available.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3 only
- d) 2 and 4 only

Answer: A

- 1. Statement 2 is incorrect: GBU-57 is non-nuclear.
- 2. Statement 4 is incorrect: India has not published a formal NSS.

Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. India's doctrine of strategic autonomy has served well in the past but may now require revision. Critically evaluate in light of recent regional conflicts and India's global aspirations. (250 words)

Student Notes 🍊







Using Tech to Empower Women and Children

Digital Dignity: Transforming the Lives of Women and Children through Technology

Topic: GS Paper II – Governance | Welfare Schemes | Women & Child Development | E-Governance

Introduction:

Empowerment Begins with Access

In the 21st century, empowerment is no longer just about intent—it's about access: to rights, to services, to safety, and to opportunity. Over the past decade, India has reimagined welfare delivery by marrying social justice with digital innovation. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) stands at the forefront of this quiet revolution.

"What was once aspirational is now operational."

Technology is the bridge turning intent into impact.

POLITICAL ANGLE: From Policy Intent to Mission Mode Governance

1. Vision-Aligned Welfare Delivery

- Under the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, MoWCD has adopted a mission-oriented, rights-based approach to governance through:
 - Mission Poshan 2.0
 - Mission Shakti (includes One-Stop Centres, She-Box, Women Helpline)
 - Mission Vatsalya (child protection ecosystem)
 - PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

2. Legal and Institutional Backing

- Anchored in constitutional provisions and legal frameworks:
 - ✓ The Juvenile Justice Act
 - ✓ Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment (POSH)
 - ✓ Adoption Regulations and NCPCR child tracking platforms

3. Tech-Driven Bureaucratic Reforms

- > Real-time dashboards, e-Grievance modules, mobile-based data collection, and Aadhaar-linked tracking have made governance:
 - Transparent, Accountable, Scalable

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Leakproof Delivery, Financial Justice, and Productivity

1. Direct Benefits, Delivered with Dignity

- Under PMMVY:
 - ✓ ₹5,000 for first childbirth
 - ✓ ₹6,000 for second child (if girl)
 - Over ₹10,900 crore disbursed through **DBT** (**Direct Benefit Transfer**)
 - ✓ Reduces middlemen and boosts maternal health

2. Smart Nutrition Monitoring

- **Poshan Tracker** now covers:
 - ✓ Over 14 lakh Anganwadi centres
 - √ 10.14 crore beneficiaries (including pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children)

www.pramukh.academy

- > Enables real-time data entry, geo-tagging, and performance monitoring
- ➤ Helps curb leakages in **Supplementary Nutrition Programme**

3. Saksham Anganwadi: Empowering the Last-Mile Worker

- Over 2 lakh centres digitally upgraded
- Anganwadi workers equipped with smartphones and training modules







[&]quot;This is not e-governance. This is empowered governance."



Productivity has improved, especially in early childhood nutrition and pre-school education

SOCIAL ANGLE: From Welfare to Wellbeing, From Protection to Participation

- 1. Gender Justice Through Technology
 - > She-Box Portal: Enables women to file workplace harassment complaints online
 - Mission Shakti dashboard connects women in distress to assistance centres in real time
 - > Over one-stop centres operational in nearly every district
- 2. Child Protection in the Digital Age
 - CARINGS Portal: Digitises adoption, child care institutions, foster care, and placements
 - > Juvenile Justice systems are monitored with digital evidence
 - NCPCR platforms track violation of child rights in real-time, improving enforcement and case disposal

3. Tangible Social Outcomes

Indicator	Progress Achieved (2014–2024)
Maternal Mortality Rate	Declined from 130 to 97 per 1,000 births
Sex Ratio at Birth	Improved from 918 to 930
PMMVY Beneficiaries	4+ crore women supported

These numbers reflect not just services delivered—but lives dignified.

Way Forward: Institutionalizing Digital Social Justice

Reform Area	Recommendation
Digital Deepening	Expand platforms to tribal, conflict, and remote areas
Evidence-Based Policy	Leverage big data analytics for forecasting and feedback loops
Multi-Stakeholder Convergence	Link schemes across ministries for seamless lifecycle-based care
Outcome Monitoring	Set real-time KPIs for nutrition, protection, and health outcomes

Conclusion: Governance with a Human Touch

India's welfare architecture is undergoing a silent revolution—powered by code, guided by compassion. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has demonstrated how technology can be the most humane tool of public policy when designed with empathy and equity.

"When technology is used not just for efficiency, but for dignity—it becomes a force for justice."

Prelims Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following pairs:

Platform/Initiative	Primary Objective
She-Box	Workplace harassment grievance redressal
PMMVY	Maternity benefits for first and second child
CARINGS Portal	Child adoption and foster care tracking
Poshan Tracker	Skill mapping for Anganwadi workers

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- d) All four

Answer: A

Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. Digital governance is redefining the welfare delivery landscape in India, especially for women and children. Examine the role of platforms like Poshan Tracker, PMMVY, and Mission Shakti in enhancing transparency, dignity, and empowerment. (250 words)









Rephrasing Global Development Finance

Source: The Hindu | **By:** Sachin Chaturvedi

Relevance: GS Paper II (International Relations, Development Partnerships) & GS Paper III (Economic

Diplomacy)

Introduction: India's Evolving Role in South-South Cooperation

India's development cooperation with the **Global South** has grown significantly, marked by increased Lines of Credit (LoC), concessional financing, and enhanced triangular cooperation. As Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the West shrinks, India is repositioning itself as a **key development partner** offering cost-effective, demand-driven, and equity-based solutions.

POLITICAL ANGLE: Diplomacy Through Development

1. India's Leadership at G20 and VoGS

- > PM Modi, at the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (2024), advocated the Global Development Compact (GDC) to balance:
 - ✓ Capacity building
 - ✓ Tech transfer
 - ✓ Market access
 - ✓ Grants
 - ✓ Concessional finance
- > India's strategic intent is to **reshape global norms** around equitable development finance.

2. Geopolitical Realignment

- ➤ Global North donors are withdrawing due to domestic budget pressures (45% cut in UK's ODA since 2023).
- India is stepping in to fill this vacuum, especially in Africa, Latin America, and ASEAN.

3. India's Development Diplomacy Institutions

- Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS)
- Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)
- Ministry of External Affairs—Economic Diplomacy Division

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Restructuring the Development Finance Model

1. From Aid to Access

- LoCs extended by India rose from \$3 billion in 2010–11 to \$7 billion in 2023–24.
- > Shift from grant-based support to a mix of concessional finance and private capital mobilisation.

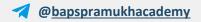
2. Rising Global Debt and Credit Constraints

- Traditional donors are affected by:
 - ✓ ODA fatigue
 - ✓ Domestic fiscal pressures
 - ✓ Inability to fund long-gestation projects
- India's concessional model offers predictability, affordability, and respects recipient country ownership.

3. Triangular Cooperation (TrC): The New Model

- Combines a traditional donor, a Global South partner, and a beneficiary country.
- > Examples:
 - ✓ Germany–India–Mozambique
 - ✓ UK–India Global Innovation Partnership (GIP)

TrC has mobilized an estimated \$670 million to \$1.1 billion across Africa, Latin America, and Asia.









SOCIAL ANGLE: Equitable Growth and Sustainable Impact

1. Tailored, Localised Development

- Focus areas:
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Renewable energy
 - ✓ Digital public infrastructure
 - ✓ Health systems
- India's approach strengthens **local capacities**, not donor-dependence.

2. Inclusive Partnerships

- > TrC platforms promote peer learning, shared problem-solving, and regional capacity building.
- ➤ Reduces **North–South power asymmetry** in global aid architecture.

3. Alignment with SDGs

- India's financial outreach aligns with SDG implementation goals, especially:
 - ✓ SDG 9 (infrastructure & innovation)
 - ✓ SDG 17 (partnerships for development)

Way Forward: Towards an Equitable Global Financial Order

Priority Area	Strategic Suggestion
Development Finance Reform	Institutionalize GDC across G20 and BRICS platforms
South-South Partnerships	Expand India-led TrC with Africa, ASEAN, and Latin America
Resource Pooling	Blend Indian LoCs with MDB support (ADB, AfDB, NDB) for scale
Data & Monitoring	Leverage digital dashboards for transparent delivery & impact audit

Conclusion:

India as a Norm-Shaper, Not Just a Donor India's development cooperation today is not about charity—it's about solidarity, sustainability, and shared prosperity. By realigning global development finance through innovation and inclusivity, India is emerging as a leader of the Global South and a credible alternative to traditional Western aid. "India isn't just bridging the North-South divide — it's reshaping the rules of the bridge itself."

Prelims Practice MCQ

- Q1. With reference to the Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015) case, which of the following statements
 - 1. It struck down Section 66A of the IT Act for violating Article 21.
 - 2. The Court held that vague laws infringing upon free speech are unconstitutional.
 - 3. The judgment upheld the constitutionality of arrest without warrant for social media posts.

Select the correct answer:

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: C

(Statement 3 is incorrect; the judgment struck down 66A for allowing such arrests.)

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q2. In the name of curbing misinformation, governments are increasingly resorting to speech regulation. Critically examine the constitutional, legal, and societal implications of such laws, using Karnataka's proposed Fake News Bill as a case study. (250 words)







Kill the Bill: Karnataka's Fake News Law and the Fine Line Between **Regulation and Censorship**

Topic: GS Paper II – Governance, Fundamental Rights, Federalism

Introduction:

When Laws Threaten Liberties The Karnataka Mis-Information and Fake News (Prohibition) Bill aims to curb the spread of false information. However, with vague definitions, unchecked authority, and severe penalties, the Bill is being criticized for enabling state-sponsored censorship under the pretext of ensuring truth in the digital space.

"A bad law, even with good intentions, can be the death of good governance."

POLITICAL ANGLE: Fundamental Rights vs State Overreach

1. Violation of Free Speech and Due Process

- > The Bill conflicts with the **Supreme Court's 2015 Shreya Singhal judgment**, which struck down Section 66A of the IT Act for vagueness and overbreadth.
- > Offences are defined loosely terms like "misinformation", "reckless reporting", and targeting of speech against "Sanatan Dharma" and "feminism" are highly subjective.

2. Arbitrary Structure of the Proposed Authority

- > A state-led "Authority", appointed by the Information and Broadcasting Minister and comprised of bureaucrats, has unchecked power to classify content as fake news and penalize offenders.
- > This violates the doctrine of checks and balances vital in federal constitutional governance.

3. Legal Precedents Ignored

- > The Bombay HC's 2024 verdict struck down parts of the Centre's IT Rules, reaffirming that vague provisions violate Article 19(1)(a).
- ➤ Karnataka's Bill repeats similar constitutional errors.

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Impact on Innovation and Digital Economy

1. Start-up Ecosystem Under Threat

- Bengaluru, the hub of India's innovation economy, thrives on free digital expression and open tech
- > Overregulation through subjective content policing discourages investment and slows down tech entrepreneurship.

2. Legal Uncertainty as a Cost

- The chilling effect of potential criminal penalties up to ₹10 lakh and seven years in jail introduces compliance burdens on:
 - ✓ Journalists
 - ✓ Social media users
 - ✓ Content creators
 - √ News platforms

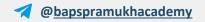
3. Overreach May Discourage Digital India Goals

India's dream of a \$1 trillion digital economy hinges on trust in law, transparency, and innovation freedom—all of which this Bill endangers.

SOCIAL ANGLE: Satire, Art, and Expression at Risk

1. Artistic Expression in the Crosshairs

- > The Bill prosecutes "distorted facts" while exempting only religious sermons and satire, but even those are left vaguely protected.
- Risk to **journalism**, **political critique**, **stand-up comedy**, **and satire** is enormous.









2. Threat to Civil Liberties and Dissent

> Critics argue the law is reminiscent of Emergency-era controls, where truth became what the government defined it to be.

3. Existing Laws Already Address Misinformation

- India already has:
 - ✓ Defamation laws
 - ✓ IT Act (post-2021 Rules)
 - √ Laws against hate speech and communal disharmony
- > Instead of a new censorial law, the editorial advocates for **digital literacy**, awareness, and civic education to **strengthen information discernment**.

Way Forward: Regulate Smartly, Not Arbitrarily

Challenge	Progressive Alternative
Vague legal language	Use narrowly defined, court-tested terminology
Arbitrary Authority	Ensure judicial oversight and independent panels
Misinformation concerns	Invest in digital media literacy and community verification tools
Lack of public trust	Promote transparent grievance redressal, not preemptive censorship

Conclusion: Liberty Needs Light, Not a Gag Order

Misinformation is a genuine societal threat. But the remedy must not come at the cost of **constitutional liberties**, **journalistic freedom**, **and democratic dissent**. Any law that **criminalizes speech without clarity**, **safeguards**, **or independent review** is bound to backfire.

"You cannot kill a lie by killing liberty."

True reform lies in empowering citizens, not controlling narratives.

Prelims Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following pairs:

Term	Description
IDEAS	India's concessional credit scheme to the Global South
GDC (Global Dev.	India's G20 initiative to harmonise development cooperation modes
Compact)	
Triangular	Partnership involving one North donor, one Global South donor, and
Cooperation	beneficiary

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: C

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. "India's approach to development cooperation with the Global South reflects a shift from aid to partnership." Discuss in the context of the Global Development Compact and Triangular Cooperation. (250 words)



Socialism and Secularism: The Spirit and Soul of the Indian Constitution

Author: J.B. Rai, General Secretary, CPI(M)

Topic: GS Paper II – Indian Constitution | Preamble | Secularism | Social Justice

Introduction:

India's Constitution is not merely a legal document; it reflects a vision of social transformation, dignity, and justice. The principles of socialism and secularism, enshrined in the Preamble and reflected across Directive Principles and Fundamental Rights, form the core values of the Republic.

"To hollow out secularism and socialism is to unravel the soul of our Constitution."

POLITICAL ANGLE: Constitutional Morality vs Majoritarian Revisionism

1. Secularism as Political Neutrality, Not Religious Apathy

- The Constitution mandates a state equidistant from all religions, upholding citizens' right to practice, profess, and propagate faith (Article 25–28 Fundamental right part 3).
- > Secularism was part of the Constitution's structure since 1950, even before its **explicit insertion in the 42nd Amendment (1976)**.

2. Socialism: Not Statism, But Egalitarianism

- > The term 'socialist' reflects the commitment to distributive justice, not state ownership.
- > It reinforces the idea of equal access to opportunity, economic dignity, and protection of the poor.

3. Current Threats: Soft Deletion of Constitutional Ideals

➤ Rising calls to remove "secular" and "socialist" from the Preamble reflect majoritarian reinterpretation, undermining the spirit of the Constituent Assembly debates.

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Socialism and the Vision of Economic Justice

1. Directive Principles as Socio-Economic Blueprint

- > Articles 38, 39, and 46(DPSP Part IV) promote a society that reduces inequality, prevents wealth concentration, and supports the weaker sections.
- Socialism in the Indian context prioritizes welfare, public education, universal healthcare, and livelihood support.

2. Social Justice is Integral to Economic Democracy

The Constitution envisages equal access to public resources, reservations, and redistribution through policy tools like MGNREGA, PDS, and DBTs.

Socialism does not mean economic control. It means economic inclusion.

SOCIAL ANGLE: Unity in Diversity – Secularism as a Social Cohesion Force

1. Cultural Pluralism and Communal Harmony

India's secular ethos allows religious coexistence, interfaith respect, and protection of minorities — essential for a socially just democracy.

2. Safeguarding Marginalised Identities

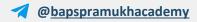
Ambedkar's vision and Article 15's equality clause protect women, Dalits, tribals, and religious minorities against systemic exclusion.

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3. Ideological Attack on Constitutional Values

- > Rising attempts to rebrand India as a majoritarian ethno-state ignore:
 - ✓ The **Ambedkarite view** of fraternity and constitutional morality
 - ✓ The Nehruvian idea of a composite culture
 - ✓ The Gandhian belief in religious harmony

Way Forward: Reinforcing Constitutional Ideals in the 21st Century







Constitutional Principle	Modern Strategy for Reinforcement
Secularism	Civic education, hate speech laws, minority safety measures
Socialism	Universal basic services, gender budgeting, equitable fiscal tools
Constitutionalism	Wider public debates, judiciary-led protection, curriculum reforms

Conclusion: The Constitution is Non-Negotiable

The Preamble is not a preface—it is a pledge to a just, inclusive, and plural India. Any attempt to dilute the ideals of socialism and secularism is not just unconstitutional; it is anti-national in spirit.

"India is not just a land of diversity; it is a promise of equality in diversity. That promise is secular and socialist at its core."

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

- Q1. Secularism and socialism are not just ideological terms but constitutional commitments.
- Q2. Discuss their significance in preserving the identity of the Indian republic. (250 words)

UPSC Prelims MCQ

- Q1. Consider the following statements:
 - 1. The terms 'Secular' and 'Socialist' were part of the original Preamble in 1950.
 - 2. The Directive Principles of State Policy reflect the economic philosophy of socialism.
 - 3. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to religion subject to public order.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 2 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: A

Statement 1 is incorrect – the terms were added via the 42nd Amendment (1976).

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Closing In On TB: Innovations in Diagnostics & Governance

Author: Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, former Chief Scientist, WHO

Topic: GS Paper II – Health Governance | GS Paper III – Disease Eradication, Biotechnology

Introduction:

India's battle against tuberculosis (TB) is entering a crucial phase, powered by technological breakthroughs, public participation, and focused governance through the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP). With PM Modi's strong push and recent learnings from COVID-19, India is re-strategizing to eliminate TB by **2025**, ahead of the global SDG target of **2030**.

"The biggest threat in the fight against TB is the undiagnosed — and technology is helping change that."

POLITICAL ANGLE: State Commitment and Strategic Governance

1. NTEP – A Model of Mission-Mode Governance

- > Guided by top-level review, including PM's intervention, NTEP uses a 100-day intensified TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan to enhance reach.
- > India's active TB case-finding effort reached 2.85 lakh symptomatic patients in vulnerable groups.

2. Policy Backing and Institutional Leadership

- > Support from **ICMR**, **health ministries**, and convergence with schemes like:
 - ✓ Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) for nutritional support
 - ✓ Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) for data-enabled follow-up

3. Global Diplomacy Through Health Leadership

India's lead role in mRNA TB vaccine development showcases science diplomacy and strengthens its global soft power.

ECONOMIC ANGLE: Investing in Innovation and Public Health Infrastructure

1. Reducing the Diagnostic Gap = Reducing Economic Burden

- > 2.7 million TB patients globally (2023) went undiagnosed, with significant economic loss due to untreated transmission.
- > Subclinical TB contributes to nearly 50% of undetected cases, especially in high-density and lowincome urban areas.

2. Tech-Driven Cost Reduction

- ➤ Use of:
 - ✓ Al-assisted X-rays
 - ✓ Point-of-care molecular testing platforms
 - Non-invasive tests (saliva, nasal swabs)
- > These innovations are cutting costs, improving private sector access, and boosting early detection.

www.pramukh.academy

3. TB and Malnutrition Linkage

- > Supportive nutrition is critical for TB recovery:
 - ✓ NPY doubles monthly food allowance
 - ✓ Encourages local food distribution systems

SOCIAL ANGLE: Public Participation and Inclusion in Health Mission

1. Health Equity Focus

- Screening campaigns covered:
 - ✓ Urban slums
 - ✓ Migrant populations
 - √ Tribal pockets
 - ✓ Elderly and children







- Goal: Eliminate stigma and ensure early detection in vulnerable groups.
- 2. Community Awareness and Behavioural Shift
 - ➤ TB Mukt Bharat campaign engaged **schoolchildren**, **local leaders**, and **Anganwadi workers** promoting participatory health governance.
- 3. TB as a Social Disease, Not Just a Medical One
 - > TB is exacerbated by:
 - ✓ Poverty
 - ✓ Undernutrition
 - ✓ Housing insecurity
 - NTEP integrates health with social protection mechanisms, essential to breaking the transmission chain.

Way Forward: Science, Scale, and Sensitivity(3s)

Challenge	Recommended Solution	
Undiagnosed TB cases	Expand Al-powered and molecular diagnostics to PHCs and mobile vans	
	Valls	
Subclinical TB detection	Deploy mass screening tools, especially in silent epidemic zones	
Mortality and adherence	Scale nutrition-linked DBTs + tech-based follow-up	
Innovation integration	Strengthen ICMR-industry collaboration on mRNA TB vaccines	
Community trust	Localised IEC campaigns in regional languages, faith-based & panchayat roles	

Conclusion: From Control to Elimination - A Shared National Goal

The **TB elimination mission** is no longer just a health issue. It is a **national development priority**. India's progress in diagnostics, vaccines, and digital public health offers the tools. What remains essential is **political will, community trust, and sustained innovation**.

A TB-free India is a healthier, more productive, and more dignified India."

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. Discuss the role of technological innovation and public participation in India's National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP). What challenges remain in eliminating TB by 2025? (250 words)

UPSC Prelims MCQ

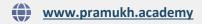
- **Q1.** Consider the following statements:
 - 1. The Nikshay Poshan Yojana provides direct cash transfers to TB patients for nutritional support.
 - 2. Al-assisted diagnostics are now being used under NTEP for TB detection via X-rays.
 - 3. The National TB Elimination Programme aims to eliminate TB by 2030 in India.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: A

(Statement 3 is incorrect: India aims to eliminate TB by 2025, ahead of the global SDG deadline of 2030.)



[&]quot;You cannot treat TB in a vacuum. It must be addressed with dignity, nutrition, and trust."



Two Democracies & the Echoes of Tyranny

Author: Sanjay Hegde (Senior Advocate, Supreme Court)

Source: The hindu

Theme: Democracy, Authoritarianism, Constitutional Morality

Relevance: GS Paper II (Polity), Essay, Ethics (GS IV – Integrity of Institutions)

Introduction: The Warning in Liberty's Name

On the anniversary of American independence, the editorial reflects on **India and the United States—two of the world's largest democracies**—facing eerily similar internal challenges: **executive overreach, suppression of dissent**, and the **erosion of constitutional norms**.

"When a long train of abuses evinces a design to reduce the people under despotism, it is their right and duty to resist." – U.S. Declaration of Independence

POLITICAL ANGLE: Fragility of Institutions

1. Democratic Decline in India

- > From the **1975 Emergency** to today, India has seen:
 - ✓ Curbs on free press
 - ✓ Arbitrary arrests
 - ✓ Shrinking judicial independence
- Post-2019 era likened to a "covert emergency" with subtle but systemic erosion of checks and balances.

2. Parallels in the United States

- > Capitol Hill Insurrection (Jan 6, 2021) under Trump revealed deep fractures in U.S. democracy.
- > Threats to judicial independence and violent populism mirror India's descent into **executive populism**. Democracy isn't destroyed by tanks—it fades with silence, laws, and lies.

SOCIAL ANGLE: Dissent and Civic Courage

1. Fear is Replacing Freedom

- Dissenters today face:
 - ✓ Arrest under UAPA, MISA-like laws
 - ✓ Digital surveillance
 - ✓ Social delegitimization ("anti-national" tags)
- > Public apathy enables **soft-authoritarianism**.

2. "We, the People" Must Be More Than a Preamble

- From Mahatma Gandhi to Stan Swamy, citizens have **resisted tyranny with non-violence**.
- True patriotism lies in defending rights, not pledging blind loyalty to governments.

CONSTITUTIONAL ANGLE: Rule of Law vs Rule by Law

1. Ambedkar's Constitution Under Threat

- Constitution envisions:
 - ✓ Separation of powers
 - ✓ Liberty of thought and expression
 - ✓ Moral restraint on majoritarianism
- > Today's reality:
 - ✓ Laws weaponized against minorities and dissidents
 - ✓ Judiciary under strain to resist executive pressure
- 2. From "Emergency" to "Emergency-Like Situations"
 - Historical patterns:





- √ 1975 Emergency (de jure dictatorship)
- ✓ 2020s: de facto control without official proclamation

"A silent Emergency is more dangerous—it deceives before it destroys."

Way Forward: Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty

Risk	Democratic Response
Executive overreach	Strong judiciary, active Parliament
Weaponization of law	Sunset clauses, SC oversight, legal activism
Public amnesia	Civic education, remembering Emergency lessons
Fearful silence of citizens	Support journalism, protect whistleblowers
Disinformation & nationalism	Promote constitutional literacy, secular unity

Conclusion: The Republic is a Daily Pledge

Democracy is not a one-time revolution. It is a daily resistance against tyranny, a lived truth in every court verdict, protest, and vote. India and the U.S. must remember: democracy dies in silence, but it is reborn in resistance.

"The Constitution is not a paper shield—it is a mirror of our moral courage."

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q1. Which of the following are essential features of constitutional democracy?

- 1. Judicial Review
- 2. Separation of Powers
- 3. Unchecked Majoritarianism
- 4. Free Press
- a) 1, 2, and 4 only
- b) 1, 3, and 4
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: A

(Unchecked majoritarianism is anti-democratic.)

UPSC Mains Question (GS II / Essay)

Q1. "The decline of a democracy is not always marked by emergency proclamations, but by the quiet erosion of its moral guardrails." In this context, examine how modern democracies can protect constitutional values against executive populism. (250 words)

Student Notes <u></u>





Low GST collections reveal cracks in the system — and the urgent need for structural reform

Source: The Hindu

GS Paper III – Economy (Taxation, Fiscal Federalism)

Introduction: A Wake-Up Call on GST's 8th Anniversary

India marked **eight years of GST rollout** on July 1st. Instead of celebration, the occasion served as a **reminder of deep-rooted flaws** in the system:

- 1. Gross GST collections: ₹1.85 lakh crore (June 2025)
- 2. Just 5.2% higher than June 2024 slowest growth in over a year
- 3. Net revenue growth (post refunds): a mere 3.3%
- 4. Real revenue (excl. imports): grew only 4.6%, below inflation

GST is a consumption tax. Weak collections hint not just at economic slowdown, but structural inefficiencies.

Economic Angle: Cracks in the One-Nation-One-Tax Dream

1. Structural Inefficiencies

- > Core commodities like fuel, alcohol, and real estate still excluded from GST
- > These exclusions reduce the tax base and deny revenue buoyancy

2. Excessive Reliance on Cess

- > Cess collections are not shared with States (unlike GST), creating asymmetry in fiscal devolution.
- > These cesses are now used to fund:
 - ✓ Central welfare schemes
 - ✓ Election-time freebies

"Taxation cannot become a tool of central control — it must reflect cooperative federalism."

Cess is a tax levied by the government for a specific purpose, often related to public welfare or infrastructure development, and is distinct from general taxes

Political Angle: Growing Centre-State Fiscal Tensions

1. The Cess Compensation Debate

- Cess was introduced to compensate states for losses post-GST, valid till 2022
- > Extended till March 2026 to repay dues from COVID-19 years
- > But now, no clear roadmap for ending cess dependence

2. States Demand Fair Share

- Centre is increasingly funding schemes through non-shareable cesses, bypassing GST Council
- > States feel cornered they bear the cost but don't share in the extra revenue

Trust is eroding. Reform cannot succeed without reviving fiscal federalism.

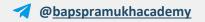
Federalism Angle: Time to Honour the GST Compact

Challenge	Reform Needed
Exclusion of key items from GST	Bring in fuel, alcohol, real estate into GST ambit
Non-shareable cesses	Phase out cess, shift to shareable tax pools
Prolonged compensation mechanism	Sunset clause for compensation cess by FY2026
Lack of revenue predictability	Broaden base, rationalize slabs, reduce compliance costs

[&]quot;GST must be a covenant of trust — not a contest of control."

Way Forward: Towards GST 2.0

- 1. Include petroleum & liquor in GST
- 2. Rationalize rate slabs (avoid slab-creep, unify 12% & 18%)







- 3. End overuse of compensation cess
- 4. Reinvigorate the GST Council as a federal decision-maker
- 5. Shift from tax dependence to tax efficiency

Conclusion: The Time to Reform is Now

India's GST was a bold leap in fiscal integration. But political mistrust, economic rigidity, and overreliance on cesses are holding it back. The Centre must walk the talk of cooperative federalism. And States must rise above short-term populism.

"GST is not just a tax. It is a test of how India balances unity with federal fairness."

UPSC Mains Question (GS III – Economy)

Q1. GST was envisioned as a landmark reform in India's fiscal architecture. Critically examine the present challenges in its implementation and suggest structural reforms to strengthen its efficacy. (250 words)

UPSC Prelims MCQ

- Q2. Consider the following statements about GST in India:
 - 1. Cess collected under GST is part of the divisible pool of taxes.
 - 2. Fuel and alcohol are currently included under the GST regime.
 - 3. GST is a destination-based indirect tax.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 3 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: C

Student Notes 🍊

(Statements 1 and 2 are incorrect: cess is not shared, and fuel/alcohol are outside GST.)

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Common Goals: India's Renewed Engagement with the Global South

Context: PM Modi's visits to Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil, and Namibia – International Relations

GS Paper II: GS Paper I (Post-Colonial South-South Cooperation)

Essay Theme: India and the Global South: Toward Equitable Global Governance

Introduction: South-South Solidarity in Action

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's five-nation tour en route to the **BRICS Summit in Brazil** reinforces **India's strategic outreach to the Global South**. The visits aimed at strengthening **development partnerships** in health, energy, digital innovation, food security, and diaspora diplomacy.

"India is offering inclusive, low-cost solutions to global challenges by deepening ties with fellow developing nations."

POLITICAL ANGLE: Reclaiming Non-Western Leadership

1. Reviving South-South Cooperation

- > Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina: countries with shared colonial legacies
- > Common history of anti-colonialism & leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)
- Aimed at resisting unilateralism and asserting voice in multilateral forums

2. India's Multilateral Leadership

- Promotion of India-led institutions like:
 - ✓ Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)
 - ✓ International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- > Shared vision for alternative global institutions to counter dominance of the Global North

ECONOMIC ANGLE: From Aid to Equitable Partnerships

1. Health and Pharma Diplomacy

- > Ghana: Plans to establish a "Vaccine Hub for West Africa"
- Trinidad & Tobago: MoU on "Indian Pharmacopeia" to provide quality, affordable generics
- Argentina: Promotion of India's pharma and technology for energy security

2. Critical Minerals and Digital Trade

- > Argentina: Discussions on shale gas, critical minerals
- > Digital collaborations discussed across all three nations to improve governance, access, and fintech India's diplomacy today is about **knowledge sharing**, not just financing.

SOCIOCULTURAL ANGLE: Diaspora as a Diplomatic Bridge

1. India's Emotional Connect

- > Port of Spain speech: reference to **Indian indentured labor** since 1845
- > Tribute to Indo-Trinidadian leaders like Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Christine Carla Kangaloo

2. Diaspora as Soft Power

- PM's outreach to the 35 million-strong Indian diaspora echoes India's global image as:
 - ✓ A development partner
 - ✓ A cultural bridge
 - ✓ A democratic ally

[&]quot;The Indian diaspora is not just a remittance channel, it is a strategic asset."







Country Visited	Key Outcome
Ghana	Partnership to establish Vaccine Hub for West Africa
Trinidad & Tobago	MoU on Indian pharmacopoeia for medicine access
Argentina	Cooperation on critical minerals, shale gas, pharma
Brazil (BRICS)	Participation in Global South economic and security agenda
Namibia (Upcoming)	To focus on energy and strategic minerals

Conclusion: India as the Voice of the Global South

India's engagement with the Global South is not transactional — it is transformative. It marks a deliberate attempt to reimagine global governance as more equitable, inclusive, and development- oriented.

"The future of global order will be shaped not in Western capitals, but in Accra, Buenos Aires, and Port of Spain - with Delhi as the bridge."

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS Paper II)

Q1. India's leadership in the Global South today is built on development cooperation, not ideological alignment. Discuss this shift with examples from recent diplomatic engagements. (250 words)

UPSC Prelims MCQ

- Q1. Concerning India's engagement with the Global South, consider the following:
 - 1. Ghana and India are collaborating to establish a vaccine manufacturing hub.
 - 2. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is headquartered in Accra.
 - 3. Argentina recently signed a pact with India for cooperation in critical minerals.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: A

(ISA is headquartered in Gurugram, not Accra.)

Student Notes 🧶





Shaky Foundations: Nicobar Project and Earthquake Risk Concerns

Source: The Hindu

GS Paper III – Environment | Disaster Management | Infrastructure Planning Theme: Ecological Ethics vs

Developmental Urgency

Introduction:

The Fault Beneath Development The ₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project (GNIP) has attracted controversy after its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) downplayed the likelihood of future megaearthquakes, despite the region's seismic volatility.

- "Earthquake recurrence is not linear You may have a calm century, followed by catastrophe."
- Prof. C.P. Rajendran, NIAS

Key Highlights of the Project

Component	Description
Transshipment Port	Part of India's maritime trade expansion
International Airport	Strategic logistics and defence hub
450 MVA Solar Plant	Renewable energy component
Urban Township	Associated developmental ecosystem

What the EIA Report Says

- 1. Downplays possibility of a 9.2 magnitude earthquake, like the 2004 tsunami
- 2. Cites a "return period" of 420-750 years for mega-earthquakes
- 3. Suggests region is "safe" for long-term infrastructure

Problem: EIA relies on secondary data and doesn't include site-specific studies

Scientific Counterpoints IIT-Kanpur Study (2019)

- 1. Sediment analysis at Bada Bal and South Andaman revealed seven tsunami events in 8,000 years
- 2. Nicobar lies on the highly active Sunda Subduction Zone, similar to Indonesia
- 3. Risk of accumulated tectonic stress remains under-quantified

Prof. C.P. Rajendran (NIAS)

1. "The Great Nicobar region is **highly geo-dynamic**. Multiple fault lines, island shifts, and poor building codes increase risk."

Ecological & Ethical Concerns

Environmental Threats	Social Concerns
Massive tree felling (forest clearance)	Displacement of Shompen tribes
Coral reef and marine biodiversity loss	Loss of traditional ecological knowledge
Impact on endemic species (Nicobar Megapode, etc.)	Cultural erasure and human rights violations

[&]quot;Biodiversity isn't a casualty of progress — it is the foundation of sustainable progress."

The Policy Dilemma: Development vs Disaster Risk

Argument for Development	Counterargument
Enhances trade and regional connectivity	Disregards tectonic sensitivity of the region
Strategic positioning near Indo-Pacific	Weakens ecological resilience of a fragile biome
Solar + Port = Economic growth multiplier	No buffer zones, no quake-proof infrastructure



Way Forward:

- 1. Science-Led, Ethics-Backed Development Conduct site-specific microseismic studies before execution
- 2. Enforce NDMA-compliant design standards for earthquake resistance
- 3. Adopt the Precautionary Principle in island ecosystems
- 4. Include tribal communities in decision-making (PESA Act spirit)
- 5. Revise EIA norms to mandate field-based geological modelling

"Infrastructure may be built in months — but ecological damage lasts centuries."

Conclusion:

A Project at a Tectonic Crossroads The Great Nicobar Project can be a model for responsible island **development** — or a cautionary tale of scientific neglect and ecological blindness. India must embrace a science-first, community-conscious approach when planning in high-risk zones.

"Mega projects must not sit on seismic silence. They must stand on scientific truth."

UPSC Mains Practice Question – GS Paper III

Q1. Large-scale infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive and seismically active zones poses longterm risks. In the context of the Great Nicobar Project, discuss the role of Environmental Impact Assessment in safeguarding disaster-prone ecosystems. (250 words)

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

- Q1. Consider the following statements about the Great Nicobar region:
 - 1. It lies on a tectonic plate boundary known for subduction zone earthquakes.
 - 2. It is home to tribal communities recognized under the Fifth Schedule.
 - 3. It is part of a coastal region governed under the CRZ Notification.
 - **4.** The 2004 tsunami was caused by an undersea earthquake in this region.

Which of the statements are correct?

- a) 1, 3, and 4 only
- b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- c) 1, 2, and 4 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: A

(Statement 2 is incorrect — Nicobar tribes are governed under the **Sixth Schedule** or tribal protections, not the Fifth.)

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Fostering a Commitment to End Maternal Deaths

Source: The Hindu

GS Paper II – Health, Welfare Schemes, Governance GS Paper I – Indian Society (Women & Health Indicators) Essay Theme: Empowering Mothers, Empowering the Nation

Introduction: The Grim Reality Behind the Numbers

India's **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** for 2019–21 stood at **93 deaths per 100,000 live births**, a significant reduction from **103 in 2017–19**, but still far from the global goal of <70 by 2030 (SDG 3.1).

"Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination — preventable in most cases."

Mapping the MMR Landscape

To prioritize interventions, states are divided into three groups based on MMR trends:

Category	States Included	MMR Range
Empowered Action	Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, UP, Chhattisgarh, Odisha,	High (>100)
Group	Rajasthan, etc.	
Southern States	AP, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, TN	Moderate (70– 100)
Other/Union Territories	Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, etc.	Low (<70)

Kerala leads with MMR of 20, while Assam remains highest at 167.

Three Key Delays That Lead to Maternal Mortality

Coined by Dr. Deborah Maine, these "Three Delays" are critical bottlenecks:

- 1. Delay in seeking care:
 - > Low health awareness, patriarchal restrictions
 - > Financial insecurity or lack of autonomy
- 2. Delay in reaching health facilities:
 - > Poor transport, difficult terrain, lack of 108/ambulance reach
 - > Islands, tribal areas face the brunt
- 3. Delay in receiving timely care:
 - Staff shortage, lack of blood banks or skilled obstetricians
 - > Mismanaged deliveries, infection, or bleeding

Ground-Level Challenges

Problem Area	Real-world Challenge
Staff and Skill Shortage	5,491 CHCs, but only 714 have blood storage units
Emergency Obstetric Services	Late arrival or absence of trained birth attendants
Infrastructure Gaps	Poor referral systems, delay in cesarean or anesthesia access
Behavioural & Social Norms	Early marriage, undernutrition, unsafe abortions

[&]quot;A weak system fails when a woman dies of sepsis because the hospital had no IV fluids."

Solutions and Way Forward

Institutional Mechanisms

- 1. Strengthen Janani Suraksha Yojana, PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
- 2. Increase budgetary allocation for maternal & child health
- 3. Ensure availability of skilled birth attendants (SBA) in every block







Transport & Referral Systems

- 1. Universalize 108 ambulance coverage
- 2. Set up emergency obstetric care units and blood storage centers in EAG states

Community Linkages

- 1. Integrate ASHA + ANM + Nutrition tracking
- 2. Promote health literacy among women and men

Best Practice - Kerala Model

- 1. Kerala's Confidential Review of Maternal Deaths
- 2. Timely audits + case-based policy interventions helped reduce MMR to <20

Conclusion: A Call to Collective Conscience

Maternal death is not just a health failure, it is a societal failure. Each life lost is a story of inaction, delay, or discrimination. The road to achieving SDG 3.1 must be paved with strong political will, granular action plans, and, above all, compassionate governance.

"A mother's life is not a statistic. It is the heartbeat of a household."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following statements about climate-induced displacement:
 - 1. The Disaster Management Act, 2005 explicitly defines climate refugees.
 - 2. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2019 addresses socio-economic rehabilitation of displaced people.
 - 3. The National Action Plan on Climate Change does not have a specific sub-mission on climate migration.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: B

(Statements 1 and 2 are incorrect. DM Act and CRZ laws do not directly deal with climate migration)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. India has made progress in reducing maternal mortality, yet challenges remain in equitable access and emergency care. Examine the causes of maternal deaths and suggest targeted interventions for highburden states. (250 words)

Student Notes 🍊





Rising Seas, Shifting Lives, and the Test of Democratic Values

Source: The Hindu

GS Paper II – Governance, Rights Issues

GS Paper III – Environment & Disaster Management

Essay Theme: "Climate justice is not a privilege—it is a right."

Introduction: The Invisible Victims of Climate Change

India's coastal communities are being silently displaced by sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, and climateinduced erosion. From Odisha to Kerala, traditional fishing and farming livelihoods are vanishing, pushing thousands into urban slums without legal protections or resettlement dignity.

"Environmental degradation is no longer just an ecological issue—it is a social justice challenge."

What's Happening on the Ground?

Region	Displacement Trigger	
Odisha (Satabhaya)	Villages swallowed by rising seas	
Karnataka (Honnavar)	Fishing communities evicted for tourism ports	
Tamil Nadu (Nagapattinam)	Coastal degradation due to aquaculture and infrastructure	
Gujarat (Kutch, Hazira)	Mangrove loss, industrial expansion	
Kerala (lowlands)	Flooding, saline intrusion from climate variability	

Communities are being relocated to resettlement colonies, often inland, without jobs, basic services, or legal land titles.

Legal Gaps and Governance Vacuum

Despite climate impacts, India lacks a coherent legal framework on climate displacement.

Existing Provision	Limitations
Article 21 – Right to Life	No specific mention of climate refugees
Disaster Management Act, 2005	Focuses on rapid-onset disasters, not slow ones
CRZ Notification, 2019	Ignores human vulnerability during enforcement
NAPCC/Sub-missions	No targeted protection for displaced communities

[&]quot;Climate migrants fall into legal invisibility—neither refugees, nor citizens with secure entitlements."

Socioeconomic Impacts on the Displaced

- 1. Many enter urban labor markets as informal workers (construction, sanitation, domestic help)
- 2. Live in slums with no access to housing rights, health care, or pensions
- 3. Women, children, and elderly face triple vulnerability—poverty, informality, and discrimination
- 4. Labour codes fail to protect those displaced by ecological collapse

Climate change disproportionately affects the most socio-economically vulnerable.

Grassroots Resistance: A Fight for Rights

Despite legal gaps, fisher unions, indigenous groups, and local coalitions are fighting for their rights:

Protest Location	Issue Opposed	
Ennore Creek (Tamil Nadu)	Adani Port expansion	
Puttuvam (Kerala)	Mangrove degradation by Sagarmala project	
Satabhaya (Odisha)	Submergence and inadequate resettlement	

These movements highlight the democratic right to dissent—often criminalized in the name of "green growth".

<u>Towards a Rights-Based Climate Migration Framework</u>









To uphold India's **constitutional ethos**, a rights-based policy approach must be adopted:

Policy Reforms Needed:

- 1. Legal recognition of climate migrants
- 2. Guaranteed entitlements (housing, health, wages)
- 3. Urban planning laws that integrate climate-displaced populations
- 4. Climate Resilience Mapping to preemptively relocate vulnerable areas

India must align with SDG 7 & 8: Ensure energy access and decent work for all, not just for the privileged.

Conclusion: Development Cannot Ignore Dignity

India's growth story cannot come at the cost of climate injustice and coastal erasure. The Constitution promises life with dignity, which must extend to those at the frontlines of environmental collapse. Protecting their rights is not just ecological policy—it is democratic duty.

"We may lose our coasts to the sea—but we must not lose our values to silence."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following:

- 1. The "Three Delays" model explains structural delays contributing to maternal deaths.
- 2. Maternal Mortality Ratio is defined as maternal deaths per 100,000 population.
- 3. PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan provides fixed-day specialist antenatal care in public health facilities.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: C

(Statement 2 is incorrect: MMR is maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, not population.)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. QClimate-induced migration in India is a growing challenge, yet legal and policy frameworks remain inadequate. Examine the implications of unregulated coastal development and suggest a rights-based response. (250 words)

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India's ₹1 Lakh Crore R&D Push: Quick Fix or Long-Term Vision?

Balancing Atmanirbharta, Innovation & Global Competitiveness

Source: Indian Express GS PAPER: 3 Science Tech

Context

India has launched a ₹1 lakh crore fund to catalyze private sector participation in research and development (R&D) over the next 5 years, through a low-interest loan-based model.

The initiative aims to push Atmanirbhar Bharat in critical sectors like:

1.	Green hydrogen	4.	Quantum tech
2.	Electric mobility	5.	Deep-tech & Al
3.	Semiconductors	6.	Defence R&D

It is a shift from grant-based models to a demand-driven, accountable, and industry-focused model.

Scientific & Technological Angle

- 1. Addresses the "valley of death" in India's innovation cycle, where good research fails to commercialize.
- 2. Facilitates translational research from labs to factories.
- 3. Enhances capabilities in **strategic areas**: Space, Cybersecurity, Biotechnology, Defence.

Comparison with global models:

Country	Initiative	Focus
US – USA	DARPA	Defence & deep tech
IL – Israel	Yozma Fund	VC-backed R&D innovation
DE – Germany	Fraunhofer Institutes	Industry-academic synergy, Applied research + IP generation
CN - China	Torch Programme	Innovation & entrepreneurship generation

Economic Angle Rationale:

- 1. India's R&D expenditure remains ~0.7% of GDP, among the lowest for major economies.
- 2. Private sector contribution is only ~37%, vs ~75% in the US and ~65% in China.

Economic Impact:

- 1. Boosts high-value manufacturing, reduces import dependency.
- 2. Enhances ease of doing innovation, a key to improving global competitiveness.
- 3. Generates quality jobs, especially for engineers, scientists, and startups.

Political & Governance Angle

- 1. Signals state-led industrial transformation.
- 2. Aligns with National R&D Policy, PLI schemes, and Make in India 2.0.
- 3. Reflects cooperative federalism, as states will be key implementers through R&D clusters. "This is not just fiscal stimulus, but a political commitment to scientific nationalism."

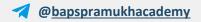
Social Angle

- 1. Inclusive innovation: Encourages participation from Tier-2/Tier-3 institutions and startups.
- 2. Jobs with dignity in science & technology sectors.
- 3. Can help reduce urban-rural knowledge divide and educational migration.

Example: If implemented in partnership with state governments, new "Innovation Districts" can emerge in UP, Bihar, Odisha, and Northeast India.

Global & Strategic Angle

1. Reduces dependency on Western tech giants, aids strategic autonomy.









- 2. Aligns with Global South leadership—India as a technology provider, not just a consumer.
- 3. Enhances India's credibility in multilateral forums like G20, WTO, and IPEF. "Innovation diplomacy is the new currency of global leadership."

Environmental Angle

- 1. Encourages climate-friendly R&D in:
 - Green hydrogen
 - Biofuels
 - Sustainable infrastructure
 - Clean mobility (EVs)
- 2. Ensures **techno-environmental resilience** through smart, low-carbon solutions.

Challenges Ahead

Challenge	Solution
Accountability in loan disbursal	Create independent Innovation Funding Authority
Lack of skilled researchers	Strengthen STEM education & R&D fellowships
Weak IPR culture	Reform patent filing, fast-track dispute resolution
Poor industry-academia linkage	Incentivize joint ventures, PPPs
Past implementation delays	Use PM-Gati Shakti digital dashboard for tracking

Way Forward

- 1. Create a National Innovation Finance Authority for transparent fund disbursal and real-time monitoring.
- 2. Foster strong industry—academia linkages through mission-driven partnerships and applied R&D hubs.
- 3. **Promote inclusive innovation** via District Innovation Labs (DILs) in Tier-2, rural, and state-level institutions.
- 4. Reform the IPR ecosystem by speeding up patents and expanding IPR support cells.
- 5. Prioritize public good innovations in clean energy, agri-tech, and health—especially for rural India.
- 6. Leverage global partnerships for deep-tech collaboration while preserving strategic autonomy.
- 7. Encourage competitive federalism with a State Innovation Index to boost grassroots R&D investment. India must institutionalize innovation as a national movement — inclusive, sustainable, and strategically sovereign.

Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. With reference to India's R&D (Research and Development) ecosystem, consider the following statements:
 - 1. The private sector in India contributes more than 50% of the total R&D spending.
 - 2. The National Research Foundation (NRF) is proposed as a nodal agency to coordinate funding across ministries and promote private participation in research.
 - 3. India spends over 2% of its GDP on R&D, aligning with developed economies like the USA and South

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Despite repeated budgetary hikes, India's Research and Development sector has not yielded transformative outcomes. Critically examine the structural challenges in India's R&D ecosystem. Suggest reforms to make R&D a driver of innovation and self-reliance.





Old Delhi, New Washington: Understanding Trump's Unilateralism and Its Implications for India

Source: Indian express

GS PAPER: 2&3 (IR & ECONOMY) WRITER: C. RAJAMOHAN

Context:

Donald Trump's presidency marked a sharp departure from post—World War II U.S. foreign policy traditions. His "America First" agenda sidelined multilateralism, disrupted trade regimes, and shook long-standing alliances, signaling a shift from liberal internationalism to transactional nationalism. India, as it adapts to this recalibrated global order, must understand the domestic political economy of the U.S., particularly the inward-looking, populist forces shaping its foreign posture.

Political Angle: Rise of Neo-Isolationism

- 1. Trump's actions were not entirely personalistic; they were **rooted in domestic disillusionment** with globalization.
- 2. His policies reflected a **deep voter shift** the American working class, hurt by deindustrialization, turned against free trade, immigration, and "endless wars."
- The resulting Trump doctrine favored bilateral deals over multilateral forums and economic nationalism over free trade.

Impact on India: Less U.S. appetite for large trade deals or climate cooperation frameworks like the Paris Agreement; increasing demand for reciprocity in defense and trade engagements.

Economic Angle: Strategic Protectionism and Recalibrated Trade

- 1. Tariffs on steel, aluminum, and solar products; withdrawal from the TPP; pressure on WTO rules all highlight America's strategic retreat from global trade liberalism.
- 2. India, affected by tariff hikes and withdrawal of GSP benefits, must recalibrate its exports and strengthen economic resilience through domestic manufacturing and new FTAs (like with EU, UAE, etc.)

Strategic Angle: Redefined Alliances and Opportunity for India

- 1. Trump weakened trans-Atlantic ties and antagonized NATO, but strengthened Indo-Pacific partnerships.
- 2. The **QUAD revival** (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) and **2+2 Dialogue** platforms gained prominence, offering India a stronger geopolitical role.

New Delhi's Role: As the U.S. reorients its alliances, India must become a **pillar of regional balance**, especially amidst China's assertiveness.

Intellectual Angle: Understanding America's Domestic Drivers

- 1. U.S. foreign policy is increasingly shaped by **internal political coalitions** (e.g., MAGA base), not elite consensus.
- 2. India must look **beyond D.C. diplomacy** to engage U.S. think tanks, governors, diaspora networks, and bipartisan groups.

Way Forward:

- 1. Strategic Autonomy + Strategic Convergence: Deepen cooperation with the U.S. without becoming dependent; pursue issue-based alignment.
- 2. Institutional Engagement: Expand India's presence in American universities, policy think tanks, diaspora lobbies, and state legislatures.
- **3. Diversified Diplomacy**: Balance ties with U.S., EU, Russia, and Global South to avoid overdependence on any one bloc.







- 4. Invest in Trade Resilience: Reduce vulnerability to U.S. policy shifts by expanding trade with ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America.
- 5. Indo-U.S. Tech Alliance: Build robust partnerships in AI, semiconductors, critical minerals, and defense coproduction — beyond traditional security.

Mains Practice Questions

 $\mathbf{Q2.}$ Despite policy recognition of R&D's importance for India's self-reliance and innovation, outcomes remain below potential. Evaluate the role of schemes like the National Research Foundation (NRF) and PLI-linked innovation efforts in revamping India's R&D landscape. Suggest steps to enhance private sector participation and coordination across sectors.

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End Custodial Brutality, Begin Criminal Justice Reform?

Date: 10 July 2025

GS Paper II – Governance, Polity

GS Paper IV – Ethics (Empathy, Accountability, Public Service)

Essay Linkages – "Justice delayed is justice denied", "Policing and Humanity"

Context:

Custodial deaths in Tamil Nadu, like the recent case of Ajith Kumar (2025), alongside past cases like Vignesh (2022) and Raja (2024), reveal a disturbing pattern of custodial torture and death, exposing a crisis in the Indian criminal justice system.

These incidents are not isolated — they reflect structural failures, political apathy, lack of police reforms, and erosion of constitutional morality.

Issue at Core: Custodial Brutality

- 1. Institutional Normalisation of Violence:
 - > Custodial deaths are often not isolated incidents but outcomes of a system that prioritizes punishment over justice.
 - Police departments are often under-resourced, undertrained, and lack accountability.
- 2. Lack of Accountability & Transparency:
 - **Prakash Singh vs Union of India (2006)** directives remain poorly implemented.
 - > most states largely ignore Model Police Act (2006) recommendations.
- 3. Neglect of Mental Health and Sensitisation:
 - Less than 1% of police budgets are spent on training, wellness, or community policing.
 - > Absence of institutional mental health mechanisms for officers results in stress-induced violence.
- 4. Imbalance in Criminal Justice Architecture:
 - > Heavy investment in surveillance gear and hardware with minimal investment in human-centric policing.
 - > Disproportionate suffering is often inflicted on marginalized communities (Dalits, Muslims, Adivasis

Political Dimensions

- Centralised misuse of police forces undermines federalism and democratic accountability.
- 2. Lack of implementation of reform recommendations from commissions like:
 - > 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)
 - > Justice Malimath Committee on Criminal Justice Reform
- 3. Police forces often used for **political vendetta**, affecting impartiality and justice.

Social Dimensions Disproportionate impact on marginalized groups, including Dalits, minorities, and the poor.

- **4.** Reflects **social prejudice**, caste hierarchy, and structural discrimination.
- 5. These incidents erode trust in the system and reinforce inequality in justice delivery.

Key Recommendations from Committees:

Committee/Report	Key Reform Suggestions
2nd Administrative Reforms	- Separation of investigation from law & order functions.
Commission (ARC)	- Establishment of Independent Police Complaints Authority.
Commission (ARC)	- Community policing to build public trust.
Law Commission of India	- Police accountability commissions.
(152nd, 273rd Reports)	- Legal prohibition of torture during interrogation.







	- Repeal of outdated laws that encourage custodial force.
NHRC Guidelines	 Mandatory judicial inquiry in all custodial deaths. CCTV installation in lock-ups and jails. Prompt compensation and prosecution.
Justice Thomas Committee (2010)	Uniform training across states.Forensic-based investigation.Human rights embedded in police manuals.

Way Forward: Institutional Reforms:

- 1. Enforce **SC** directives in letter and spirit—Police Complaints Authorities at state and district levels.
- 2. Implement Model Police Act, 2006 across states to depoliticize policing.

Human-Centric Policing:

- 1. Increase funding for training, mental wellness, and counselling of police personnel.
- 2. Regular **refresher courses** on human rights, stress handling, and legal literacy.

Social Trust Building:

- 1. Promote community policing and inclusion of civil society in reform mechanisms.
- Use **body cameras, CCTV in lockups**, and digital monitoring to ensure transparency.

Legal & Judicial Overhaul:

- 1. Ensure independent investigation of custodial deaths through judicial magistrates.
- Mandate compensation and rehabilitation of victims' families.

Administrative Reforms:

- 1. Allocate adequate police budgets for preventive and reform-oriented interventions.
- 2. Fast-track establishment of Forensic Labs, Legal Aid Cells, and quick disposal of complaints.

Prelims MCQ

- **Q1.** Consider the following statements regarding the BRICS Summit 2024:
 - 1. The Rio Declaration condemned cross-border terrorism and supported UNSC reforms.
 - 2. Saudi Arabia has officially joined BRICS.
 - 3. BRICS has proposed an alternative payment system independent of SWIFT.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c)

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. The BRICS Summit 2024 in Rio signifies a rising shift towards multipolarity and Global South solidarity. Discuss the relevance of BRICS in reforming the global governance institutions. (250 words)

Student Notes 🍊









BRICS Summit 2024 and the Rio Declaration: Strengthening Global South and Multipolarity

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Introduction:

The **17th BRICS Summit** in Rio de Janeiro marked a significant phase in the evolution of the bloc, especially after its **expansion in 2023** to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Argentina. Amid shifting geopolitical alignments and Western dominance, the **Rio Declaration reaffirmed unity**, stressed **multilateralism**, and positioned BRICS as a **counterweight to the G7-dominated order**.

Key Highlights:

1. Geopolitical Assertion of the Global South:

- The **Rio Declaration** reinforced BRICS' role as a **platform for the Global South** to voice concerns about unilateralism, Western sanctions, and double standards.
- > BRICS positioned itself as a defender of multipolarity, sovereign equality, and development-led peace.

2. Strong Stand on Gaza & Iran:

- Firm condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza and U.S. strikes on Iran.
- Marks a shift from mere economic coordination to political posturing and diplomatic solidarity.

3. Strengthening Financial Sovereignty:

- Growing interest in de-dollarization and creating alternatives to the SWIFT system.
- > Push for greater use of national currencies in trade, backed by the New Development Bank (NDB).

4. Security and Terrorism:

- India's push against cross-border terrorism, including references to the **Poonch attacks** and terrorism financing, was included in the final communiqué.
- > Reaffirmation of UNSC reform and expansion—"democratization of global governance."

Political and Economic Significance

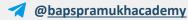
Dimension	Relevance	
Global Governance	Underscores BRICS as a challenger to Western-led global institutions	
	(e.g., IMF, World Bank, UNSC)	
Strategic Autonomy	Encourages non-aligned middle powers to pursue independent	
	foreign policy amid US-China tensions	
South-South Cooperation	BRICS-NDB financing of Global South infrastructure without	
	conditionalities (unlike IMF conditional loans)	
India's Diplomatic Leverage	India highlighted terrorism and Poonch attack; BRICS endorsed stand.	
	Gained space for strategic messaging	

Ethical & Diplomatic Dimensions

- Equity in global institutions: BRICS upholds fairness, inclusion, and representation in global decisionmaking.
- 2. Peace diplomacy: Push for negotiated settlements over armed conflict.
- 3. Ethics of Sovereignty: BRICS opposes external interventions, sanctions, and regime change policies.

Key Recommendations from Committees / Reports:

Report/Forum Suggestion







BRICS Academic Forum	Greater coordination on digital currency, AI, and global health
BRICS Academic Foldin	governance
UN Secretary-General Reform Agenda	Democratisation of UNSC through inclusion of India, Brazil,
ON Secretary-General Reform Agenda	South Africa
India's Economic Survey (2021-22)	Promotion of Rupee trade settlements and de-dollarization
iliula 5 Economic Survey (2021-22)	push

Way Forward

Reform Global Institutions:

- 1. Urgent need for UNSC expansion, especially permanent membership for India and African nations.
- 2. Revive WTO dispute resolution with focus on inclusive trade rules. Financial Sovereignty:
- 3. Accelerate BRICS-led payment mechanisms using national currencies.
- 4. Strengthen the **NDB** to become a credible alternative to Bretton Woods institutions.

Political Cohesion:

- 1. Avoid internal rifts (e.g., India-China border issues) by institutionalizing conflict resolution mechanisms.
- 2. Coordinate positions on issues like Gaza, Iran, and Ukraine without compromising national interest.

Multipolar Diplomacy:

- 1. Promote Issue-based alliances with African Union, ASEAN, and G20 for a balanced global order.
- 2. India must continue to play the **bridge-builder** role within BRICS.

Prelims MCQ

- **Q1.** Which of the following is/are correctly matched?
 - 1. Prakash Singh Case Police Reforms
 - 2. Malimath Committee Victim-centric criminal justice
 - 3. 2nd ARC Electoral Reforms

Select the correct answer:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a)

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Custodial deaths in India reflect deeper structural and moral failures of the criminal justice system. Discuss with suitable examples and suggest comprehensive reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes 🍊







Empowering India's Youth: Population Dividend through Rights, Reforms & Resources

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 1 (India Society)

GS II:Social Justice

Introduction:

On World Population Day 2024, as India emerges as the world's most populous nation, the spotlight shifts from sheer numbers to the transformative potential they hold. This milestone presents not just challenges, but immense opportunities—if guided by the right investments. Central to harnessing this demographic wave is empowering women and youth with choice, control, and capital. These three pillars form the foundation for converting population pressure into a population dividend—fueling growth, equity, and innovation in the decades to come

Key Themes:

- 1. Demographic Dividend: A Ticking Window
 - > Over **52% of India's population** is below 30.
 - > This can boost productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship if supported by quality education, skill development, and reproductive rights.
- 2. Child Marriage and Early Pregnancies:
 - India has the highest number of child brides (UNICEF 2023).
 - Child marriage leads to early pregnancies, limiting girls' education, income, and health.
 - ➤ NFHS-5: 23% of Indian women aged 20-24 were married before 18.
- 3. Reproductive Health and Fertility Choices:
 - ➤ Half of Indian women (15–49 years) are not involved in their own health or contraception decisions.
 - > Teenage pregnancies remain high despite declining fertility rates.

Political & Governance Aspect:

- 1. Lack of enforcement of the Child Marriage Prohibition Act (2006) and gaps in reproductive rights.
- 2. Programmatic gaps in Mission Parivar Vikas, RKSK (Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram).
- 3. Need for inter-ministerial coordination across health, education, women and child welfare.

Economic & Capital Development:

- 1. Child marriage and early motherhood reduce women's labour force participation.
- 2. Women's empowerment boosts GDP, productivity, and intergenerational well-being.
- 3. Skilling and reproductive autonomy can help balance population and prosperity.

Ethical & Social Justice

- 1. Issue of **bodily autonomy and consent** in reproductive decisions.
- 2. Intergenerational equity: burden of early marriage and lack of choices passed on to next generation.
- Denial of family planning access violates right to dignity, equality, and informed choice.

Committee Recommendations and Global Commitments:

Body/Committee	Recommendation	
UNFPA	Promote SRHR (Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights), delay marriage age	
NITI Aayog's SDG Index	Improve reproductive health, eliminate early marriage (Goal 5, Goal 3)	







Justice Verma Committee	Ensure legal rights over reproductive autonomy	
National Education Policy (2020)	Includes life skills, gender sensitivity, and health awareness	

Way Forward:

1. Empowering Girls & Young Women:

- > Delay age of marriage, invest in girls' **secondary education** and **skill training**.
- > Scale up Adolescent Health Clinics and peer educator models under RKSK.

2. Health System Strengthening:

- > Integrate **family planning services** with nutrition and maternal health.
- Increase budget allocation for sexual and reproductive health in district health plans.

3. Behavioural Change and Awareness:

- Leverage local influencers, community health workers, and school curricula to shift gender norms.
- Focus on "Men as partners" in reproductive responsibility.

4. Data-Driven Governance:

- > Use disaggregated data from **NFHS-6**, SRS, and UDAY to target vulnerable districts.
- > Ensure convergence of ministries (WCD, Education, Health) for holistic adolescent empowerment.

Mains Practice Question (GS II – Social Justice):

Q. India's demographic dividend can become a demographic disaster if issues like child marriage and lack of reproductive autonomy are not addressed. Discuss with measures to empower women and adolescents.

Prelims MCO:

- Q. Which of the following schemes focus on adolescent reproductive health and delaying early marriages?
 - 1. Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)
 - 2. Mission Shakti
 - 3. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
 - 4. Mission Parivar Vikas

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: d)

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Editorial Summary: *Bridge Too Far* – Infrastructure Collapse & Institutional Gaps

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: (iii) Disaster management

GS Paper: (II)Governance

Introduction:

On July 9, a **40-year-old bridge collapsed** in **Valsad district of Gujarat**, killing several and exposing major concerns in **infrastructure audit**, **accountability**, **and public safety**. The editorial highlights the recurrent nature of such disasters and the **lack of structural integrity**, **transparency**, **and maintenance oversight**.

Major Issues Highlighted:

1. Recurring Bridge Failures:

- ➤ Morbi Bridge Collapse (Gujarat, 2022) 135 deaths.
- ➤ Bihar Bridge Collapses (2023–24) Several under-construction bridges collapsed.
- > Mumbai's Andheri Foot Overbridge (2018) lack of timely inspection.

2. Institutional Apathy and Redundancy:

- > Overlapping jurisdictions between urban local bodies, PWDs, and contractors.
- > No national-level, real-time infrastructure audit or compliance mechanism.
- > Delays in repair despite known vulnerabilities.

3. Corruption and Low-Quality Materials:

- > Poor quality construction due to **lowest-bid tenders**, nepotism, and lax oversight.
- Absence of blacklisting or penal action for erring contractors.

Multi-Dimensional Analysis:

Governance & Policy Dimension:

- 1. Poor implementation of urban infrastructure safety codes.
- 2. No mandate for periodic third-party structural audits.
- 3. Recommendations of CAG and NITI Aayog on maintenance remain unimplemented.

Accountability & Ethics:

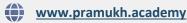
- 1. Ethical lapse in contractor behavior and institutional negligence.
- 2. Violation of **Right to Life under Article 21** due to preventable disasters.
- 3. Public infrastructure as **public trust** its failure reflects erosion of state integrity.

Economy & Infrastructure:

- 1. Infrastructure failure leads to economic loss, investment risk, and loss of public confidence.
- 2. Funds allocated to smart cities, PM Gati Shakti, and urban rejuvenation need safety-first orientation.
- 3. Absence of digital, real-time mapping of critical infrastructure health.

Committee Recommendations & Best Practices:

Body/Policy	Suggestion
2nd ARC Report on Ethics in Governance	Transparency in public works; independent audit of assets
CAG Reports	Periodic audit of bridges and roads with compliance enforcement
IRC Guidelines (Indian Road Congress)	Mandate life-cycle safety audit for all critical infrastructure





UK's National Infrastructure Commission (NIC)

Real-time infrastructure dashboards and automated inspections

Way Forward:

1. Mandatory Safety Audits:

- All bridges over 15 years old must undergo annual audits by third-party agencies.
- > Use drones, LIDAR, and sensor-based monitoring systems for real-time data.

2. Institutional Reforms:

- Create a National Infrastructure Safety Authority (NISA) on lines of NDMA.
- > Strengthen the capacity of **urban local bodies** through trained engineers and auditors.

3. Accountability Mechanism:

- > Enforce **criminal liability** for wilful negligence by contractors or officials.
- > Ensure **public disclosure** of infrastructure health on government portals.

4. People-Centric Infrastructure Governance:

- > Engage citizens in reporting cracks or faults via mobile apps.
- > Integrate infrastructure governance into Smart City Dashboards.

Mains Practice Question

Q1. Repeated incidents of infrastructure collapse across Indian cities indicate systemic failures in governance and accountability. Discuss with reference to institutional reforms needed in public works.

UPSC Prelims MCQ:

- **Q1.** Consider the following with reference to infrastructure safety in India:
 - 1. Indian Road Congress (IRC) provides technical guidelines for bridges and roads.
 - 2. Central Public Works Department (CPWD) is the nodal agency for auditing all bridges in India.
 - 3. There is a constitutional mandate for annual safety audits of public infrastructure.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a)

(Statements 2 and 3 are incorrect; there is no such constitutional mandate or CPWD monopoly.)

Student	Notes	<u>/</u>





India's Gender Gap – A Warning Bell, Not Just a Ranking

GS Paper: 2 Social Justice, Governance

ESSAY: Women's Empowerment Source: The Hindu

Introduction:

India, despite its rising economic stature, digital prowess, and demographic potential, continues to falter when it comes to gender equality. The **Global Gender Gap Report 2025**, published by the **World Economic Forum**, **serves** as a critical reminder that **structural gender disparities remain deeply entrenched** across health, education, economic participation, and political representation. With India ranking **131 out of 148 countries**, the report highlights that gender justice is not merely a social imperative but a core development concern—crucial for equitable and sustainable national progress.

Multidimensional Issues Behind the Gender Gap Structural & Institutional Gaps

- Persistent son preference reflected in skewed sex ratio at birth, despite legal deterrents like the PCPNDT
 Act.
- 2. Underinvestment in **reproductive health, nutrition, and primary healthcare** for adolescent girls and women, especially in rural and marginalised regions.
- 3. Poor implementation of the National Gender Budgeting Framework across states and ministries.

Economic Disempowerment

- 1. Women's participation in the **labour force remains below 25%**, compounded by the burden of **unpaid** care work, which is seven times more than men's (Time Use Survey).
- 2. Gender pay gap continues, with women earning less than one-third of what men do for similar work.
- 3. Lack of childcare, maternity support, and eldercare infrastructure leads to female workforce attrition.

Political Underrepresentation

- 4. Women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making forums less than 15% representation in Parliament.
- 5. **Gender quotas in Panchayati Raj Institutions (33%)** have not translated into effective participation due to tokenism and patriarchal constraints.

Health and Demographic Concerns

- 1. **57% of women aged 15–49** are anaemic (NFHS-5), impacting their education, employment, and maternal outcomes.
- Increasing ageing population of dependent women (widows, elderly), with limited economic and social support systems.
- 3. **Declining fertility rate and rising dependency ratio** challenge India's economic stability unless women are included meaningfully in the workforce.

Social Norms and Cultural Barriers

- 4. Deep-rooted patriarchal mindset restricts women's choices in marriage, education, work, and mobility.
- 5. Early marriage, dropout from secondary school, and lack of digital access deepen the divide.

Global Best Practices:

Country	Reform
Sweden/Norway	Redistribute care work through public crèches and elder care services.
South Korea	Introduced elder care allowances to support women's return to workforce.
Rwanda	Gender quotas in parliament have led to 60% women representation.

Way Forward (Multi-dimensional Approach):





Strengthen Gender-Responsive Governance

- 1. Institutionalise gender budgeting across all ministries and states with measurable outcomes.
- Ensure implementation of laws such as the Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, and PCPNDT
 Act with strict monitoring.

Recognise and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work

- 1. Invest in **childcare centres**, elder care facilities, and flexible work policies.
- 2. Integrate unpaid work into **national accounting and economic planning** frameworks (like the Time Use Survey recommendations).

Boost Women's Economic Participation

- 1. Promote skilling, digital inclusion, and entrepreneurship among women in both rural and urban sectors.
- 2. Provide incentives to businesses for **gender-inclusive hiring and leadership development**. Reproductive Health and Social Protection
- 3. Enhance investment in maternal health, nutrition, and sexual education.
- **4.** Expand access to **universal health coverage and direct benefit transfers** for adolescent girls and elderly women.

Political and Community Empowerment

- 1. Enforce 50% reservation for women in local bodies and support their meaningful participation through training and digital tools.
- 2. Promote gender-sensitive school curricula and community campaigns to shift social norms.

Ethical & Long-Term Perspective:

"Gender equality is not merely a target—it is the means to a just, healthy, and economically resilient society."

India must move beyond slogans and symbolic representation to a **transformative agenda** where women are not just beneficiaries but **co-creators of the development narrative**.

Conclusion

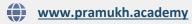
India's low ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report is not just a statistical concern—it is a **mirror to the structural inequities** that continue to hinder inclusive national development. Despite policy intentions and constitutional guarantees, women in India face systemic barriers in access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. Unless gender equality is made **central to governance**, **planning**, **and budgeting**, the demographic dividend will remain unrealised and economic growth unsustainable.

UPSC Practice Questions

- Q1. Which of the following statements about the Global Gender Gap Report 2025 is/are correct?
 - 1. It is released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
 - 2. It includes parameters like political empowerment, education, economic participation, and health.
 - 3. India's ranking in the report has improved over the last five years. Select the correct answer:
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3 Answer: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's Artificial Intelligence ambitions must be supported by institutional legitimacy, political consensus, and long-term national vision." Discuss the need for a bipartisan AI strategy and lessons from global best practices.





Mission Without a Mandate: Strengthening India's AI Governance Vision

Source: Indian Express

(GS II/GS III - Governance + Tech Policy):

Introduction

India is aspiring to position itself as a global leader in Artificial Intelligence (AI), driven by initiatives like the ₹10,000 crore India AI Mission. With its demographic advantage and expanding digital ecosystem, India holds immense potential. However, the absence of a cabinet-approved national AI strategy, parliamentary oversight, and political consensus raises concerns. Without a unified and accountable framework, India's AI ambition risks becoming fragmented, lacking long-term vision, and global competitiveness.

Core Issues:

1. Structural and Strategic Gaps:

- The India AI Mission is currently housed under a Section 8 company within MeitY, limiting its authority and coordination capacity.
- > No whole-of-government mandate or Parliamentary endorsement exists.
- Parliament remains largely disengaged from AI discourse despite its wide-ranging societal implications (e.g., job losses, ethics, privacy, surveillance).

2. Institutional Deficit in R&D and Innovation:

- India's AI ecosystem is **dominated by consumer tech deployment**, not by foundational or deep-tech innovation.
- Lack of coordination between academia, startups, and industry.
- ➤ Poor pipeline of Al-specialised PhDs and limited international Al leadership.

3. Funding & Market Challenges:

- Venture capitalists view India more as a consumer market, not a deep-tech innovator.
- Public and private investments in AI R&D remain shallow, limiting global competitiveness.

Global Best Practices

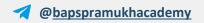
Country	Key Practice	
US – USA	Al Bill of Rights, National Al Initiative Act, Congressional oversight	
EU – EU	Al Act 2024 (binding regulation on ethical use of AI), AI Ethics Guidelines	
CN – China	Al Development Plan (2017) with five-year targets, coordinated state-led	
	investment	
GB – UK	National AI Strategy (2021), cross-departmental AI Council for oversight	
SG – Singapore	Model AI Governance Framework, AI Verify System for testing models	

Relevant Committee Recommendations:

- 1. NITI Aayog's 'National Strategy for AI (2018)': Called for creation of a national AI marketplace, ethical framework, and coordination mechanism.
- 2. **K. VijayRaghavan Committee** (former PSA): Recommended setting up of an apex body and alignment of AI with India's strategic needs.
- 3. K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee (Judicial Reforms): Emphasised tech governance and AI in legal aid systems.

Way Forward:

- 1. Parliamentary Mandate & Political Consensus:
 - > Launch a Cabinet-approved "National AI Strategy", tabled in Parliament for legitimacy.
 - Ensure **bipartisan support**, transparency, and democratic accountability.







2. Institutional Anchoring & AI Governance Framework:

- > Establish a National Al Commission (on lines of TRAI or NITI Aayog) with representation from academia, industry, and civil society.
- > Enable regulatory sandboxing, data governance, and AI ethics monitoring.

3. Boost R&D and Human Capital:

- Fund foundational AI research through public grants (like **NSF-USA** model).
- > Incentivise AI PhDs, international fellowships, and university—startup collaboration.

4. Align AI Goals with Global South Priorities:

- Use India's G20 presidency experience to lead Global South's voice in multilateral Al governance (e.g., Global Digital Compact at UN).
- > Push for inclusive AI tools in agriculture, health, education, and local languages.

UPSC Practice Questions

- Q1. What was the allocation for the India AI Mission announced by the Indian Government?
 - a) ₹1,000 crore
 - b) ₹10,000 crore
 - c) ₹5,000 crore
 - d) ₹25,000 crore

Answer: B) ₹10,000 crore

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's demographic dividend will not yield results unless half its population is empowered." In the context of the Global Gender Gap Report 2025, examine the barriers to gender equality and suggest measures to address them.

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Assessing India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)

Theme: Climate Governance and Carbon Market Targets

Source: The Hindu I

GS Paper III – Environment, Economy, Climate Policy

Introduction:

India's recently launched Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) aims to regulate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across eight heavy industries, aligning with national climate goals and the broader vision of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

However, assessing the ambition of these targets requires a macro-level, economy-wide lens rather than a focus on individual entities or sectors. The current CCTS structure may not reflect sufficient ambition when compared to India's long-term NDC targets

Main Points:

1. Structure and Purpose of CCTS:

- CCTS targets emission intensity reduction in 8 energy-intensive sectors: steel, cement, aluminium, paper & pulp, petrochemicals, textiles, iron, and chloro-alkali.
- > Operates similarly to the Perform, Achieve & Trade (PAT) Scheme, where industries are rewarded for surpassing energy efficiency targets and can trade credits.

2. Issues with Target Ambition:

- > Data from PAT Cycles (2012–14 to 2020) show mixed trends: some sectors increased energy intensity even while national averages fell.
- > Companies sometimes bought energy certificates instead of reducing actual in-house emissions market mechanisms worked, but ambition was low.
- > The decline in energy intensity was modest and often business-as-usual, not transformational.

3. Aggregate vs. Entity-Level Approach:

- The real climate impact must be evaluated at the aggregate economy-wide level, not merely at the sectoral or entity level.
- Focusing only on **entity-specific gains** may misrepresent India's overall emission trajectory.

4. Emissions Modelling Insights:

- CEEW modelling of a 2030 NDC-aligned scenario suggests:
 - ✓ India's energy sector could cut emission intensity by 3.44% annually (2025–2030).
 - ✓ Manufacturing sector under CCTS may only achieve 2.53% annual reduction, making it less ambitious than other sectors like power.
 - ✓ Early signs (2023–24) show only 1.68% annual EIVA reduction, well below the desired pace.

Global Practices:

- 1. EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS): Focuses on aggressive cap reductions (by 62% by 2030 vs. 2005 levels), covers over 10,000 power and industrial plants.
- 2. China's National ETS (2021): Covers power sector, gradually expanding to steel and cement; uses intensity-based benchmarking, similar to India.
- 3. California Cap-and-Trade Program: Strong integration of offsets and innovation funding.
- 4. Voluntary Carbon Markets Taskforce (World Economic Forum): Emphasizes transparent crediting and integrity in trade.

Committee Recommendations:

- 1. NITI Aayog's "Carbon Market Framework" (2022) suggested:
 - > Integration of voluntary and compliance markets under one regulatory umbrella.
 - > Need for MRV system (Monitoring, Reporting, Verification) and independent regulators.









2. **Expert Committee on Energy Transition (CEA 2021)** emphasized a **phased expansion of carbon pricing** to transport, agriculture, and buildings for holistic coverage.

Way Forward/ Suggestions

- 1. Shift Focus to Aggregate Outcomes:
 - > Set clearer **national economy-wide benchmarks**, not just sector-level targets.
 - Regularly assess against NDC-aligned modelling scenarios.
- 2. Strengthen MRV Mechanisms:
 - > Establish an independent carbon market regulator for oversight.
 - Use digital platforms for real-time credit tracking and transparency.
- 3. Incentivize In-House Reductions:
 - Limit over-reliance on credit purchases.
 - Provide support for clean technology adoption and retrofitting.
- 4. Integrate with Global Markets:
 - Align India's CCTS with international markets (like Article 6 of Paris Agreement).
 - Allow high-quality Indian credits to be traded globally.
- 5. Expand Sectoral Coverage:
 - > Bring in **transport**, **buildings**, **agriculture**, and small/medium industries in future phases.
 - Consider convergence with the Renewable Energy Credit (REC) and Energy Saving Certificates (ESCerts) markets.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- **Q1.** With reference to the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) recently launched in India, consider the following statements:
 - 1. It is mandatory for all energy-intensive sectors to reduce absolute emissions under CCTS.
 - 2. The scheme functions on the principle of rewarding entities for exceeding energy efficiency targets.
 - 3. CCTS is aligned with the Perform, Achieve & Trade (PAT) scheme model. Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B. 2 and 3 only

UPSC Main PRACTICE QUESTION (GS Paper III – Environment):

Q1. "India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) is a progressive step but lacks the ambition needed to align with national climate goals." Critically evaluate the structure, limitations, and suggest reforms for the scheme in light of global best practices

Student Notes <u></u>





The Changing Landscape of Employment

Theme: Employment Trends, Skill Gap, Informality

Source: The Hindu |

GS Paper III - Indian Economy, Employment, Social Justice

Introduction:

India faces a paradox of a youthful demographic dividend and increasing unemployment or underemployment, particularly among the educated. While schemes like the EPFO reflect a rise in formal employment, deeper concerns persist over job quality, informality, skill gaps, and mismatch between education and labor market demand.

The Future of Jobs Report 2025 and India Employment Report 2024 warn that without structural reforms, digital skilling, and education-industry alignment, India risks alienating a significant share of its workforce.

Core Employment Challenges

1. Informalisation and Structural Gaps:

- > 90% of jobs in India are still informal, with a falling share of regular salaried jobs.
- > EPFO enrolment trends show improvement post-pandemic, especially among youth (18-25), but do not reflect job quality.
- > Contractual employment is rising, especially in the gig economy, raising concerns over job security and social safety nets.

2. Educated Youth and Skilling Deficit:

- > India has the world's largest youth population, yet struggles with employability.
- > Reports show 75% of youth lack basic workplace digital skills, such as drafting emails or using spreadsheets.
- Over 60% cannot perform basic digital tasks, highlighting poor outcomes despite rising education access.

3. Technological Displacement & Sectoral Mismatch:

- ➤ Al and automation are replacing repetitive traditional jobs.
- > Sectors like manufacturing, construction, and retail face volatility while demand for tech-based gig work and green jobs rises.
- > The **skill mismatch** between industry needs and academic training remains unaddressed.

Global Best Practices & Committees:

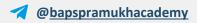
1. International Practices:

- > Germany's Dual Vocational Training Model: Combines apprenticeships with classroom education for industry-ready skills.
- > Singapore's SkillsFuture Initiative: Encourages lifelong learning with government-subsidized upskilling programs.
- > OECD Recommendations: Emphasize alignment of national skill strategies with labor market forecasts.

2. Indian Committees & Reports:

- > National Skill Development Policy (2015): Stressed public-private partnerships for demand- based skilling.
- > NITI Aayog Strategy for New India @75: Recommended revamping vocational education, tracking labor market data, and improving employment exchanges.
- > Second ARC (11th Report: Crisis Management) emphasized flexibility in employment generation and public-private employment exchanges.

Way Forward:









- 1. Curriculum Reforms and Digital Literacy:
 - > Make basic digital and financial literacy part of school and college curricula.
 - > Strengthen vocational training and coding/skilling labs in every district.
- 2. Revamp Skilling Ecosystem:
 - Strengthen Skill India Mission with measurable outcomes.
 - Introduce apprenticeship-based vocational education in partnership with MSMEs.
- 3. Strengthen Formalisation with Flexibility:
 - Extend social security and EPFO benefits to gig and informal workers.
 - Encourage portable job benefits, akin to "gig welfare codes".
- 4. Leverage Demographic Dividend:
 - > Align education with industry 4.0 and climate-resilient jobs.
 - Expand participation of women and rural youth through targeted employment incentives.
- 5. Institutional Collaboration:
 - > Establish Employment-Industry Coordination Cells in universities.
 - Promote state-level skill councils for decentralised planning and real-time labour mapping.

Conclusion:

India stands at a demographic crossroad. While formalisation of jobs is improving via EPFO and gig-based engagements, deeper structural flaws in skilling, job creation, and social security remain unresolved. The disproportionate focus on degrees without employability continues to widen the education-employment disconnect.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following regarding employment trends in India:
 - 1. Over 90% of employment in India is still informal.
 - 2. India has the highest youth population in the world, yet shows high levels of underemployment among graduates.
 - 3. The EPFO enrolment data alone is a reliable indicator of job quality in India. Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

UPSC Main Practice Question (GS Paper III – Economy):

Q1. "India's employment challenge lies not in the lack of youth but in the lack of skills and job-market alignment."Discuss the reasons behind growing educated unemployment in India and suggest comprehensive reforms to bridge the skill-employability gap. (250words)

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Women in STEM & Skilling for the Future

Source: The Hindu |

Theme: Skilling, Gender Equity, Education-Industry Linkage

Relevant for: GS Paper II (Governance, Social Justice) & GS Paper III (Skill Development, Economic Growth)

Introduction:

India presents a paradox in gender and employment: while 43% of STEM graduates are women (the highest globally), they form only 27% of the STEM workforce. This gap is symptomatic of systemic gender biases, weak education-to-employment pathways, and a workplace culture not conducive to women's retention in tech careers.

With initiatives like the NEP 2020, Digital India, and the UN's WeSTEM Programme, there's growing momentum to reverse this trend—but industry participation remains the missing link.

Body: Challenges in Women's STEM Participation

1. Low Workforce Participation:

- > Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is just 41.7%, and lower in urban areas (25.4%) despite rising rural engagement.
- > Only 31.5% of researchers globally are women, highlighting the gender gap in technical education and research fields.

2. Education-Employment Disconnect:

- > Despite rising STEM education among women, career transitions are blocked due to:
 - ✓ Gendered societal norms ("mechanical/tech jobs are for men")
 - ✓ Lack of workplace safety, maternity support, and role models
 - ✓ Persistent pay and leadership gaps

3. Industry Apathy and Stereotyping:

- > Industry often acts as a passive recruiter instead of a transformative enabler.
- Deep-rooted perceptions that "tech is not for women" restrict hiring and promotions.
- > Evidence from UNESCO and World Bank shows that even skilled women are pushed out of STEM careers due to unfriendly work environments.

Global Best Practices & Indian Interventions

1. Global Practices:

- > USA's Girls Who Code: Mentorship + tech training in schools to close the gender-tech gap.
- > Germany's Dual Education Model: Combines classroom learning with industry apprenticeships.
- UNESCO STEM Gender Toolkit: Promotes gender-sensitive curriculum and pedagogy.

2. IN Indian Initiatives:

- New Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Prioritizes STEM, digital, and life-skills training.
- > PM Vishwakarma Yojana + Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao: Skilling women for non-traditional jobs.
- > UN Women's WeSTEM Programme (with Gujarat & MP Govts): Mentorship, workplace safety, and classroom—career bridges supported by Micron Foundation.
- **Budget 2025–26**: Gender budget raised to **8.8%** with ₹4.49 lakh crore for women-focused schemes.

Way Forward:

1. Transform Workplaces:

- Ensure safe, equitable workspaces with strong anti-harassment policies.
- Provide childcare, maternity, and re-skilling support for women returning to work.
- 2. Promote Mentorship and Role Models:







- Scale up mentorship networks linking school girls to women professionals.
- > Involve community leaders and families to shift cultural norms.
- 3. Expand Industry-Education Partnerships:
 - > Institutionalize internships, live projects, and career counselling in STEM institutions.
 - Encourage diversity hiring targets and transparent promotion audits.
- 4. Monitor & Incentivize Gender Equity:
 - Include gender equity as a measurable KPI in corporate reporting.
 - Incentivize companies under CSR and tax benefits for supporting women in STEM

Conclusion:

- India has the potential to lead the world in gender-inclusive STEM development. But policy intent must translate into workplace transformation. Skilling without safe, welcoming, and growth-oriented career spaces will only reinforce dropout trends.
- 2. Unless **industry leaders shift their mindset**, the demographic dividend from female STEM graduates will remain underutilized.

Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. With reference to women's participation in STEM fields in India, consider the following statements:
 - 1. India has the lowest proportion of women graduates in STEM globally.
 - 2. Despite high STEM graduation rates, women face structural barriers in workforce participation.
 - 3. The WeSTEM Programme in India is supported by UNESCO and the Micron Foundation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B. 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

India has the *highest* proportion of women STEM graduates globally (43%). However, only about 27% join the STEM workforce. The WeSTEM Programme is supported by UN Women and Micron Foundation in states like Gujarat and MP.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1. Examine the role of education-industry partnerships in improving women's skilling outcomes in India. How can private sector participation be enhanced in making STEM fields more inclusive?

Student	Notes	



"Two Unequal" - Reassessing Inequality Metrics in India

Source: Indian Express

GS-2: Governance and Accountability; Role of International Institutions

GS-3: Inclusive Growth; Planning and Statistics; Indian Economy

Introduction

The World Bank's recent report suggesting India has the **lowest consumption inequality** but possibly **highest income inequality** has ignited a complex debate. While such conclusions have been politically endorsed, they rest on incomplete or misleading datasets. **This contradiction,** low inequality in consumption but high inequality in income, reveals gaps in global inequality metrics and underscores the need for India to develop its robust data architecture.

Key Arguments and Analysis

1. Discrepancy in Global Rankings and India's Position

- India was wrongly claimed to be the "world's fourth most equal society" based on consumption inequality, as measured by the Gini index (2022–23).
- However, income distribution data is missing for India, which makes it misleading to conclude overall economic equality.

2. Political and Institutional Misinterpretation

- > The BJP government and media **misread** a Gini-based consumption inequality ranking, failing to note that it does **not reflect income inequality**.
- India has not conducted an official income distribution survey, unlike other economies.

3. The Faulty Foundation: Global Inequality Metrics

- World Bank's Poverty and Equity Brief (April 2025) bases inequality analysis on synthetic estimates using WID (World Inequality Database).
- > WID's methodology uses **assumptions and indirect data**, often incompatible with ground realities of developing countries.

4. Limitations of Consumption-Based Measures

- > Household consumption surveys miss the wealthiest, underestimating top-end inequality.
- Gini index for India's consumption-based inequality dropped from 28.8 in 2011–12 to 25.5 in 2022–23, but income inequality trends remain unclear.
- Consumption is a poor proxy for asset ownership, capital income, and intergenerational inequality.

Global Practices and Expert Committees

1. World Inequality Database (WID)

- Widely cited in global economic literature, but increasingly criticised for:
 - ✓ Lack of consistency in developing country data.
 - ✓ Heavy reliance on assumptions and third-party estimations.

2. PIP (Poverty and Inequality Platform) – World Bank

- > Draws from over **2,258 distributions** across **167 countries**, combining consumption and income data.
- For India, it uses **consumption-based data** due to lack of income statistics, leading to **misleading** rankings.

3. Global Norms

- > OECD, IMF, and UNDP recommend triangulating three datasets: consumption, income, and wealth.
- India is not following this triad, which affects its global rankings and policy decisions.

Way Forward (Recommendations)

1. Conduct a National Income and Wealth Survey









- > Use NSSO or a new statistical body to generate longitudinal, disaggregated data.
- 2. Establish a National Inequality Monitoring Commission
 - > To audit, synthesize and report inequality using income, consumption, and wealth parameters.
- 3. Triangulate Data Using Global Guidelines
 - Align with OECD/UNDP methods by using multidimensional inequality indices.
- 4. Avoid Political Misuse of Technical Indices
 - Institutional accountability in interpreting inequality metrics is essential for credible policymaking.
- Engage with Global Forums Critically
 Use platforms like BRICS+, G20, and UNESCAP to push for more equitable and transparent global metrics.

Conclusion

India's statistical representation on inequality is caught between flawed consumption measures and absent income data. The over-reliance on consumption surveys to portray equality misguides both policy and public perception. India cannot afford to be complacent or celebrate 'equality' based on partial truths. The absence of a nationally representative **income and wealth survey** is a major gap in its statistical governance.

Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Which of the following are global recommendations for improving inequality measurement, as per the editorial?
 - 1. Use of triangulated data covering income, consumption, and wealth.
 - 2. Exclusive dependence on synthetic estimates like the WID.
 - 3. Creation of national-level inequality monitoring commissions.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: C. 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

Global agencies like the OECD/UNDP recommend **triangulating** income, consumption, and wealth data. Synthetic models like WID have limitations. The editorial suggests India should create a **National Inequality Monitoring Commission**, not rely solely on synthetic estimates.

Mains Practice Question

Q1. How can India improve its statistical architecture to better capture income and wealth inequality? What lessons can be drawn from international practices like OECD and PIP?

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The issue with criminalising all adolescent relationships

Source: The Hindu UPSC GS Linkages:

- GS Paper 2: Child Rights, Judicial Reform, Social Justice
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics): Justice vs. Legalism, Role of Law in Moral Questions
- Essay: "Is Protection Becoming Punishment? Rethinking Child Welfare Laws in India"

Introduction

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Re: Right to Privacy of Adolescents (2023)* re-examined the rigid criminalisation of adolescent sexual relationships under the **POCSO** (**Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**). This intervention is significant in restoring judicial sensitivity towards consensual relationships among adolescents and correcting an overly punitive interpretation of protective legislation.

Key Issues Raised

1. The Case in Focus

- ➤ A 14-year-old girl from West Bengal eloped with a 25-year-old man and later married him; she gave birth at 17.
- > The POCSO court sentenced the man to 20 years, constrained by mandatory minimums, despite the girl's testimony in his favour.

2. The Constitutional and Judicial Lens

- The Supreme Court used its *extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 142* to refuse custodial punishment and prioritized the **girl's voice and dignity**.
- > The Calcutta HC also earlier considered their socio-economic conditions and the consensual nature of their relationship.

3. Conflict Between POCSO and Adolescent Agency

- ➤ POCSO criminalises **all sexual activity under 18**, even when consensual, ignoring adolescent sexual agency.
- > Empirical studies (Enfold and NCRB data): ~24% of POCSO cases involve **romantic relationships**, yet trials treat all acts as coercive.
- > This blurs the distinction between exploitative and non-exploitative conduct.

4. Consequences of Over-criminalisation

- ➤ Girls often face stigma, isolation, surveillance, or forced marriage.
- Families and courts rarely recognize agency and instead see girls as 'victims' incapable of consent, reinforcing patriarchal attitudes.
- In some cases, the girl becomes the indirect victim of the punishment of her partner.

Global Practice / Committee Guidelines

1. Justice Verma Committee (2013)

- > Noted that criminalising consensual acts between adolescents could lead to unjust outcomes.
- > Emphasised the need for **contextual interpretation** of sexual behaviour to avoid overreach of protective laws.

2. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Recognises the evolving capacity of adolescents and the need to balance protection with respect for autonomy.

3. Comparative Global Models

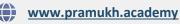
- ➤ **Germany**: Allows consensual sex between adolescents from age 14, with provisions to protect from exploitation.
- ➤ Canada: Follows a "close-in-age exemption" model, allowing minors aged 14–15 to engage in consensual acts with peers within a certain age difference.
- > South Africa: Constitutional Court decriminalised consensual sex between adolescents aged 12–16 in a landmark ruling (Teddy Bear Clinic case, 2013).

Way Forward

1. Amend POCSO with Close-in-Age Exemption

Allow consensual acts among adolescents (e.g., within a 2–4 year age gap), as suggested by global best practices.







2. Promote Judicial Discretion

> Enable courts to interpret "aggravated sexual assault" in light of consent, context, and evolving capacities of minors.

3. Sensitisation of Police and Judiciary

> Training modules on adolescent psychology and sexual rights to prevent blanket criminalisation.

4. Engage Families and Communities

> Shift from punitive approaches to rights-based awareness on adolescent sexuality, consent, and gender sensitivity.

5. Parliamentary Review of POCSO

Constitute a Parliamentary Standing Committee or Law Commission review to incorporate child-rights based and gender-just reforms.

Conclusion

Rigid application of POCSO has led to a paradox: while it aims to protect minors from abuse, it often penalises consensual adolescent relationships, disregarding context, intent, and agency. The current framework fails to distinguish between exploitative abuse and consensual intimacy, especially in socio- culturally marginalised contexts.

UPSC Prelims Question

Q1. With reference to the POCSO Act, 2012, consider the following statements:

- 1. The Act criminalises all sexual activity involving persons below 18 years, regardless of consent.
- 2. The Act provides for judicial discretion in sentencing for consensual adolescent relationships.
- 3. The Supreme Court can override mandatory minimum sentences under Article 142.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

GS Paper 2 (Child Rights / Legal Reform)

Q1. "While the POCSO Act intends to protect children from exploitation, its rigid application often violates the evolving rights and autonomy of adolescents." In the context of recent judicial interventions and global practices, critically analyse the need for reforming the Act. (250 WORDS)

Student	Notes	1
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Contesting the future of forest governance

Source: The Hindu UPSC GS Linkages:

- GS Paper 2: Governance, Devolution, Role of NGOs, SHGs
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment, Biodiversity Conservation, Forest Policy
- Essay / Ethics: "Justice for Nature is Justice for People" / Environmental Ethics and Inclusivity

Introduction

India's forest governance stands at a critical crossroads. Recent moves by the Chhattisgarh Forest Department to declare itself the nodal agency for Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR), while bypassing gram sabhas, have reignited debates on the autonomy of tribal communities and the legitimacy of colonial-era forest bureaucracy. These developments challenge the spirit of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, which aimed to democratise forest management and recognise the historical injustices faced by forest-dwelling communities.

Core Issues in Forest Governance

1. The Current Conflict

- The Chhattisgarh Forest Department attempted to enforce a **model plan** for CFRR, contrary to the **FRA's spirit**, which mandates community-prepared management plans via **Gram Sabhas**.
- > This move reflects a return to **top-down bureaucratic forest control**, undermining decentralised, rights-based approaches.

2. Systemic Flaws and Historical Baggage

- Colonial forest laws centralised control and criminalised traditional practices.
- FRA 2006 and PESA Act 1996 were meant to correct these injustices by empowering local communities, but their implementation remains weak or subverted.
- > Model plans often exclude local knowledge, and decision-making is left to technical forest staff.

3. Ecological & Social Implications

- Exclusion of communities from forest governance leads to:
 - ✓ Poor biodiversity outcomes
 - ✓ Alienation of forest-dwellers
 - ✓ Reduced efficacy in tackling invasive species and degradation
- Plans that ignore local dependence on minor forest produce and grazing rights are unviable and unjust.

Relevant Committees & Global Practices

1. 2nd ARC (Administrative Reforms Commission) – 6th Report on Local Governance

- Emphasised that local communities must be stakeholders in natural resource management, not passive beneficiaries.
- > Recommended **empowered Gram Sabhas** for forest and land governance.

2. Forest Governance Committee (MoEF) & NC Saxena Committee

> Called for *holistic CFR mapping* and reducing bureaucratic veto power in rights recognition.

3. Global Practices

- > Brazil (Amazonian Forests): Indigenous community-managed reserves show lower deforestation rates than state-run areas.
- ➤ **Nepal:** Forest User Groups (FUGs) under **Community Forestry Programme** have successfully improved biodiversity and livelihoods.
- Canada: Co-management of forests between indigenous peoples and provincial authorities through Treaty-based governance.

Way Forward

1. Legally Reinforce Role of Gram Sabhas

Amend rules to clarify that community-developed CFR plans are legally binding, not just suggestive.

2. Ensure Capacity Building

- > Provide Gram Sabhas with **technical and financial support** to draft viable forest plans.
- Set up district resource teams to aid participatory planning.







3. Integrate with Climate and Livelihood Frameworks

> Align CFR management with India's climate resilience, biodiversity targets, and SDG-13 (Climate Action).

4. Reject Model Templates

> Abandon "one-size-fits-all" plans. Encourage context-specific resource governance through democratic deliberation.

5. Constitute a Forest Governance Reform Commission

Multi-stakeholder body involving forest rights activists, climate experts, tribal welfare institutions.

Conclusion

The attempt to re-centralise CFR implementation reflects a worrying trend of bureaucratic overreach, undermining the letter and spirit of participatory forest governance. Forests are not just ecological assets but socio-cultural and economic lifelines for millions of Adivasi and tribal communities. Any governance model that sidelines them weakens not only constitutional mandates but also forest sustainability.

UPSC Prelims Question

- Q1. With reference to the POCSO Act, 2012, consider the following statements:
 - 4. The Act criminalises all sexual activity involving persons below 18 years, regardless of consent.
 - 5. The Act provides for judicial discretion in sentencing for consensual adolescent relationships.
 - 6. The Supreme Court can override mandatory minimum sentences under Article 142.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- e) 1 and 2 only
- f) 2 and 3 only
- g) 1 and 3 only
- h) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c) 1 and 3 only

- Q2. With reference to community forest governance in India, consider the following statements:
 - 1. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 mandates that Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) plans must be prepared by the Forest Department.
 - 2. The 2nd ARC recommended empowering Gram Sabhas as decision-making bodies in natural resource management.
 - 3. Brazil and Nepal have successfully implemented community-based forest governance models.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b) 2 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

GS Paper 3 (Forest Governance / Devolution of Power)

Q1. "True forest conservation in India requires the devolution of authority to tribal and forest-dwelling communities." Examine the systemic challenges in implementing the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and suggest measures for participatory and inclusive forest governance. (250 WORDS)

Student Notes 🧶









India's Foreign Policy: A Reality Check Amidst Idealism

Source: Indian Express | Author: Pratap Bhanu Mehta UPSC GS Paper II Linkages

- Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings
- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's interests
- Role of International Institutions, Indian Diaspora & Soft Power

Introduction

India's foreign policy, often hailed as strategic and morally upright, faces a critical paradox: while our public posturing champions realism and pragmatism, the underlying approach frequently leans towards **moral idealism**, **image management**, and **avoidance of tough geopolitical choices**. This editorial critiques India's inability to confront its foreign policy challenges with clear-eyed realism—especially in South Asia.

Key Criticisms from the Article

1. The Illusion of Moral High Ground

- India's reluctance to **acknowledge its role in regional instability**, e.g. in **Balochistan**, or the **diplomatic fallout of Operation Sindoor**, reflects selective outrage.
- Foreign policy is often driven by domestic optics rather than grounded strategic thought.

2. Shifting Blame without Strategy

- India criticizes **Western hypocrisy** (e.g., on human rights or terror), but fails to **objectively analyse** its own actions.
- The narrative remains reactive, not proactive particularly visible in **India—Pakistan**, **India—China**, and **India—US** engagements.

3. Over-reliance on image management

- India prioritizes symbolic victories (e.g., Modi-Trump bonhomie, diaspora diplomacy), but lacks coherent long-term strategy.
- Foreign policy is increasingly driven by **populist nationalism**, not grounded realism.

Global Practices for Comparison

1. China's Strategic Depth

- > China's foreign policy is **goal-oriented**, long-term, and uses economic tools like **BRI** and **debt diplomacy**.
- > It builds **regional clout** through infrastructure, alliances (e.g., SCO, BRICS), and a pragmatic balance of power strategy.

2. US: Realism Balanced with Idealism

While the US promotes liberal values, its foreign policy decisions (e.g., Iraq War, NATO expansion) are always shaped by national interest.

3. Vietnam's Silent Assertiveness

Vietnam balances relations with both China and the West using multi-vector diplomacy, showcasing realism without bravado.

Committee Recommendations & Expert Insights

1. K. Subrahmanyam Committee (National Security Review)

Advocated for a realist foreign policy rooted in self-interest, not moral rhetoric.

2. 2nd ARC (10th Report: Refurbishing Public Administration)

Emphasized that foreign affairs must be coordinated with domestic economic and strategic goals, avoiding populism.

3. Satish Chandra Task Force on Intelligence

Called for institutional integration between MEA, Defence, and Intelligence for better strategic foresight





Analysis: Where India Falls Short

Aspect	Current Reality	Suggested Shift
Regional Policy	Caught in rivalry with Pakistan &	Promote SAARC revival, BIMSTEC, and economic
	China	linkages
Geopolitical	Over-reliance on US & Quad	Diversify strategic partnerships (e.g., Middle East,
Alliances		Africa, EU)
Narrative Building	Nationalistic image-based	Professional, data-driven, backchannel diplomacy
	diplomacy	
Institutional Gaps	Underutilized Foreign Service	Expand training, lateral induction, policy think
	cadre	tanks

Way Forward

1. Revamp Strategic Culture

- Empower MEA with strategic autonomy.
- > Institutionalise foreign policy decision-making beyond party politics.

2. Prioritise Neighbourhood First

Avoid neglecting SAARC and smaller neighbours (Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka) in China's shadow.

3. Balance Alliances

Maintain strategic autonomy within alliances like QUAD, BRICS, I2U2, and G20.

4. Realism in Global Forums

> Focus on tangible gains over rhetorical leadership (e.g., climate financing, UNSC reform).

5. Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs

> Strengthen its role for democratic accountability and bipartisan foreign policy continuity.

Conclusion

India must move beyond moral posturing and symbolism in foreign affairs. A truly realist foreign policy demands:

- 1. Honest introspection of our geopolitical vulnerabilities.
- 2. Realignment of strategic goals with long-term interests.
- 3. Enhanced institutional capacity and bipartisan national security consensus.

As the editorial puts it — India's foreign policy fails not because of its enemies, but because of its refusal to confront its own strategic truths

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to India's foreign policy, consider the following pairs:

Strategic Initiative	India's Role
12U2	West Asian Quad
Operation Sindoor	Cross-border intelligence
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal cooperation

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: A

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Despite a robust legal framework, adoption in India remains riddled with delays and systemic inefficiencies. Analyse the role of CARA, judiciary, and child care institutions in this paradox. (Answer in 250 words)









Adoption in India: The Paradox of Legal Guardianship and Policy Bottlenecks

Source: Indian Express

GS Paper II Theme: Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections, Governance Issues, Child Rights

Essay Relevance: "Justice delayed is justice denied – A child's right to a family"

Introduction

The article highlights a widening gap in India's adoption ecosystem: while tens of thousands of couples wait to adopt, the number of children legally free for adoption remains alarmingly low. As of July 2025:

- 4. 36,381 prospective parents were registered.
- 5. Only 2,652 children were legally free for adoption. That's a 13:1 ratio, up from 11:1 in 2021.

Key Issues Highlighted

1. Procedural Bottlenecks

- CARA (Central Adoption Resource Authority) relies heavily on documentation and legal clearance, making the process tedious.
- ➤ Children living in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) cannot be declared "legally free" unless they are completely abandoned even if they are de facto orphans.

2. Judicial Delays

- > Cases involving abandonment, guardianship, or missing parents take years in court.
- > The Juvenile Justice Act 2021 allows fast-track procedures, but implementation is weak.

3. Low Rate of Legally-Free Children

In some states like **Bihar (204)** or **Maharashtra (236)**, the number of children cleared for adoption is extremely low despite having thousands of orphans in CCIs.

4. Preference Bias

> Parents prefer infants or toddlers; older children and children with disabilities are often **overlooked**, reducing their chances of being adopted.

Global Best Practices

Country	Practice
USA	The Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997) mandates states to free children for adoption
USA	if family reunification isn't possible within 15 months.
UK	Integrated foster-to-adopt models reduce waiting time; children under foster care can be
UK	adopted faster.
Netherlands	A centralised digital database tracks child in real-time with strict case timelines.
South Korea	Offers financial and medical aid to adoptive parents, especially for children with special
South Rolea	needs.

Committee Observations

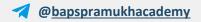
- 1. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances and Law (2022)
 - > Criticised the "excessively bureaucratic" nature of India's adoption pipeline.
 - Recommended that guardianship norms and CCI audits be expedited.

2. Supreme Court (2023)

Called the current adoption imbalance a "paradoxical situation", and urged the Union to simplify legal procedures for faster rehabilitation.

Way Forward

1. Time-bound Clearance of Adoption Cases







Mandate strict timelines (e.g. 6 months) for CCIs and DCPUs to declare children legally free under Section 38 of JJ Act.

2. Real-time Digital Tracking Portal

Upgrade the CARINGS platform for transparent status updates on every child under state care.

3. Audit of CCIs & Decentralisation

> Audit existing homes and empower district-level adoption agencies with decision- making power.

4. Legal Guardianship + Foster-to-Adopt Pathways

Introduce a transitional "guardianship—to—adoption" model to reduce waiting time (as in the UK & Australia).

5. Sensitisation of Parents & Society

Promote awareness around adopting older children, differently-abled kids, and children from marginalised communities.

Conclusion

India's adoption framework, while legally robust under the **Juvenile Justice Act and CARA**, is **failing children** by not ensuring timely legal clearance. As a result, lakhs of prospective parents wait endlessly, and thousands of children remain institutionalised — often missing the narrow window of adoptability. This is a violation of the **child's right to a family** and a dignified life.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) in India functions under which ministry?

- a) Ministry of Home Affairs
- b) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- c) Ministry of Women and Child Development
- d) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Answer: c) Ministry of Women and Child Development

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. India's foreign policy has often been criticized for prioritizing symbolism over strategic substance. Critically examine this statement in the context of regional and global challenges. (Answer in 250 words)

Student	Notes	1
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Linguistic Pride vs National Integration

Theme: Language Politics | Regionalism | Identity | Governance **GS Paper:** GS-1 (Society) | GS-2 (Governance & Federalism) | Essay

Introduction

A viral video from Bengaluru featuring an auto-rickshaw driver refusing to speak Hindi has reignited debates around **language identity and regional pride** in India. Such episodes underscore deeper societal tensions where **language becomes a proxy for power, discrimination, and perceived cultural hegemony**, especially between English, Hindi, and regional languages.

Key Issues Raised:

- 1. Language as Assertion of Identity: Regional languages are often defended as markers of cultural autonomy, especially in southern states wary of Hindi imposition.
- 2. **Hindi vs Non-Hindi Divide:** Many non-Hindi states see Hindi as a political imposition, sparking resentment and calls for **linguistic federalism**.
- 3. English as Social Divider: English fluency is not just a communication tool but often divides the urban elite from the masses. It marginalizes non-English speakers from economic mobility.
- **4. Class & Opportunity Gaps:** A student from a Hindi-medium school struggled in an English- dominated engineering college, highlighting **systemic inequity in language-based opportunities**.
- 5. Mockery of Hindi speakers in metro cities creates psychological alienation and linguistic shame.

Global Practices

- 1. Canada: Bilingual governance in English and French with regional autonomy.
- 2. Switzerland: Multi-language administration (German, French, Italian) with inclusive policy frameworks.
- 3. South Africa: 11 official languages recognized with proportional use in public institutions.
- 4. EU Parliament: 24 official languages used in all communications, reinforcing linguistic rights.
- 5. India, despite constitutional safeguards (Eighth Schedule), often lacks **institutional parity for regional languages** in governance, judiciary, and education.

Committee & Legal References

- 1. Official Language Act, 1963:
 - ➤ Hindi in Devanagari script to be the official language of the Union, but continued use of English allowed.
 - No language to be imposed, states have autonomy over language usage.
- 2. Sarkaria Commission (1983):
 - > Advocated cooperative federalism, cautioning against Hindi imposition.
 - Recommended respecting linguistic diversity for national unity.
- 3. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:
 - Advocates mother tongue as the medium of instruction till Grade 5–8.
 - > Encourages multilingualism and vernacular education to bridge equity gaps.

Way Forward

Focus Area	Policy Action
Civic Sensitization	Promote language harmony through public campaigns (like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat).
Multilingual Education	Strengthen mother tongue education + ensure transition support into English/Hindi.





Equal Language	Mandate the use of regional languages in courts, administration, and exams.
Representation	
Federal Language Dialogue	The union and states must negotiate the use of Hindi/English regionally through consensus.
Skill + Language Support	Provide bridging programs in technical/medical education for regional medium students.

Conclusion

Language is not merely a medium of communication, but a symbol of dignity, history, and access. While pride in mother tongue is valid, linguistic chauvinism can breed exclusion. The real challenge is to move from language-based polarisation to inclusive coexistence. We must shift the national discourse from "Hindi vs Others" or "English elitism" to ensuring equal linguistic respect, representation, and opportunity.

Main's magical word Linguistic Chauvinism, Language-based Discrimination, Cultural Federalism, Multilingualism, Language and Identity Politics, English Privilege

UPSC Mains Questions: GS Paper 2 (Governance):

Q1. "Linguistic pride must not come at the cost of national integration." Discuss in the context of India's language policy and recent socio-political developments.

Q1. "Language is the dress of thought, but in India it also undresses inequality."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following statements regarding linguistic identity in India:
 - 1. Language is often used as a tool for asserting regional and cultural autonomy.
 - 2. The imposition of Hindi is perceived as a threat by several non-Hindi-speaking states.
 - 3. English is widely seen as a unifying and equalizing force across all socio-economic groups in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A) 1 and 2 only

Student Notes 🊣







India's Leap in Space Diplomacy: Lessons from Axiom-4 Mission

Source: Indian Express

GS PAPER: 3 SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION, SPACE

Introduction

India's participation in the **Axiom-4 space mission**, featuring Group Captain **Subhanshu Shukla**, marks a decisive stride from symbolic human spaceflight to **strategic**, **commercial**, **and collaborative space diplomacy**. After nearly four decades since Rakesh Sharma's voyage, India's presence aboard the **ISS (International Space Station)** reflects its transition into a **techno-globalist power**, aligning with new space-age ambitions like **Gaganyaan** and **private-sector-driven innovation**.

Strategic Significance of Axiom-4 for India

1. Collaborative Model of Space Exploration

- > India moves from solo indigenous space efforts to shared international missions.
- Trained alongside global crew, Shukla's presence signals India's readiness for deeper global integration.

2. Boost for Gaganyaan Mission

- Learnings on emergency drills, space docking, crew compatibility, and psychological conditioning will strengthen ISRO's manned mission planning.
- Enhances operational safety protocols and crew return logistics for Gaganyaan.

3. Commercial and Strategic Diplomacy

- > Reinforces India's position in the global space economy.
- Private sector involvement (via IN-SPACe and NSIL) makes India a future hub for low-cost, reliable space solutions.

4. Public Inspiration and STEM Push

- Widely followed by students, Axiom-4 inspires a new generation in space sciences and applied physics.
- > Strengthens India's **soft power and international prestige**.

Challenges & Issues

- 1. Lack of Private Ecosystem Depth: India's space start-ups are still nascent; critical components often rely on imports.
- Crew Training Infrastructure: India lacks full-scale astronaut training institutes akin to NASA or Roscosmos.
- 3. Regulatory Gaps: Absence of a comprehensive Space Activities Bill slows private participation.
- **4. Budget Constraints**: Compared to global peers, India's space budget limits deep-space and human-crewed missions.
- 5. Limited Access to ISS: India is not a permanent ISS partner; access remains dependent on diplomatic goodwill.

Way forward:

- Accelerate Space Activities Bill: A robust legal framework is vital for private investment and space asset protection.
- Build a National Astronaut Training Centre: Create an institution on lines of ESA's EAC or NASA's JSC.
- **Public—Private Partnerships (PPPs)**: Encourage ISRO—startup collaboration for tech transfer and cost-effective module design.
- **Promote Space Science Education**: Integrate space tech modules in higher education and national curriculum.







Negotiate ISS Access or Build Indigenous Platform: Explore a South-South cooperation-led mini space station as a long-term plan.

Relevant Committee Recommendations

- 1. K. Kasturirangan Committee on Space Reforms (2017):
 - > Clear demarcation between ISRO's R&D and commercial role.
 - Promoted corporatisation of satellite launch & LEO operations.
- 2. NITI Aayog Strategy for New India @75 (2018):
 - Promote private satellite services, launch vehicles, and astronaut tech exports.
- 3. IN-SPACe Recommendations (2022):
 - > Fast-track private sector participation in satellite communication and low-earth human missions.
- 4. ISRO's Gaganyaan Mission Bluebook:
 - Aims to develop Indian human-rated launch vehicle, crew escape system, life support system.

Global Best Practice Reference

- 1. NASA-SpaceX Commercial Crew Programme: A model of how public agencies enable private innovation.
- 2. European Astronaut Centre (EAC): Trains multinational teams for ESA-led missions.
- 3. China's Tiangong Station: Fully indigenized, showcasing autonomy but lacking global inclusivity—India can balance both.

Way Forward

- 1. From Participation to Leadership: India must now go beyond being a guest in global missions and lead collaborative launches.
- 2. Gaganyaan as Anchor: Use Gaganyaan to establish India as a human spaceflight hub in the Global South.
- 3. Global Norm-Setter: Leverage India's non-aligned credibility to push inclusive, peaceful space governance at UN COPUOS.
- 4. Inspire Youth: Institutionalize initiatives like the Young Astronaut Programme to create a pipeline of future scientists.

Conclusion:

The Axiom-4 mission represents a milestone in India's global space integration, showcasing that our astronaut corps can thrive in diverse international missions. This event is not only a boost for the Gaganyaan program, but also a **symbol of India's rise in the space diplomacy arena**, transitioning from isolation to collaboration.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. With reference to India's participation in the Axiom-4 space mission, consider the following statements:
 - 1. It marks the first instance of an Indian astronaut visiting the International Space Station (ISS).
 - 2. It represents India's transition from symbolic participation to strategic techno-globalist collaboration.
 - 3. The mission was entirely indigenously funded and operated by ISRO. Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A) 1 and 2 only

Mains Practice Question (GS Paper III – Science & Tech)

Q1. India's participation in the Axiom-4 mission reflects a strategic shift from indigenous nationalism to collaborative techno-globalism. In this context, examine its implications for India's space policy and human spaceflight aspirations.









Indian Inequality and the World Bank's Claims

(GS Paper II - Governance, Welfare Schemes GS Paper III - Economy, Inclusive Growth)

Writer: Ram Singh is Director, Delhi School of Economics, Member, Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI),

Introduction

Inequality remains one of the most pressing concerns for democratic governance and economic justice. The recent **World Bank Report (India Poverty and Equity Brief, April 2024)**, which claims a **significant fall in consumption inequality** in India, has reignited a larger debate on how we measure inequality and how much faith we place in official data. This debate requires a nuanced understanding that extends beyond numbers to encompass **lived realities**, **structural exclusions**, and the **effectiveness of policy tools**.

What Did the World Bank Report Say?

- 1. Primary Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022–23.
- 2. Key Highlights:
 - ➤ Gini Coefficient (Consumption): Fell from 28.5% (2011–12) to 25.4% (2022–23).
 - Top 10% income share: Declined from 57.1% to 52.7%.
 - ➤ Bottom 50% income share: Increased from 13.9% to 15%.
 - Access to Nutrition: Fruit, dairy, and proteins consumption has risen across households.
 - Ownership Improvements: Increase in access to toilets, housing, electricity, and
 - mobility (PMAY-G, PMGSY, PM Ujjwala, etc.).

Claim: India has seen inclusive growth with falling inequality in consumption.

Concerns and Criticism

1. Mismatch of Consumption vs Income

- Consumption doesn't reflect wealth accumulation or savings.
- ➤ The rich tend to **under-consume**, skewing consumption-based inequality.

2. Data Gaps

- HCES omits top earners' income and wealth, thereby underestimating true inequality.
- > Post-tax and post-subsidy income data is **ignored**.

3. Temporal and Spatial Bias

> Inequality reduction may be **short-term or regional**; it does not reflect caste, gender, or intergenerational mobility issues.

4. Risk of Policy Complacency

Overemphasis on such reports can lead to underfunding of social welfare schemes.

Important Committee Recommendations

1. Rangarajan Committee on Poverty (2014)

- > Suggested broader multidimensional poverty measures, not just calorie or consumption-based.
- Advocated **realistic poverty lines** that consider health, education, and shelter.

2. NSSO Expert Committee (Mahendra Dev Committee)

- > Recommended better measurement of **household income and expenditure**, especially in urban areas.
- Urged improvements in data collection on the informal sector and gig economy.

3. NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2021)

- > Includes health, education, and standard of living indicators.
- > Offers a more **comprehensive view of inequality** than just consumption or income alone.

4. Justice Suresh Tendulkar Committee (2009)

Suggested inclusion of private expenditure on health and education in poverty estimates.





> Focused on **regional disparity** in poverty and inequality.

5. Finance Commission (15th)

- > Recommended increased fiscal devolution to address regional inequality.
- > Emphasized outcome-based spending on social sector schemes.

Global Practice

Country/Model	Practice	
OECD (Europe)	Combines wealth, income, and opportunity inequality tracking.	
Nordic Countries	Use high taxes to fund free education, healthcare, housing for all.	
Brazil (Bolsa Família)	Targeted cash transfers linked to school attendance and vaccination.	

Suggestions for Reducing Inequality:

1. Combine Income, Consumption & Wealth Data

Measuring all three together gives a more accurate picture of inequality than income alone.

2. Track Post-Tax Inequality

Consider the effect of taxes, subsidies, and transfers to know actual inequality after state intervention.

3. Expand Direct Tax Base

Increase taxes on the rich and capital assets to make the tax system more progressive and fund welfare schemes.

4. Conduct Social Audits Regularly

Ensure welfare schemes reach the bottom 40% through audits, improving transparency and accountability.

5. Disaggregate Inequality Data

Break data by caste, gender, region, and education to design targeted and inclusive policies

Conclusion:

While the World Bank highlights a fall in consumption inequality, deeper disparities remain across income, caste, and geography. True inclusivity demands better data, post-tax analysis, and targeted welfare for the bottom 50%. For India to be not just a fast-growing but a fair economy, growth must be equitable, just, and people-centric.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. With reference to inequality measurement in India, consider the following statements:
 - 1. Gini coefficient is used to measure income inequality.
 - 2. The Multidimensional Poverty Index includes education, health, and standard of living indicators.
 - 3. NSSO's Household Consumption Survey tracks both income and wealth inequality.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

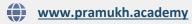
- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Despite optimistic data from the World Bank, deep-rooted inequality persists in India. Discuss the limitations of current measurement tools and suggest ways to ensure equitable growth. (GS II / GS III – 250 words)







PM Dhanya Krishi Yojana – A Reform or Mere Repackaging?

GS PAPER 3: AGRICULTURE SOURCE: THE HINDU

Introduction:

The **PM Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY)** is the Union Government's latest attempt to unify 26 agricultural schemes under a single umbrella to address regional disparities and enhance productivity. While convergence is welcome, concerns remain regarding inadequate **public investment**, lack of **implementation efficiency**, and risks of **tokenistic reform**.

Key Features of PMDKY:

Feature	Description
Objective	Address inter-district disparity in agricultural productivity Convergence of 26
Structure	schemes like PMFBY, PM-KISAN, PM-AASHA PPP mode; ₹2400 crore annual outlay
Implementation	100 districts with low productivity and high rural distress Based on NITI Aayog's
Model	Aspirational District Programme
Target Areas	Value addition, crop diversification, agri-logistics, FPO promotion
Design	
Focus Areas	

Challenges in Agricultural Reform:

1. Low Public Investment:

- > Agriculture expenditure declined from 2.3% (2021–22) to 2.0% (2023–24) of total Union spending.
- Most spending is on subsidies, not on capital formation (e.g. irrigation, storage, technology).

2. Fragmented Implementation:

➤ Past experience shows merged schemes often suffer from **bureaucratic overlap** and **poor accountability**.

3. Exclusion Risks in PPP Model:

> Private participation may prioritize profit over inclusion, leaving out marginal/small farmers.

4. Regional Imbalances Persist:

Agri support still leans towards irrigated and surplus-producing states, neglecting rainfed, tribal, and backward regions.

5. Climate Vulnerability:

No specific focus on climate-resilient agriculture despite increasing frequency of droughts, floods, heatwaves.

Global Best Practices: FAO & IFAD recommend a mix of:

- Region-specific subsidies
- Direct investment in agri-infrastructure
- Strengthening farmer-producer organizations (FPOs)

OECD reports warn against over-centralized agri strategies; suggest locally adaptable, climate-resilient investments.

Expert & Committee Recommendations:

Source	Key Suggestion
Ashok Dalwai Committee (Doubling Farmers'	- Boost capital investment · Promote post-harvest
Income)	infrastructure · Enable agri-diversification & FPOs
Parliamentary Standing Committee on	- Warned against low allocation trend · Urged for state-
Agriculture (2023)	wise tailoring of schemes





Economic Survey & NITI Aayog	- Repeated call for market reforms, private storage chains,
	and digitized procurement

Way Forward:

1. Increase Public Investment in Agriculture

Raise allocation to **3–4% of the Union Budget** to support infrastructure, innovation, and climate resilience.

2. Localized Implementation Strategy

Move beyond "one-size-fits-all" design; empower panchayats, SHGs, FPOs for micro-level planning.

3. Transparency and Monitoring

Introduce real-time dashboards, geotagging, and third-party audits to ensure convergence leads to actual impact.

4. Prioritize Agri-Ecology and Water-Smart Farming

Focus on rainfed areas, millet farming, soil health, and carbon-neutral agriculture.

5. Inclusive PPP Model

Guard against corporate dominance; ensure fair terms for smallholders, tenant farmers, and women cultivators.

6. Fiscal Incentives for Climate Resilience

Design subsidies that promote solar pumps, drip irrigation, crop insurance, and resilient seeds.

Conclusion:

The PM Dhanya Krishi Yojana reflects a welcome intent to streamline agricultural schemes. However, unless backed by adequate financial support, inclusive design, climate foresight, and real decentralization, it risks becoming a symbolic reform.

A farm-centric India, especially in the context of climate change and rural stress, demands not just administrative convergence but transformative investment. As global food security and domestic livelihoods intersect, India must seize this moment to build a resilient, equitable, and productive agricultural economy.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. Which of the following is/are true about PM Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY)?
 - 1. It merges 26 agricultural schemes under one umbrella.
 - 2. It follows the framework of NITI Aayog's Aspirational District Programme.
 - 3. It aims to double farmer incomes by 2027. Select the correct answer:
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) All of the above

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Despite numerous schemes, public investment in agriculture remains low. Suggest reforms to make agriculture remunerative and inclusive. (GS III – 250 words)

Student Notes 🌜







Unlocking Investment: Confidence, Clarity & Competitiveness in the **Indian Economy**

Source: Indian Express

GS PAPER: 3 Indian Economy, (Investment)

Introduction: Why This Matters

India's economic ambitions for a \$5 trillion economy and global manufacturing hub cannot be achieved without a robust Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) ecosystem. Yet, in recent years, India, like many EMDEs (Emerging and Developing Economies), is facing a drop-in investor confidence, policy friction, and infrastructural fatigue.

Despite being the world's fastest-growing major economy, India's FDI inflows fell by 16% in FY25, the sharpest drop in a decade. This calls for a clear, stable, and globally competitive investment regime — not just to attract capital, but to build economic resilience, jobs, and technology-driven growth.

Key Challenges in Attracting FDI

Challenge	Description		
Policy Uncertainty	Delays in clearances, retrospective taxation (Vodafone case), and		
	inconsistent policies hinder investor sentiment.		
Excessive Regulation	Complex compliance regimes, lack of ease in land/labour acquisition, and		
	logistics bottlenecks deter long-term investment.		
Global Risk Aversion	Developed economies are experiencing a "home bias," focusing on near-		
	shoring or friend-shoring.		
Low Trade Integration	India's trade-to-GDP ratio remains below 30%, lower than many ASEAN		
	peers.		
Fragmented Treaties &	Slow pace of new trade pacts and stalled progress in FTAs reduce India's		
Bilateralism	integration into global value chains.		

Global FDI Landscape: The Bigger Picture

- 1. FDI flows to EMDEs declined to \$845 billion in FY23, the lowest since
- 2. FDI as a % of global GDP has fallen from 2% (pre-2008) to much lower levels today.
- 3. In India's case, FDI plunged 16% in FY25, to just \$30.35 billion, with significant reductions from large economies like Singapore and the US.
- 4. India's FDI-to-GDP ratio has slipped to less than 1%, below the global average.

FDI on the Decline In India's case, FUI p. 16% in FY23, to just \$30 significant reducti with significant from large econ India's FDI-to-GDP ratio has slipped to less than 1%, below the global

Institutional Recommendations & Global Practices

Source/ Model	Recommendation/ Insight
Kelkar Committee (2012)	Reform PPPs, expedite dispute resolution, reduce sovereign risk.
Arvind Panagariya/NITI	Simplify tax regime, remove tariff inconsistencies, ensure full capital account convertibility.
World Bank	Improve logistics, labour flexibility, contract enforcement.
Vietnam Model	Industrial clusters + SEZs + FTA access → High FDI.
Singapore Model	Stability, tax clarity, port-led growth, single-window clearance = global investor trust.



Way Forward: Unlocking India's FDI Potential

1. Create a Predictable Policy Ecosystem

- > Reforms like scrapping retrospective tax (Vodafone/Cairn cases) must continue.
- Build a single window clearance platform for all levels—centre, state, local.

2. Modernize Infrastructure & Logistics

- Complete delayed Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Gati Shakti, and port-led corridors.
- Expand multi-modal freight systems, energy grids, and FTZs.

3. Trade & Tax Reforms

- Conclude long-pending FTAs with EU, UK, Australia.
- > Ensure competitive corporate taxation and remove disincentives on profit repatriation.

4. Sector-Specific Incentives

- Target sectors like electronics, green energy, EVs, semiconductors, and digital trade.
- Offer Production-Linked Incentives (PLI) along with land and logistics support.

5. Strengthen Institutional Confidence

Protect contracts, ensure dispute resolution mechanisms (arbitration courts), and improve rankings in the World Bank's Doing Business.

Conclusion: Trust Is the New Currency

India's moment to lead is here, but capital is not loyal to geography; it is faithful to governance and

If India wishes to become the global investment magnet it aspires to be, it must transform its FDI architecture from ad hoc incentives to structured trust.

With clarity in regulation, credibility in contracts, and competence in execution, India can move from being a **destination** for capital to a **partner** in global wealth creation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. Consider the following statements about Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India:
 - 1. India's FDI-to-GDP ratio in FY25 slipped to below 1%, which is lower than the global average.
 - 2. FDI inflows into India fell by more than 25% in FY25, the steepest decline in over two decades.
 - 3. Policy uncertainty and excessive regulation have been cited as key barriers to FDI inflow into India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: C

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct - India's FDI-to-GDP ratio slipped below 1%. Statement 2 is incorrect - The decline was 16%, not more than 25%.

Statement 3 is correct – Policy uncertainty and regulation are highlighted as challenges.

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. In the context of India's declining FDI inflows, discuss the structural bottlenecks hampering foreign investment. Suggest a long-term reform roadmap. (250 words)

Student Notes 🧶









India and Global AI Governance: Reframing the Debate

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 3 Science & Technology

Introduction: AI in Global Power Politics

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has shifted from labs to **living rooms**, **legislatures**, **and battlefields**. With the rise of tools like ChatGPT and military-grade AI in conflicts, the demand for **global AI governance** is surging.

Domestic Readiness: Key Indian Initiatives

As the **AI Impact Summit 2026** approaches, India has a historic opportunity—not just to showcase innovation—but to offer a **model for democratic, inclusive, and secure AI** rooted in public welfare and global equity

Key Issue: Fragmented Global AI Landscape

Challenge		Description
Geopolitical Divides	i	US-China rivalry, EU regulation-first approach, and rejection of Paris AI text (2025) reflect fractured consensus.
No Global	No Global Safety Despite safety summits (like Bletchley 2023), no universal checklist or red	
Standards		team testing framework exists.
Risk of Exclusion		Global South may be left behind in AI innovation and governance.
Data & P	Privacy	Few rules exist on cross-border data sharing, AI explainability, or risk audits.
Asymmetry		

Recommendations: 5 Action Points for India

1. Pledge-Based Global AI Governance

- > Each country should **declare a core AI goal** publicly.
- Inspired by India's UPI success, digital tech must be positioned as a public good.
- Offer free basic AI tools (e.g. rural crop apps, educational tutors) globally.

2. Lead the Global South

- > Use the Al Summit 2026 to elevate voices from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- Share datasets, testing labs, and safety toolkits.
- India can shape a "Global AI Commons" for public utilities.

3. Form a Global AI Safety Collaborative

- > Like the Bletchley Summit (2023), propose a permanent, open-source Al safety platform.
- > Share red-team scripts, incident logs, model evaluation templates.
- Publish Indian AI models with voluntary external testing + open datasets.

4. Propose a Global AI Code of Conduct

- > Draft a **Voluntary AI Frontier Act** based on:
 - ✓ External testing
 - ✓ Bias audit reports
 - ✓ Impact transparency within 90 days of deployment.
- Promote this under UN or G20 platform.

5. Avoid Cold War-style AI Fragmentation

- Mediate between the **US's regulation-first** and **China's control-first** approaches.
- > Delhi must advocate for interoperable, trust-based, plural governance frameworks.







IN Initiative	Description	
Digital India Act (Draft)	Seeks to regulate AI, intermediaries, and algorithms.	
AI Mission by MeitY	Includes national consultations, youth participation, startups, academia.	
Bhashini & India AI Platforms for multilingual and inclusive AI access.		
MyGov Consultation 2024	Crowdsourced ideas from researchers, startups, and civil society.	

Committee & Expert Inputs

Body/Expert	Recommendation	
RBI AI/ML Committee (2022) Ethical use of AI in finance, algorithmic transparency.		
NITI Aayog (National Strategy on AI)	trategy on AI) Responsible AI for All (RAISE) — emphasis on inclusiveness explainability, and accountability.	
Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) India must anchor global north-south partnerships with labs.		
UNESCO AI Ethics Report (2021)	Advocate for human rights—centered AI design. India is a signatory.	

Additional Suggestions to Reframe the AI Debate

1. Establish a Global "Al Commons" Infrastructure

- India should propose a **public repository** of open-source AI datasets, models, benchmarks, and evaluation frameworks hosted under the UN or G20 umbrella.
- This will democratize access to high-quality training material, especially for low-resource countries.

2. Champion "Zero Trust" Testing & Red-Teaming

- Mandate that **every foundation model** developed in India (public or private) undergoes independent, adversarial "zero trust" testing.
- > Establish an AI Regulatory Sandbox where models are stress-tested before deployment.

3. Launch an International AI Ombudsman

- India can advocate for a neutral, multi-stakeholder institution to address:
 - ✓ Algorithmic harms
 - ✓ Biases in datasets
 - ✓ Discrimination in automated decisions (esp. in hiring, loans, insurance)

Conclusion

India's tryst with AI comes not as a race for technological supremacy, but as a **civilizational responsibility**. With deep-rooted democratic ethics, a culture of frugal innovation, and lived experience of developmental governance, India can **rewrite the rules of AI** not through dominance, but through **dharma** a balanced path between **progress and protection**.

The **AI Impact Summit 2026** must be more than a diplomatic showcase. It must be the birthplace of a new **Digital Panchsheel** one that anchors AI in **equity**, **accountability**, **sustainability**, **safety**, **and sovereignty**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. Which of the following statements best explains India's approach to global AI governance, as outlined in the AI Impact Summit 2026?
 - a) India advocates strict regulation of AI tools at the domestic level only.
 - b) India focuses on making AI commercially viable through private-sector dominance.
 - c) India supports the development of an AI code of conduct and public digital infrastructure for the Global South.
 - d) India opposes open-source AI collaboration to protect its strategic interests.

Ans: C

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Discuss the role of multilateralism in creating a global framework for ethical and inclusive AI governance. What role can India play in shaping this? (250 words)





India's Strategic Autonomy under Threat: Iran Crisis and the 'Great Power' Dilemma

Source: The Hindu

GSPAPER: 2 International Relations

Introduction:

India aspires to be a **leading power in a multipolar world**, backed by its strategic autonomy, independent foreign policy, and multi-alignment diplomacy. However, emerging tensions in **West Asia**— particularly the threat of a **U.S.-led conflict with Iran**—could jeopardize India's economic interests, diplomatic positioning, and its broader great power ambitions.

Core Strategic Issues:

- 1. **Dependence on West Asia**: India imports over **50% of its crude oil** from West Asia. A U.S.-Iran conflict would disrupt this vital supply chain and inflate global oil prices.
- 2. **Multipolar Vision vs. Unipolar Revival**: India's vision of a **multipolar world order**, shared with partners like Russia and China, contrasts sharply with a resurgent **U.S.-led unipolarity**.
- 3. India's Energy & Naval Stakes: India has made investments like the Chabahar Port in Iran and deployed naval assets like INS Trikand in the region. These will be directly impacted by instability.
- **4. Strategic Balancing Challenge**: India's neutral posture—engaging with both the U.S. and Russia-Iran—may be untenable in a renewed Cold War-like polarity.

Strategic Challenges for India:

Challenge	Implication	
1. Rising U.S. Sanctions	Secondary sanctions could penalize India for buying Russian/Iranian oi	
2. Geopolitical Binary	Pressure to "choose sides" between U.SWest and Russia-China.	
3. Disruption in Oil Supply	Could derail India's energy security and push inflation.	
4. Undermining of Autonomy	Reduced space for India's multi-alignment and strategic hedging.	
5. Risk to Strategic Assets	Indian investments in West Asia, incl. Chabahar, become vulnerable.	

Relevant Committees/Strategic Expert Insights:

- 1. Shyam Saran (NSAB Member, ex-Foreign Secretary): Emphasized India's ability to withstand pressure from major powers by "anchoring diplomacy in national interest, not sentiment."
- 2. K. Subrahmanyam Doctrine (Strategic Autonomy): Advocates non-alignment 2.0, allowing India to selectively engage with global blocs without becoming subservient to any.
- 3. Raja Mohan (ORF, Foreign Affairs Expert): Calls for India to play the role of a 'balancer' rather than a bystander in Asia's power games, using its voice in G20, BRICS, and SCO.

Way Forward:

1. Reaffirm Strategic Autonomy

- Maintain India's non-aligned posture and continue engaging with both blocs.
- Oppose unilateral sanctions outside of UN framework.

2. Strengthen Energy Diversification

Increase imports from Latin America, Africa, and renewable alternatives to reduce West Asia dependence.

3. Boost Indian Naval Diplomacy

Expand India's presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through **MILAN exercises** and bilateral agreements with Gulf states.





4. Initiate Dialogue on West Asia Peace

Leverage India's neutral goodwill to host or mediate dialogues on Gulf peace, in line with Nehruvian non-alignment legacy.

5. Use G20 Presidency (2023 Legacy) Diplomatically

Champion Global South peace initiatives, steering global forums away from confrontation.

Conclusion:

India stands at a strategic crossroads.

In a world inching toward bipolar confrontation, it must retain its unique voice advocating for a multipolar, inclusive global order. The Iran crisis—if mismanaged—could undo years of Indian investment in West Asia and limit Delhi's room to maneuver.

But if approached with clarity, courage, and commitment to strategic autonomy, India can avoid becoming collateral in big power rivalries, and instead emerge as a bridge-builder and peace champion in the region and beyond.

"India's greatness will not lie in joining power blocs, but in helping dismantle them."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's strategic position in the context of the West Asia (Iran) crisis:
 - 1. India has made direct investments in Iran's Chabahar Port as part of its strategic interests in the region.
 - 2. India's crude oil imports from West Asia constitute less than 25% of its total imports.
 - 3. India's strategic autonomy is guided by the principles of Non-Alignment 2.0, which encourages selective engagement without alliance entanglement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: C) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. India's aspiration for strategic autonomy is facing serious challenges amid the escalating Iran- West conflict and global power polarisation. In this context, examine how India can maintain its multialignment strategy while protecting its strategic interests in West Asia. (15 marks)

Student Notes <u>/</u>				





India-UK FTA & the Rise of Global Capacity Centres (GCCs)

Source: the Hindu GS PAPER: 3 Economy

Introduction

The evolving India–UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has the potential to **reshape global services trade** by catalyzing the growth of **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**—offshore hubs for analytics, digital transformation, and R&D that serve global clients. With India already housing over 1,500 GCCs and 1.9 million employees in the sector, the FTA could offer **transformational economic and diplomatic gains**.

Significance of GCCs & FTA Synergy

Dimension	Relevance
Digital Economy	GCCs power AI, cybersecurity, fintech, and enterprise tech innovation.
India-UK Synergy	British firms view India not just as a low-cost back office, but as a strategic
	digital partner.
Post-Brexit	For the UK, stronger GCC ties with India offer service trade leverage in a
Strategy	bifurcating world order.
Employment	Drives high-value job creation, especially in Tier-2 cities (e.g., Lucknow,
	Varanasi, Kanpur).

Major Challenges

1. Regulatory & Tax Barriers

➤ High indirect taxes, data localisation mandates, and unclear cross-border compliance hurt ease of doing business.

2. Fragmented Policy Landscape

Lack of a dedicated national GCC policy, with state-level competition sometimes creating inefficiencies.

3. Skill & Diversity Gaps

Need to enhance women's participation, digital skilling, and diversity in mid-level GCC leadership.

4. Intellectual Property & Data Governance

> India's IP regime and data harmonisation rules need alignment with international standards.

Expert Recommendations & Consultations

A recent **UKIBC-led expert consultation** recommended:

- 1. **Designing a National GCC Policy Framework** for India to streamline regulations, taxation, and ease of operation.
- 2. Emphasis on talent diversity, women in tech leadership, and cross-sectoral digital skilling. Need for infrastructure investments in Tier-2 cities to expand GCC footprints.
- 3. Framing shared intellectual property protocols for cross-border collaborations.

Way Forward

Strategy	Suggested Action	
Regulatory Harmonisation	India should align data governance, tax, and digital standards with UK norms under FTA.	
National GCC Policy	Introduce a central framework to coordinate state efforts and prevent	
	over-competition.	





Skilling & Inclusion	Launch incentives for women-in-tech, AI/ML certifications, and mid-career reskilling programs.
Sectoral Integration	Link GCCs with manufacturing, fintech, and health-tech to drive vertical integration.
Brand India	Project India as a global GCC hub in international diplomacy via G20, WEF, and WTO platforms.

Conclusion

The India–UK FTA can be more than a trade pact—it can be a blueprint for next-gen digital diplomacy. With GCCs at the heart of global digital innovation, India must leverage this moment to become the world's **GCC capital**, aligning policy, skilling, and governance to global best practices.

By unlocking the GCC-FTA synergy, India can secure high-value employment, attract global investment, and cement its position as a leader in the global services economy.

"From back office to brain trust—India's GCC story must now lead the global stage."

UPSC PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q1. With reference to Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India, consider the following statements:
 - 1. GCCs in India are primarily limited to IT-BPO functions such as customer support and backend processing.
 - 2. The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is expected to enhance collaboration in the digital services sector through the expansion of GCCs.
 - 3. Tier-2 cities like Varanasi and Kanpur are emerging as new hubs for GCC growth in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B) 2 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. The India—UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) holds strategic potential to position India as a global leader in the digital services economy through the expansion of Global Capability Centres (GCCs). Examine the benefits and challenges of this synergy and suggest measures to enhance India's role as a global GCC hub. (15 marks)

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India-China Conflict over Buddhism: A Geopolitical Battle Cloaked in Spirituality

Source: The Hindu

GSPAPER: 2 International relations

Introduction: Faith meets Geopolitics

The struggle over Buddhism in the Himalayas is no longer merely about **faith or spiritual lineage**—it has become a tool of **strategic influence** between India and China. From the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama to monastic control in Tibet and Tawang, the Himalayas are now witnessing a **quiet but consequential contest of cultural soft power**. India must recognise this dimension and act not only as a stakeholder in Buddhist heritage but as a **strategic spiritual leader**.

Key Highlights

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>India</u>	<u>China</u>
Role of	Birthplace and spiritual nurturer;	Tool of statecraft; exerts control over
Buddhism	emphasizes religious freedom and pluralism	reincarnation and religious hierarchy
Dalai Lama	Open, spiritual, and internationally	Politically controlled, with Chinese-
succession	recognized	appointed successor
Monastic	Ladakh, Tawang, Sikkim, Arunachal —	Heavily regulated monasteries in Tibet,
Ecosystem	culturally independent monasteries	co-opted by state
Strategy	Respecting Tibetan autonomy, using	Using Buddhism for political legitimacy
	Buddhism for diplomacy	and border control

Strategic Challenges

1. Succession of the 15th Dalai Lama

China seeks to install its own Dalai Lama in Chinese territory, undermining the legitimacy of the Tibetan spiritual leader recognized globally — including by India.

2. Buddhist Soft Power War

China is weaponizing Buddhist institutions by building databases of reincarnate lamas and funding temples in disputed areas (Ladakh, Arunachal).

3. Religious Interference in Border Politics

India's Buddhist monasteries in border regions (Tawang, Sikkim) face pressure from Chinese propaganda and influence operations.

4. Geopolitical Fragmentation

Nations like Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka may be pulled into choosing sides — India's spiritual heritage vs. China's economic sway.

5. Cultural Misappropriation

China's claims to Tibetan cultural heritage and denial of the spiritual agency of its people pose a long-term threat to regional spiritual diversity.

Global Practices: Lessons & Models

- Mongolia and Taiwan: Both face Chinese pressure on religious matters but continue to host Tibetan Buddhist traditions independently.
- UNESCO's Cultural Heritage Mandates: Protecting living heritage (like Buddhist practices) can be invoked
 to shield monasteries and teachings.







3. South Korea & Japan: Maintain religious independence despite regional hegemonies — India can build soft-power coalitions here.

Way Forward for India

Strategy	Action Points		
Spiritual Leadership	India must assert its role as the authentic custodian of Buddhist values emphasizing openness and human dignity.		
International Diplomacy	Garner global consensus via UNESCO, Buddhist conclaves, and G Culture Track on religious freedom and legitimacy. Protect and invest in monasteries in Ladakh, Tawang, Sikkim especially post-Dalai Lama — to sustain independent leadership.		
Border Monastic Ecosystem			
Buddhist Soft Power Alliance	Asian		
Dalai Lama Succession Legitimacy	Internationally endorse the recognition made by the Tibetan religious council, to delegitimize the Chinese puppet appointment.		

Conclusion

The Himalayan conflict is not just about territory—it's about the soul of Asia. The coming succession of the Dalai Lama will be both a test and an opportunity for India to project its unique spiritual diplomacy. India must blend faith, freedom, and foresight to ensure that Buddhism remains a force of peace and pluralism, not a pawn in geopolitical games.

"In this war of whispers and prayer bells, the Himalayas are not the sidelines — they are the stage."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. With reference to the India—China contest over Buddhist soft power, consider the following statements:
 - 1. India emphasizes religious freedom and pluralism in managing its Buddhist heritage.
 - 2. China's approach to Buddhism includes controlling reincarnate lamas and monasteries.
 - 3. Taiwan has completely abandoned Tibetan Buddhist practices under Chinese pressure. Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are correct as India nurtures Buddhism spiritually while China uses it as a political tool. Statement 3 is incorrect — Taiwan continues Tibetan Buddhist practices despite Chinese pressure.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. India-China conflict over Buddhism has moved beyond spiritual discourse to strategic contestation. Discuss India's policy options to assert its role in the global Buddhist ecosystem. (250 words)

Student Notes 🧶









Clearing the Air on Coal: Revisiting SO₂ Norms for Indian Thermal Pow

Source: Indian express

GSPAPER: 3 Ecology, environment

Introduction

India's thermal power sector, the backbone of its energy security, faces a crucial balancing act — ensuring environmental safeguards while maintaining energy affordability and availability. The rollback of **mandatory** SO₂ flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) norms for several coal plants marks a shift in policy that seeks to address ground realities and consumer burden. The issue demands nuanced assessment of **technology feasibility**, regional variations, and the economic cost of compliance.

Background: What Are FGD Norms?

- In 2015, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) introduced SO₂ emission limits
 for coal-based thermal power plants.
- 2. It mandated **FGD installation** for all thermal units to control sulphur dioxide emissions.
- 3. Estimated cost: ₹0.25–0.30/kWh additional burden on consumers.

Challenges & Concerns Raised

Challenge	Description		
Economic Cost	High capital expenditure; increases cost of electricity to end-users		
Technical Feasibility	Older plants lack design compatibility for FGD retrofitting		
Regional Variation	Plants in coal-rich but low-sulphur zones (e.g., NE India) emit less SO₂		
Lack of India-specific	Initial standards were modeled on European/Western conditions		
Data			
Water Stress	FGD systems consume large volumes of water — difficult for arid regions		
Disproportionate	Small units in low-emission zones face same regulatory load as high-emission		
Burden	zones		

Research-Based Evidence

IIT Delhi Study (Ministry-backed)

- 1. Findings: Not all plants need FGDs.
- 2. Ambient SO₂ levels in many Indian regions already within limits.
- 3. Supported a more selective, **risk-based approach** to implementation.

NEERI Analysis (2023)

- 1. Covered 21 sites across India.
- 2. Recommends flexible standards based on:
 - Coal quality
 - Plant vintage
 - Emission concentration
 - Meteorological factors
- 3. Found: 78% of older plants don't need FGD due to already low emissions.

Global Practice

Country	Practice
us USA	Uses selective retrofitting based on cost-benefit analysis
CN China	Strict FGD norms, but state-funded retrofitting programs
EU EU	Region-specific SO₂ limits; newer plants get stricter rules





Way Forward

Strategy	Action Points
Evidence-based Flexibility	Implement graded SO₂ norms by plant capacity, coal quality, and zone
Strengthen Monitoring	Real-time emission tracking & pollution auditing
Focus on Water-Efficient FGDs	Promote dry FGD and newer tech with low water use
Industry-Government	Joint funding for retrofitting critical units
Partnership	
Phased Compliance	Exempt low-emitting plants temporarily; prioritize high-pollution
	zones

Committee/Expert Recommendation

- 1. IIT Delhi: No universal need for FGDs; adopt cost-effective and plant-specific plans.
- 2. NEERI (2023): Developed new decision matrix; advised dropping mandatory FGD for low-risk plants.
- 3. MoEFCC Review Panel (2023): Approved revised SO₂ norms allowing flexibility based on performance indicators.

Conclusion

India's decision to revisit and relax blanket FGD norms reflects a pragmatic energy-environment approach. Rather than compromising environmental goals, it embraces a targeted, scientific, and consumer-sensitive **strategy**. For India's coal-based power — still essential in the energy mix — such a policy balances **economic** feasibility, technological realism, and emission control.

"Not all that emits must be restricted equally — regulation must align with science, not uniformity."

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the SO₂ emission norms for Indian thermal power plants?
 - 1. India's initial norms were based on studies from Indian emission patterns.
 - 2. NEERI's 2023 study recommended uniform implementation of FGD across all power plants.
 - 3. Water consumption is a major challenge in the implementation of FGDs. Select the correct answer using the code below:
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are incorrect: Initial norms were modeled on Western standards, and NEERI recommended selective, not uniform implementation. Statement 3 is correct.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. Uniform emission norms can lead to inequitable compliance burdens in a geographically and technologically diverse country like India. Discuss regarding India's SO₂ regulations and thermal power sector reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes 🍊







Title: The Reality of the Changing Dimensions of Warfare

Source: The Hindu

1. GS Paper III: Internal Security, Defence, Cyber & Space Threats

2. GS Paper II: Strategic Environment, India's Defence Diplomacy

By: M.K. Narayanan | Former NSA & Intelligence Bureau Director

Introduction:

The nature of warfare is undergoing a radical transformation — from traditional state-on-state conflict to multi-domain hybrid warfare involving AI, drones, cyber weapons, space assets, and hypersonics. The year 2025, marking 80 years since World War II's end, prompts reflection on how war, peace, and power have evolved.

Key Themes & Analysis:

1. End of Traditional Conflict Models:

- Old frameworks based on the Westphalian system, balance of power, and deterrence are no longer
- > Peace dividends post-WWII and Cold War have diminished; newer conflicts blur lines between peace and war.

2. Rise of "Hybrid" and Multi-Domain Warfare:

- Ukraine-Russia War, Gaza conflict, and cyberattacks mark a shift to non-contact, tech-driven, highspeed war.
- New tech (drones, precision missiles, AI, hypersonics) replaces tanks and boots.
- > Information warfare & psychological ops are as decisive as kinetic battles.

3. Al, Robotics, and Hypersonic Weapons:

- > Hypersonic tech (Mach 5+), swarm drones, unmanned systems redefine strike speeds and enemy response time.
- AI-based decision-making, battlefield robotics, and predictive defence systems create a new theatre of war.
- > India must urgently assess gaps in R&D, strategy, and deployment.

4. Weakening of Traditional Deterrence:

- Nuclear deterrence and troop deployment lose significance.
- Conflicts are now short, sharp, algorithmic, and asymmetrical.
- > Example: Use of GPS-guided munitions in Gaza and Ukraine shows evolution of precision warfare.

Challenges for India:

- 1. Heavy reliance on ageing platforms (MiG-21, old tanks, limited drones).
- 2. Procurement delays, DRDO-private sector disconnection.
- 3. Inadequate cyber and space warfare readiness.
- 4. Shortage of skilled human capital for next-gen war tech (AI, robotics, etc.).

Recommendations:

Institutional Reform:

- 1. Restructure and empower the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Integrated Defence Staff (IDS).
- 2. Create a Permanent Strategic Warfare Innovation Taskforce.

Capability Development:

- 1. Accelerate programs like **Tejas Mk2**, **AMCA**, and **hypersonic missiles**.
- 2. Strengthen DRDO-private-startup partnerships (via iDEX, DAP reforms).
- Invest in quantum communication, cyberwarfare units, and satellite constellations. Doctrinal Clarity:









- **4.** Update India's **National Defence Strategy** to reflect hybrid warfare.
- 5. Adopt integrated theatre commands tailored for multi-domain ops.

Way Forward:

- 1. Defence is no longer about numbers it's about speed, data, precision, and decentralization.
- 2. India's security preparedness must evolve **beyond borders**, into **algorithms**, **cyberspace**, **and orbital zones**.
- 3. Investment in education, innovation, and AI-skilling is essential.
- 4. Strategic autonomy depends on not just self-reliant weapons, but self-reliant minds

Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following statements about challenges to India's defence modernization:
 - 1. There is a strong coordination between DRDO and private defence firms.
 - 2. India faces a shortage of skilled human capital for AI and robotics-based warfare.

Which is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: B) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Discuss the changing dimensions of warfare in the 21st century and evaluate India's preparedness in addressing these challenges."

GPSC Class 3 Master Batch

Residential Learning Online Learning Classroom Learning





The Water Front

Theme: China's hydropower project on Brahmaputra and India's urgent response strategy

Source: Indian Express Editorial

GS Mains Relevance:

1. GS Paper II: India—China Relations, Federal—State Issues, Disaster Cooperation

2. GS Paper III: Infrastructure, Water Security, Flood Management

Essay: "Water: A New Geopolitical Weapon", "India's Response to Climate-Induced Disasters"

Introduction:

Water has become the new frontier in geopolitics, especially between upper riparian China and lower riparian India and Bangladesh. The recent Chinese decision to fast-track a \$170 billion dam project on the Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) has raised strategic, environmental, and disaster-related concerns for India's Northeast. The need for storage infrastructure and cooperative hydrodiplomacy is more pressing than ever.

Core Issues Highlighted:

1. China's Dam Construction at Yarlung Zangbo:

- A mega project near Arunachal Pradesh expected to generate 60 GW of power 3x more than the Three Gorges Dam.
- > Risks: Unannounced water releases, engineering failures, flash floods, and climate-triggered discharge could threaten India and Bangladesh downstream.

2. Lack of Transparency in Water Data Sharing:

- Despite a 2013 MoU between India and China on river data sharing, China has often withheld hydrological data.
- > Strategic use of water by China is being viewed as a hydro-hegemonic tool.

3. Threats to India's Northeast:

- > Brahmaputra contributes major volume after entering Arunachal Pradesh via tributaries like Lohit and Dibang.
- > Over 80% of India's hydropower potential in the Northeast remains untapped due to political resistance and environmental concerns.

Challenges for India:

Challenge	Details
Hydrological Uncertainty	China's unilateral control over upstream flow and lack of data-sharing
Flood Vulnerability	Sudden surges or altered water regimes may affect lower Assam and Bangladesh
Delay in Domestic Projects	India's Siang multipurpose project delayed due to opposition and lack of pre-feasibility
Environmental & Livelihood Concerns Diplomatic Constraints	Displacement fears, tribal opposition, and lack of awareness MoU exists, but China evades deeper water-sharing cooperation

Committee Suggestions (Relevant Past Recommendations):

Body	Recommendation		
NITI Aayog (2017) Proposed a Siang Multipurpose Project to act as a stra			
	buffer.		
National Security Advisory Board	Urged development of storage infrastructure in Arunachal.		





Parliamentary Standing Committee on **Water Resources**

Called for River Basin Authority, flood forecasting infrastructure, and international hydrodiplomacy strategy.

Way Forward:

- 1. Build Strategic Storage: Expedite the Siang Dam Project and other multipurpose reservoirs to buffer India's downstream vulnerability.
- 2. Hydro-Diplomacy with China: Push for a binding treaty on transboundary river data-sharing, modeled on the Indus Water Treaty.
- 3. Environmental Safeguards & Consent: Engage local communities, address displacement concerns, and provide rehabilitation plans to reduce opposition.
- 4. Leverage Technology: Use real-time satellite data, AI-based flood modeling, and early warning systems for Brahmaputra management.
- 5. Regional Cooperation with Bangladesh: Develop a Brahmaputra River Commission for coordinated disaster management and equitable usage.

Conclusion:

China's upstream moves on the Brahmaputra are not just about hydropower—they challenge India's strategic stability and regional resilience. India must urgently transition from passive observation to proactive river management, strategic infrastructure development, and assertive water diplomacy.

Building storage capacity and political consensus is no longer optional — it's a national imperative.

Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. The Brahmaputra enters India through which Indian state?
 - a) Sikkim
 - b) Arunachal Pradesh
 - c) Assam
 - d) Nagaland

Answer: B) Arunachal Pradesh

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "The Brahmaputra River dispute underscores the need for a robust water diplomacy strategy." Elaborate with examples.

Student	Notes	1
		-



India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Its Public Health Implications

Source: The Hindu

Relevant for: GS Paper II (Governance, International Agreements), GS Paper III (Public Health, Economy)

Context / Background

The signing of the India–UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) marks a watershed moment in India's trade diplomacy. While it promises tariff-free access and lower prices, especially on processed food imports, it also rings alarm bells for public health advocates. The editorial critiques this trade pact as a potential **Trojan horse**, silently pushing ultra-processed, High Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) products into Indian markets, thereby endangering national nutrition goals and the fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs). At the heart of the issue lies a deeper conflict—**economic liberalisation vs health sovereignty**.

Key Challenges Highlighted

Issue	Details		
Tariff-free import of	The FTA allows duty-free entry of UK products like biscuits, chocolates, soft		
HFSS foods	drinks—fueling junk food consumption in India.		
Weak Regulatory	India lacks a mandatory warning label system. The existing Health Star Rating		
Framework	(HSR) model is misleading and not fully enforced.		
Poor Advertisement	Children-targeted ads for HFSS products remain loosely regulated. Celebrity		
Regulation	endorsements continue to normalize unhealthy choices.		
Children & Adolescents	Rising obesity and NCDs among youth make them a vulnerable demographic to		
at Risk	unregulated junk food marketing.		
Regulatory Delay	Despite Supreme Court directions (2015) and FSSAI's recommendations, India		
	has not implemented front-of-pack warning labels effectively.		

Key Committee Recommendations (India)

Committee/Body	Recommendations				
IAP/NIN/ICMR (2022-	Strong warning labels on HFSS products; promote 'Red Warning Labels'				
25)	and restrict TV & online ads during prime time.				
FSSAI Draft Regulations	Mandate Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPNL) with bold, interpretive				
Supreme Court (2015)	warnings rather than stars.				
	Directed immediate framing of consumer-friendly food labelling policies.				
National Dietary	Endorsed "high sugar, fat, and salt" red flags; need alignment with FTA				
Guidelines (2022)	provisions.				

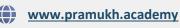
Global Best Practices

Country	Action Taken
Mexico	Post-NAFTA, implemented a Soda Tax, warning labels, and ad bans after childhood obesity crisis.
chile	Mandated <i>black hexagon warning labels</i> for HFSS foods. School and media ads for such products banned.
United	Introduced advertising bans during child programming hours and red-label warnings for salt/fat
Kingdom	content.
Thailand	Adopted colour-coded traffic light labelling on food packets for consumer awareness.

Way Forward for India

1. Mandate Warning Labels







Introduce **bold, graphic, colour-coded warning labels** under FOPNL, replacing the misleading 'star rating' system.

2. Protect Children from HFSS Ads

Ban all HFSS food advertisements during children's TV hours and block celebrity endorsements of such products.

3. Health Impact Assessment of FTAs

Make **Public Health Impact Assessment** mandatory for all future FTAs, akin to Environmental Impact Assessment.

4. Incorporate WHO Guidelines

Implement the WHO's *Best Buys* on NCD prevention—focusing on food regulation, public awareness, and taxation.

5. Health Education in Schools

Integrate HFSS risks and healthy food practices into school curricula and midday meal audits.

6. Enforce FSSAI Recommendations Urgently

Expedite FSSAI's pending draft on 'red alert' front labels and ban prime-time HFSS marketing.

Conclusion

The India—UK FTA offers an economic high but risks a nutritional low. In the name of free trade, India must not become a dumping ground for unhealthy, ultra-processed foods. The country stands at a crucial crossroad—either embrace short-term economic gains or uphold its constitutional duty to safeguard the health of its citizens. With childhood obesity rising and non-communicable diseases spiraling, the time to act is now. The real litmus test of development is not in GDP growth, but in the health and well-being of future generations.

UPSC Prelims Question

- Q1. Which country implemented the 'Soda Tax' and warning labels on junk food after signing a free trade agreement that adversely impacted public health?
 - a) Philippines
 - b) Mexico
 - c) Brazil
 - d) United Kingdom

Answer: (b) Mexico

UPSC Mains Question

Q1. "The India–UK FTA may offer economic benefits but poses risks to public health." Examine this statement in the context of India's nutritional labelling regulations and HFSS consumption. (10 marks)

Student Notes <u></u>			





Electoral Disenfranchisement & Migrant Voters: The Visible Fault Lines in Electoral Architecture

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 2 Polity and governance

Introduction

India's electoral democracy is witnessing intense scrutiny as the Election Commission undertakes the revision of electoral rolls in Bihar. While intended to sanitize voter databases, the process has sparked concerns over disenfranchisement of migrants, minorities, and the poor. The larger issue lies not just in faulty enumeration but in the structural disconnect between law, migration, and democratic representation.

Key Challenges

1. Outdated Legal Framework

The Representation of People Act, 1950 assumes static populations; it ignores internal migration patterns that affect over 450 million citizens.

2. Conflation of Residency and Citizenship

Residency (for voter rolls) is treated as equivalent to citizenship, leading to exclusion of migrant citizens who move for work.

3. Mass Deletions without Adequate Verification

> In Bihar, over 1.2 million names were deleted in 2025, citing "non-residency", disproportionately affecting migrant-dense districts.

4. Institutional Minimalism of ECI

The Election Commission has failed to push for legislative reform and relies on outdated procedures, compromising inclusiveness.

5. Administrative and Political Apathy

State actors weaponize disenfranchisement to suppress opposition strongholds. Surveys show over 60% of migrants unable to vote at place of work.

Committee Recommendations

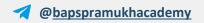
- Law Commission of India (2015): Recommended reforms to enable migrant voting through remote voting
- Election Commission Reports: Have flagged the issue of missing voters and suggested outreach and alternate models.
- ECI-Technology Committee (2020): Proposed Remote Voting Machines (RVMs) and pilot testing but implementation remains pending.

Challenges in Implementation

- 1. Lack of Political Will: Many political parties benefit from status quo.
- 2. Logistical Complexities: Establishing remote voting without compromising transparency is technologically and administratively challenging.
- 3. Identity & Verification Issues: Ensuring no duplication or impersonation remains a major technical hurdle.
- 4. Resistance from Local Power Blocs: Migrant enfranchisement may shift political equations, leading to local opposition.

Global Best Practices

- 1. United States: Absentee and mail-in ballots for voters away from home states.
- **Philippines**: Allows overseas postal ballots for 1.8 million citizens.
- 3. Australia: Mobile polling stations in remote regions 90% turnout.









These examples prove that voter mobility need not compromise electoral integrity, if institutional design aligns with democratic values.

Way Forward

1. Legal and Constitutional Reforms

- > Amend the Representation of the People Act, 1950 to redefine "ordinary residence" in tune with high
- > Incorporate provisions to recognize mobile and transient workers as valid electoral participants at their place of origin or work.

2. Implement Remote Voting Technologies

- > Accelerate pilot testing of Remote Voting Machines (RVMs), as recommended by the Election Commission and TEC (2020).
- > Integrate biometric verification and Aadhaar-linked authentication to prevent fraud in remote voting.

3. Institutional Push by the Election Commission (ECI)

- > The ECI should proactively recommend legislative changes and push for outreach innovations in migrant-heavy states.
- > **District Election Officers** must conduct special migrant-inclusive enrolment drives.

4. Dedicated Voter Registration for Migrants

- Create a migrant-specific voter registration track, supported by mobile camps at workplaces and construction sites.
- > Develop a one-nation-one-voter-ID tracking architecture to prevent multiple enrolments and ensure portability.

Conclusion

India's democratic promise cannot be realized without acknowledging its dynamic, mobile citizenry. Voter disenfranchisement due to outdated legal interpretations and administrative inertia is a democratic deficit. It is high time the electoral system is reformed to ensure universal, inclusive, and participatory democracy, particularly for the working poor and migrants who form the backbone of the Indian economy.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following statements about the Representation of the People Act, 1950:
 - 1. It uses citizenship as the sole criterion for inclusion in electoral rolls.
 - 2. It was enacted when India had largely sedentary populations. Which of the above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. Critically examine the limitations of India's electoral architecture in ensuring inclusivity for internal migrants. Suggest structural reforms. (15 marks)

Student Notes 🧶









Kargil, Pahalgam and a Revamp of the Security Strategy

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 3 Internal security **GS PAPER: 2** Bilateral relations (IR)

Introduction

The 26th anniversary of the **Kargil War (1999)** and the recent Pahalgam terror attack (April 22, 2025) mark two important junctures in India's counter-terrorism strategy. While **Kargil symbolized a wake-up call for India's defence and intelligence restructuring,** Pahalgam has once again reiterated the urgency of revamping national security doctrine. The article traces India's evolution in military, strategic, and intelligence capabilities in the face of persistent cross-border threats from Pakistan.

Key Challenges in India's Security Architecture:

- 1. Asymmetric Warfare: Pakistan uses non-state actors and proxy groups to destabilize India without crossing conventional military thresholds.
- 2. Intelligence Gaps: Prior to Kargil and even Pahalgam, intelligence lapses resulted in surprise attacks.
- 3. **Delayed Punitive Action:** Initial responses to terror attacks (e.g., Parliament attack, 26/11 Mumbai) lacked immediate, decisive retaliation.
- 4. Nuclear Deterrence Complexity: Pakistan's nuclear capability complicates India's response matrix.
- **5. Slow Modernisation:** For years, India lagged in upgrading its defence capabilities, platforms, and doctrines.

Strategic Lessons from Kargil

- 1. Kargil was India's first full-scale limited war post-1971 and showed the vulnerabilities of existing surveillance and response mechanisms.
- 2. It triggered a long-term overhaul of:
 - Intelligence sharing.
 - Command chain integration.
 - Military preparedness.
- 3. It underscored the necessity of real-time surveillance, satellite reconnaissance, and swift air- land coordinated action.

Institutional and Policy Reforms Post-Kargil

Institutional and Policy Reforms Post-Kargil			
Year/Period	Reform/Development		
2000s	Set up of Kargil Review Committee, leading to creation of National Security Council (NSC), NSCS, and NSA post.		
2002	Creation of Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and integration of intelligence units.		
2004	Restructuring of Intelligence Coordination via Multi-Agency Centre (MAC).		
2019	Appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and push for theatre commands.		

The Pahalgam Attack: Strategic Message in 2025

1. The retaliation via **Operation Sindoor May 7–10, 2025**, struck terror camps and missile sites inside Pakistan.

2. Demonstrated:

- > High-precision air and missile capabilities.
- > Rapid operational mobilisation.
- > Strategic resolve and denial of sanctuary to terror actors.







3. Message: India will no longer tolerate proxy wars and strategic ambiguity by Pakistan.

Global Practice in Security Reforms

- 4. Israel: Pre-emptive neutralization of threats via real-time intelligence and targeted strikes.
- **5. USA (Post 9/11)**: Homeland Security restructuring, Patriot Act, creation of unified commands.
- 6. Russia/China: Emphasis on electronic warfare and rapid response mechanisation.
- 7. India has increasingly adopted surgical strikes and air precision models, akin to **Israel's Iron Fist** doctrine.

Way Forward:

- 1. Permanent Theatre Commands to streamline coordination across services.
- 2. Al & Satellite Integration for real-time surveillance and prediction of cross-border intrusions.
- 3. Strengthen Internal Grid in UTs like J&K for proactive civilian and military synergy.
- 4. Cybersecurity Doctrine to counter information warfare and propaganda.
- 5. Decentralised Tactical Command to empower frontline units for rapid retaliation.
- **6. Institutional Memory Culture**: Periodic review of past attack responses to plug repeating gaps.
- 7. Diplomatic Offensive: Push at FATF, UNSC, and G20 to isolate Pakistan diplomatically.

Conclusion

From Kargil to Pahalgam, India's national security strategy has transformed from reactive restraint to assertive retaliation. The 2025 response marks a tectonic shift in India's security posture—militarily, diplomatically, and psychologically. To ensure long-term deterrence and national integrity, India must now institutionalize reforms, deepen integration across agencies, and prepare for multidimensional warfare in the future.

UPSC PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q1. Operation Sindoor, recently in news, is related to:
 - a) Flood relief mission in Northeast India
 - b) India's anti-piracy naval patrol
 - c) Cross-border counter-terror strikes on terror camps
 - d) Military evacuation during civil unrest

Answer: (c)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the role of technological integration and joint command structure in strengthening India's national security posture in the wake of cross-border terrorism. (10 marks)

Student Notes <u>/</u>	





Healing Manipur: Reconciliation Beyond President's Rule

Source: The Hindu

GSPAPER: 3 Internal Security, Northeast security

Introduction

Manipur has been in the grip of a deep ethnic conflict since May 2023, largely between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. Despite administrative measures and the imposition of President's Rule (recently extended till August 2025), the crisis remains unresolved. This article emphasizes the need for genuine political reconciliation and inclusive governance over mere bureaucratic control.

Key Challenges in Manipur

- 1. Ethnic Polarization: Deep-rooted conflict between Meiteis and Kuki-Zos has led to segregated buffer zones, fueling mistrust.
- 2. Militant Impunity: Ethnic-based militant groups have operated with little accountability, undermining law and order.
- 3. Ineffective Political Outreach: National leadership has shown reluctance to engage meaningfully with regional concerns.
- 4. Over-reliance on Bureaucracy: Civil servants and security forces are shouldering the burden in absence of political consensus.
- 5. Narrative of 'Outsiders': Hardline rhetoric labeling fellow citizens as outsiders aggravates the divide.
- 6. Failure of Electoral Mandate: Though BJP was elected with broad support, it failed to unify the hills and the valley.

Global Parallels and Best Practices

Country	Similar Conflict	Approach Taken
Northern Ireland	Sectarian conflict	Good Friday Agreement, power-sharing model
Rwanda	Hutu-Tutsi ethnic genocide	Gacaca courts, truth and reconciliation commissions
South Africa	Racial divisions	Truth and Reconciliation Commission post-apartheid

Learning for India:

Healing requires political dialogue, power-sharing mechanisms, truth-telling, and civil society leadership.

Committees and Constitutional Provisions

- 1. S.R. Bommai Case (1994): Limited misuse of President's Rule by mandating floor tests and judicial scrutiny.
- 2. Inter-State Council (Art. 263): Can facilitate Centre-State dialogue in conflict-prone regions.
- 3. Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC): Recommends community-based policing and local conflict resolution mechanisms.

Way Forward

- 1. Genuine Dialogue: Political parties must initiate direct conversations with both communities through allparty delegations.
- 2. Ethnic Integration Model: Establish a statutory Ethnic Harmony Council for inclusive governance in buffer
- 3. Demilitarize & Rehabilitate: De-weaponize ethnic militias and ensure dignified rehabilitation of displaced families.
- 4. Constitutional Safeguards: Provide legal clarity and security to both ST and general category communities.
- 5. Civic Inclusion: Support civil society platforms and religious bodies to bridge ethnic divides through community programs.





- 6. Political Accountability: National leadership must lead from the front, not leave healing to bureaucrats alone.
- 7. Monitoring by NHRC & NCST: Ensure human rights compliance in security actions across conflict zones.

Conclusion

Manipur's crisis is not merely an administrative challenge but a test of India's democratic resolve to heal internal divisions. A durable solution lies in reconciliation, shared responsibility, and inclusive governance. President's Rule may maintain order, but peace demands political courage, civil society participation, and empathy-driven leadership. The future of Manipur must be built on bridges, not buffer zones.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Consider the following about the S.R. Bommai judgment:
 - 1. It restricted arbitrary imposition of President's Rule.
 - 2. It made floor tests mandatory to prove majority in the Assembly.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. Examine the constitutional and political mechanisms available to the Union Government to address deep-rooted ethnic conflicts in India. (10 marks)

Student Notes	
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Not the Way: Why Criminalising Adolescent Sex Undermines the Spirit of POCSO

Source: The Hindu GSPaper: Social justice

Introduction

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, was enacted to shield minors from sexual abuse. However, its rigid application has unintentionally criminalized consensual sexual relationships between adolescents aged 16–18. Courts, activists, and legal scholars are now debating whether the law should differentiate between exploitative abuse and consensual intimacy among teenagers.

Key Challenges in Implementation

- 1. **Over-criminalization**: Current provisions classify all sexual activity under 18 as assault—even if consensual.
- 2. **No distinction between abuse and consent**: The law equates consensual teenage intimacy with predatory behaviour.
- 3. Judicial Constraints: Judges cannot exercise discretion, leading to mandatory punishments even in consensual cases.
- **4. Social Repercussions**: Criminal records damage the future of teenagers engaged in mutual relationships.
- 5. **Gendered Misuse**: Law may disproportionately target boys, especially from marginalized backgrounds.
- **6.** Lack of Clarity in Definition of Consent: Indian law does not allow teenagers below 18 to legally consent, leading to a grey area.

Committee Recommendations & Legal Interventions

- 1. Law Commission of India (2023):
 - Opposed lowering the age of consent.
 - Suggested use of "judicial discretion" in sentencing for consensual cases.
- 2. Madras High Court (Vijayalakshmi v. State Rep.):
 - Advocated for a nuanced approach in consensual adolescent relationships.
- 3. Indira Jaising's Submission to SC (2024):
 - > Proposed exempting consensual sex between 16–18-year-olds from criminal liability under POCSO and BNS (Section 63).

Global Best Practices

Country	Legal Age of Consent	Notable Feature
Germany	14–16	Protected relationships if close in age
UK	16	Includes grooming and power imbalance clauses
USA	Varies (16–18)	"Romeo and Juliet" laws for close-in-age
France	15	Allows judicial evaluation of consent cases

India lacks a "close-in-age exemption", making even consensual acts punishable.

Way Forward

- 1. Introduce Close-in-Age Exemption: Decriminalize consensual sex between 16–18-year-olds through statutory reform.
- 2. Judicial Discretion Clause: Allow judges to differentiate between exploitative abuse and voluntary intimacy.
- 3. **Consent Education in Schools**: Introduce age-appropriate sexual education with emphasis on consent and boundaries.







- 4. **Diversion from Criminal Justice System**: Use rehabilitation/restorative justice for adolescent relationships rather than criminal trials.
- 5. Gender-Sensitive Reform: Ensure that boys from marginalized groups are not disproportionately
- 6. Amend POCSO & BNS Harmoniously: POCSO should focus on preventing abuse, not punishing consensual intimacy.

Conclusion

While POCSO remains vital for protecting children from exploitation, blanket criminalisation of adolescent intimacy risks violating the very spirit of the law. Legal reform must evolve to reflect the realities of teenage maturity, evolving relationships, and the need to preserve human dignity without compromising child protection. A calibrated, rights-based, and empathetic legal framework is the way forward.

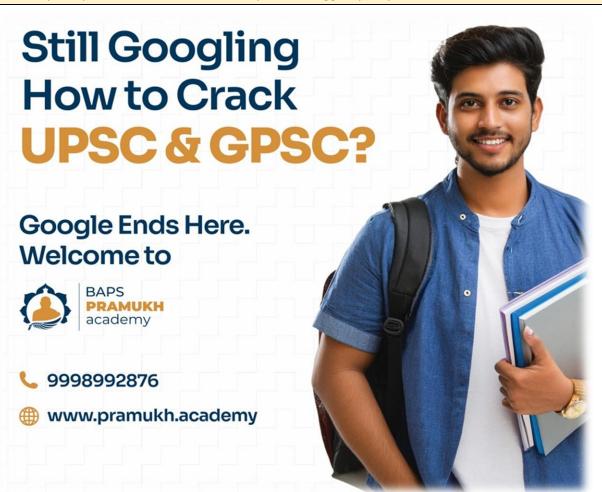
UPSC Prelims Questions

- Q1. Which of the following statements about POCSO Act, 2012 is correct?
 - (a) It applies only to sexual offences against girls under 18.
 - (b) It criminalizes all sexual acts involving children below 18, regardless of consent.
 - (c) It allows consensual sex between minors aged 16–18.
 - (d) It does not apply in cases of marital rape.

Answer: (b)

UPSC Prelims Question

Q1. "Empowering doctors as frontline innovators is key to transforming India's healthcare system." Critically analyze this statement with examples and suggest policy measures. (15 marks)







The Need for Doctor-led Innovation

Source: The Hindu

For GS Paper II (Governance, Public Health), GS Paper III (Science & Tech, Innovation), and Essay

Introduction

In a world transforming rapidly due to Artificial Intelligence, biotechnology, digital health, and personalized medicine, doctors are being reduced to passive consumers of innovation. The article argues that unless medical professionals lead the innovation process, healthcare reforms will remain superficial. It calls for a systemic change where doctors evolve from being just service providers to clinical innovators and health-tech entrepreneurs.

Why Doctors Must Lead Innovation

- 1. Clinical Insight & Empathy: Doctors are closest to patients and diseases; they understand unmet needs deeply.
- 2. Treatment Ground Realities: From misdiagnosis to logistical challenges, doctors witness problems firsthand.
- **3. Crisis Responsiveness**: Doctors are better placed to rapidly prototype life-saving innovations in emergencies.
- **4. Ethical Judgment**: Being grounded in patient welfare, they ensure innovations are safe, accessible, and need-driven.
- **5. Global Evidence**: Countries that empower doctors to innovate (e.g., UK's NHS Clinical Entrepreneur Programme) show better patient outcomes.

Key Challenges

1. No Innovation Curriculum in MBBS

Medical students are not trained in design thinking, AI, entrepreneurship, or problem- solving.

2. Work Overload and Time Constraints

Doctors are often too overburdened with patient care to engage in R&D or innovation.

3. Lack of Institutional Ecosystem

Hospitals in India do not have dedicated innovation cells, incubators, or research funding structures.

4. Siloed Working Style

Doctors rarely collaborate with engineers, designers, data scientists, or health-tech startups.

5. Regulatory Inertia

Approval pathways for medical devices and diagnostics are unclear and slow.

6. Risk Aversion

The system penalizes failure, discouraging experimentation and innovation among clinicians.

Committee & Institutional Recommendations

Initiative/Body	Contribution	
National Innovation Council	Advocates grassroots doctor-led innovations.	
BIRAC (Biotech Industry Research	Funds early-stage health tech startups, but needs more	
Assistance Council)	doctor representation.	
ICMR Innovation Programs	Support translational research but rarely include clinician- entrepreneurs.	
Pharmacovigilance Programme of	Identifies adverse drug reactions needing safer clinical	
India	innovations.	
(PvPI)		



Global·Best·Practices

Country	Model
GB∙UK	NHS·Clinical·Entrepreneur·Programme·—
	$\cdot trains \cdot and \cdot funds \cdot clinicians \cdot to \cdot develop \cdot health \cdot solutions.$
US-USA	$\textit{Stanford} \cdot \textit{Biodesign} \cdot \textit{Program} \cdot - \cdot \text{integrates} \cdot \text{doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{and} \cdot \text{business} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{to} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{and} \cdot \text{business} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{to} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{and} \cdot \text{business} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{to} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{and} \cdot \text{business} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{to} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{with} \cdot \text{engineers} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot \text{co-doctors} \cdot \text{experts} \cdot $
	create·solutions.
IL·Israel·	$Hospitals \cdot like \cdot \textit{Sheba} \cdot \textit{Medical} \cdot \textit{Centre} \cdot \text{run} \cdot \text{in-house} \cdot \textit{MedTech} \cdot \text{innovation} \cdot \text{hubs}, \cdot \text{led} \cdot \text{by} \cdot \text{doctors}.$

Way Forward

1. Curriculum Reform

Introduce innovation modules in MBBS/MD: Al in medicine, clinical problem-solving, biodesign.

2. Innovation Cells in Hospitals

Every AIIMS and state hospital should have an "Innovation and Research Department".

3. Doctor-Innovation Fellowship

> Launch fellowships giving doctors paid research leave to develop solutions with startups and labs.

4. Mentorship & Bootcamps

Partner with IITs/IIMs to train doctors in startup culture and product design.

5. Seed Funding and PPP

➤ Use Atal Innovation Mission or CSR to fund hospital-based projects led by doctors.

6. Fast-Track Medical Innovation Approval

Create a streamlined regulatory fast-lane for innovations from certified doctor- researchers.

7. Bridge Tech and Clinics

> Create a formal platform for doctors to collaborate with tech entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

To transform Indian healthcare sustainably, **doctors must move from prescription to innovation**. A doctor-led innovation ecosystem will ensure not only the development of patient-centric solutions but also India's leadership in **affordable**, **ethical**, **and indigenous health technologies**. Without such systemic change, India risks lagging behind in the next wave of health-tech evolution.

UPSC Prelims Questions

- Q1. Which of the following are global examples of doctor-led innovation programs?
 - 1. NHS Clinical Entrepreneur Programme
 - 2. WHO Bio-Med Initiative
 - 3. Stanford Biodesign Program
 - 4. India's National Startup Advisory Board

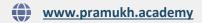
Choose the correct code:

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: (a)

UPSC Mains Question

Q1. "India's future as a global healthcare leader depends on transforming doctors into frontline innovators." Discuss this in light of current challenges and institutional gaps. (15 marks)





AYUSH vs. Allopathy: A Conflict of Practice and Policy in Indian Healthcare"

Source: The Hindu

GSPAPER: 3 HEALTH, PAPER 2: GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The ongoing controversy in India regarding whether practitioners of traditional medical systems like Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy—collectively called **AYUSH**—can claim the status of doctors and practice procedures customary to modern medicine has sparked significant debate. This issue isn't just about professional titles, but **covers legal, ethical, and public health concerns**, with implications for the quality, safety, and regulation of healthcare in India.

Key Challenges

- 1. **Defining Medical Boundaries:** The primary challenge is demarcating what medical actions AYUSH practitioners are legally permitted to do, *especially* concerning the prescription of allopathic (modern) medicines and the performance of clinical procedures.
- 2. Educational Gaps: The training and curriculum of AYUSH systems differ considerably from MBBS, raising questions about their ability to practice allopathy without additional qualifications safely.
- Legal Grey Areas: Provisions like Rule 2ee of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, use the term
 "Registered Medical Practitioner," which gets interpreted differently by authorities, creating confusion
 across states.
- **4. Patient Safety:** Concerns exist regarding the **lack of rigorous scientific evidence** supporting many traditional treatments when used for acute or critical illnesses.
- **5. Overburdened Public Healthcare System:** Some states resort to "bridging" AYUSH practitioners into public service to address doctor shortages, but this move is contentious from a patient safety perspective.

Important fact: According to the National Health Profile 2022, India has **over 800,000 registered AYUSH practitioners**, which is more than one-third of the number of allopathic doctors.

Global Practice

- Most developed countries, like the USA, UK, and Australia, strictly regulate traditional practitioners and do not allow them to practice mainstream medicine or prescribe allopathic drugs unless they have formal, accredited qualifications.
- 2. China stands out for integrating traditional medicine (Traditional Chinese Medicine TCM) with modern care in public hospitals, but under strict government regulation and with distinct professional tracks.
- 3. World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes traditional medicine, but emphasizes rigorous standards for practitioner qualifications, safety, and integration only where evidence supports it.

Indian Committee Suggestions

- 1. The **Bhore Committee (1946)**, a milestone for public health policy, stated that **AYUSH** systems must be preserved and improved but **should not substitute allopathic care in critical areas.**
- 2. The **National Health Policy 2017** encourages evidence-based integration of **AYUSH** for preventive and promotive health, but **stresses clear professional and legal boundaries.**
- Recent health ministry committees recommend bridge courses only in public health settings and never for full clinical practice of allopathy.
- 4. The National Medical Commission (NMC) and the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) continue to maintain separate regulatory standards for modern and traditional systems.







Fact for UPSC(PRELIMS): As per Article 25 and Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, traditional practices are protected, but public health is a State subject under the Seventh Schedule, giving states autonomy on this issue, leading to regulatory divergence across India.

Way Forward

- 1. Stricter Regulatory Clarity: Enact clear national legislation defining boundaries of AYUSH and modern medicine, preventing unauthorized cross-practice.
- 2. Improved Education and Upskilling: Introduce standardized bridge courses strictly limited in scope, with transparent oversight where indispensable.
- 3. Strengthened Public Communication: Educate the public on the qualifications and legitimate role of AYUSH practitioners to avoid misleading titles and advertisements.
- 4. Promote Collaborative, Not Substitutional, Care: Encourage team-based integrative care models in primary health, with each system working within its expertise and evidence base.
- 5. Regular Monitoring and Audits: Create mechanisms to monitor quality of care and patient outcomes in settings where integration is introduced.

Conclusion

The debate over the status and scope of AYUSH practitioners is central to the evolution of India's healthcare ecosystem. Policymakers must strike a delicate balance between preserving India's rich medical heritage and ensuring the highest standards of patient safety, scientific rigor, and public trust. The path forward must be guided by evidence, robust regulation, and unwavering commitment to public health—not mere expediency.

UPSC Prelims practice question

- Q1. Which of the following statements regarding AYUSH practitioners in India is/are correct?
 - 1. The National Health Policy 2017 encourages the integration of AYUSH systems for preventive and promotive healthcare, but mandates clear professional and legal boundaries.
 - 2. The scope of AYUSH practitioners' rights to prescribe allopathic drugs is uniformly regulated across
 - 3. According to the National Health Profile 2022, the number of registered AYUSH practitioners in India exceeds 800,000.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: B) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. Discuss the key challenges associated with integrating AYUSH practitioners into India's mainstream healthcare system. Examine the regulatory and ethical concerns, and suggest measures to ensure patient safety and effective healthcare delivery

Student Notes 🧶









Two Nations and A River

SOURCE: The Indian express GSPAPER: 2 International Relations

Introduction

China's announcement of constructing a massive **hydropower dam** on the **Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)** in Tibet's Medog County has heightened India's concerns regarding transboundary river management. Given that the Brahmaputra is a lifeline for India's **Northeast**, any upstream intervention could have a severe impact on water security, ecology, and the region's geopolitical equilibrium. The issue underscores the urgent need for robust legal frameworks and diplomatic mechanisms between the two countries, both nuclear powers with a history of border disputes.

Key Challenges

- Unilateral Construction and Consultation Deficit: China's decision to proceed without meaningful
 consultation violates the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization enshrined in the UN
 Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997). The lack of
 a binding treaty between India and China on the Brahmaputra further amplifies risks.
- Downstream Impact: Control over the upper reaches provides China enormous strategic leverage, threatening water availability in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. This could impact not just agriculture and livelihoods but also increase vulnerability to floods and droughts.
- 3. Environmental and Seismic Sensitivity: The proposed project is situated in an ecologically fragile and seismic zone. Studies by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) highlight the risks to biodiversity and potential for catastrophic hazards.
- 4. Lack of Data Sharing and Transparency: Absence of automatic real-time hydrological data transfer impairs India's disaster preparedness and water planning. Parliamentary Standing Committee reports have repeatedly emphasized this gap.
- **5. Geopolitical Asymmetry:** As an **upper riparian** state, China's unilateral moves without multilateral engagement upset the regional power balance and defy global best practices.

UPSC Fact: China is **not a signatory** to the UN Watercourses Convention (1997), which makes mutual cooperation difficult.

Global Practice

- Successful Cooperative Models: The Indus Waters Treaty, 1960 (between India and Pakistan) stands as a
 global benchmark for resolving transboundary river disputes, illustrating dispute resolution protocols,
 joint technical committees, and third-party arbitration mechanisms.
- 2. Regional Alliances: The Mekong River Commission (Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam) is another example where countries share technical data, impact assessments, and cooperative development plans.
- 3. International Norms: Most established river-sharing frameworks demand prior notification, joint impact assessments, and regular data exchange—practices notably absent in Sino-Indian river management.

Indian Committee Suggestions

- 1. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources: Repeatedly recommended establishing a bilateral water commission with China, institutionalizing early flood-warning systems, mandatory data sharing, and joint technical surveys.
- National Security Advisory Board and NDMA: Advised integration of water security in national security strategy, enhancement of satellite and ground-based river monitoring, and inclusion of water issues in all bilateral dialogues.
- 3. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA): Emphasizes leveraging forums like BIMSTEC and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for regional water governance frameworks.







UPSC Fact:

The NITI Aayog Task Force on Himalayan Water Security advocates building "diplomatic and legal muscle" for negotiating transboundary water issues.

Way Forward

- 1. Legal and Institutional Mechanisms: India must push for negotiation of a legally binding bilateral watersharing agreement with China, drawing from the success of the Indus Waters Treaty.
- 2. Robust Diplomacy and Regional Coalitions: Forge joint diplomatic initiatives with Bangladesh and promote water cooperation under UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme.
- 3. Advanced River Management: Invest in satellite monitoring, basin-wide modeling, and automated hydrological stations in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Implement NDMA- recommended disaster planning.
- 4. Public and State Preparedness: State governments must be equipped for adaptive strategies through updated water policies, community awareness, and contingency action plans.
- 5. Norm-building and Advocacy: Champion the cause for a South Asian Convention on transboundary rivers in regional and international forums.

Conclusion

The issue of China's Brahmaputra dam is not merely one of infrastructure. It is a complex intersection of environmental sustainability, national security, international law, and diplomacy. For India, ensuring an adequate and safe flow of the Brahmaputra requires a combination of proactive diplomacy, legal innovation, environmental stewardship, and robust preparedness. Policy solutions must combine India's rights under international conventions, successful case studies like the Indus Waters Treaty, and recommendations from key committees, with a renewed focus on protecting the rights and livelihoods of downstream communities.

UPSC Prelims Prctice Question

- Q1. Which of the following Indian committees or bodies has NOT been prominently involved in water security and river management concerning transboundary rivers?
 - A) National Security Advisory Board
 - B) NITI Aayog
 - C) National Disaster Management Authority
 - D) Finance Commission

Answer: D) Finance Commission

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. Discuss the strategic, ecological, and legal challenges posed to India by China's construction of hydropower projects on the Brahmaputra River. Evaluate the effectiveness of international conventions and Indian committee recommendations in addressing these challenges. Propose a comprehensive way forward

Student Notes 🍊





Adopt formalisation to power productivity growth

Source: The Hindu

GS PAPER: 3 Indian Economy

Introduction

Contract labour has become a significant part of India's formal manufacturing workforce, comprising 40.7% of all workers in FY23, up from just 20% two decades ago. This shift is seen in over 5.95 million out of 14.61 million workers, indicating a steady reliance on contractual employees for flexibility and cost reduction. However, this rapid contractualisation often leads to exploitation: contract workers typically have little job security, limited bargaining power, fewer legal protections, and much lower pay compared to regular staff. Some states, like Bihar and Telangana, report contract workforce shares exceeding 60%, while Kerala and Tamil Nadu have the lowest at around 24%

Key Challenges or Issues

- Contract workers experience precarious employment, poor job security, and wage disparities of 14-42% less than regular workers.
- 2. Weak enforcement of labour laws leads to widespread non-compliance and exploitation.
- 3. Lack of social security coverage and difficulty in unionising deepen contract workers' vulnerability.
- 4. Ambiguous regulations and loopholes allow excessive use of contract labour even in core activities.
- 5. Over-reliance on contractual labour hampers skill development and reduces overall manufacturing productivity.

Global Practices

- 1. Many countries in the European Union and North America mandate that contract workers receive pay and benefits equal to permanent employees, with strict regulation of third-party contractors and transparent contracts.
- 2. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recommends formalizing contract work by ensuring minimum wages, social security, safe working conditions, and collective bargaining rights, especially for vulnerable groups such as women.
- 3. BRICS nations focus on strengthening labour institutions, promoting social dialogue, and enhancing skill development to facilitate the shift from informal to formal employment, particularly in the post-pandemic context.
- 4. Leading global firms, especially in sectors like garments, implement "good practice" standards for contract labour, emphasizing transparency, legal compliance, and accountability of supply chain managers for workers' rights.
- 5. There is a growing global emphasis on educating contract workers about their rights, supporting union membership, and developing gender-sensitive policies to assist women contract workers.

Committee Recommendations

- 1. Indian Labour Conferences and advisory bodies urge strict enforcement of the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act to eliminate wage and benefit discrimination and hold principal employers accountable.
- 2. It is recommended that all contract workers be mandatorily covered under social security schemes such as EPF and ESIC, with employers ensuring compliance, including direct deductions from contractors' payments if necessary.
- 3. Committees advocate for banning contract labour in core sectors while allowing it only in non-core functions, and recommend "tightening legal definitions" to prevent misuse of outsourcing.







- **4.** Emphasis is placed on **building capacity** in labour departments using additional resources, improved technology, and sharing of **best and worst practices**.
- 5. Recommendations include **regular review and simplification of labour laws** combined with **stronger penalties for violations** to better protect contract workers.

Way Forward

- Enforcement should be strengthened using technology, with higher penalties for violations, strict regulation of contractor registration, and clear restrictions on contract labour limited to non-core activities.
- 2. Governments should **promote formalisation** of contract jobs into permanent roles through **fiscal incentives such as tax rebates** and simplify formal employment procedures.
- 3. There must be universal social security coverage for all contract workers, ensuring principal employers are responsible for timely contributions to pension, insurance, and healthcare schemes.
- 4. **Skill development initiatives** tailored to contract workers should be expanded **to improve their employability, productivity, and bargaining power.**

Conclusion

Contract labour forms a large and growing share of India's formal manufacturing sector, but continues to face serious challenges—such as **exploitation**, **lack of social security**, **and wage disparities**—despite existing laws and recommendations. Adopting **global best practices** like equal pay, strong regulation, and universal social security, along with robust enforcement and regular policy review, is critical. **Only with comprehensive reforms**, stronger protections, and active formalisation can India ensure fair treatment, greater productivity, and sustainable, inclusive industrial growth for all workers.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. Which of the following statements about contract labour in India's formal manufacturing sector is/are correct?
 - 1. Contract labour forms around 40.7% of the formal manufacturing workforce as of FY23, up from 20% two decades ago.
 - 2. Contract workers typically earn between 14% to 42% higher wages than regular employees in the same enterprise.
 - 3. The Indian Labour Conference advocates for ensuring social security coverage like EPF and ESIC for contract workers.
 - **4.** Over-reliance on contract labour tends to improve long-term productivity due to workforce flexibility.

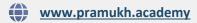
Options:

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 3, and 4 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: a) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Critically analyze the challenges posed by contractualisation in India's formal manufacturing sector. Discuss the policy measures recommended to protect contract workers and promote sustainable productivity growth.





Deaths in school

Source: the Hindu

GSPAPER 2 GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE,

<u>Introduction</u>

Seven children lost their lives and over 20 were injured on July 25, 2025, when the roof of a government school building collapsed in Piplodi, Jhalawar district, Rajasthan. The tragedy brought to light the chronic **neglect and underfunding of school infrastructure** in the state. Many of the victims were from marginalized, tribal communities. Despite repeated warnings about the deteriorating conditions of school buildings, both staff and authorities failed to act with urgency. The incident is not isolated: just days later, a similar infrastructure failure in another school led to additional casualties, underscoring the widespread unsafe conditions in Rajasthan's government schools.

Key Challenges or Issues

- 1. Widespread Dilapidation: Official estimates cite over 2,000 government schools in Rajasthan are in dangerous condition, with many more needing urgent repairs and upgrades.
- 2. Apathy and Negligence: Warning signs and complaints from students and parents were ignored by teachers and administrators, reflecting systemic apathy and a lack of accountability.
- 3. Bureaucratic Red Tape: Despite a yearly allocation of funds (e.g., ₹250 crore in 2025), most of the repair budgets remain unreleased or insufficient, stuck in administrative delays, while actual infrastructure needs are above ₹5,000 crore.
- 4. Budgetary Shortfalls: Spending on education infrastructure is far below the requirement; only a fraction of school buildings get addressed each year due to limited funds.
- 5. Disproportionate Impact on the Poor: Most tragic incidents occur in schools serving poor, tribal, and marginalized communities, indicating unequal attention and protection for vulnerable groups.

Global Practices

- 1. Mandatory Safety Audits: Many countries conduct regular, independent safety audits of all public school buildings, with immediate evacuation orders and repairs for any found unsafe.
- 2. Transparent Funding and Oversight: Successful systems have clear, accountable mechanisms for releasing and tracking funds allocated for school repairs, ensuring money reaches where it's needed most.
- 3. Community and Stakeholder Involvement: Engaging parents, local governments, and school management committees in maintenance oversight increases accountability.
- 4. Legal Accountability: Severe legal consequences for negligence and non-compliance with safety regulations act as strong deterrents; site preservation for forensic investigation after accidents is standard.
- 5. International Benchmarks: UNESCO and UNICEF recommend at least 4–6% of GDP be spent on education, with infrastructure safety as a key evaluation metric.

Committee Recommendations

- 1. Immediate Statewide Audit: Orders for comprehensive audits of all government school buildings, closure of unsafe schools, and relocation of students to safe premises.
- 2. Allocation of MLAs' Funds: Mandate that a portion (e.g., 20%) of local development funds be reserved for school infrastructure repairs and maintenance.
- 3. Strict Accountability and Penalties: Suspension of responsible officials and calls for resignations; directives for independent investigations and penalties for those found negligent.
- 4. Transparent Repair Work: Recommendations for third-party monitoring of repair work to avoid quick-fix, superficial repairs and to ensure long-term safety.







5. Regular Progress Reporting: Requirement that all audits and repairs be regularly reported in detail to the public and judiciary for enhanced transparency.

Way Forward

- 1. Urgently Prioritize School Safety: Make children's safety in schools a non-negotiable state priority, fasttrack fund release, and ensure targeted investment in the most at-risk schools.
- 2. Implement Immediate and Independent Audits: Safety audits should be overseen by neutral expert agencies; any school with structural risks must be vacated until made safe.
- 3. Integrate Technology for Monitoring: Use digital platforms to track school building conditions in real time and create public dashboards for complaints and maintenance status.
- 4. Systemic Accountability: Legal reforms to fix individual responsibility for lapses; enforce penalties for ignoring student warnings or neglecting infrastructure issues.
- 5. Long-term Infrastructure Modernization: Invest in durable, climate-resilient school buildings and ensure regular maintenance budgets are not subjected to bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Conclusion

The deaths of these children are a grim reminder that school infrastructure in Rajasthan—and India remains perilously inadequate, especially for society's most vulnerable. Preventable tragedies will persist unless governments act with urgency: prioritizing safety, allocating sufficient funds, enforcing strict accountability, and adopting global best practices. Safe schools must be the foundation of a just and equitable education system.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

- Q1. What percentage of the formal manufacturing workforce in India were contract workers in FY23?
 - a) 20%
 - b) 30.5%
 - c) 40.7%
 - d) 50%

Answer: c) 40.7%

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Discuss the key challenges in maintaining safe and resilient school infrastructure in India, highlighting the role of governance, funding, and community participation. Suggest reforms needed to prevent tragedies.

Student Notes 🍊





Spectacle, privacy and sharing in the digital age

Source: The Hindu

GS Paper: 3 Security, Technology

Introduction

In today's digital age, the boundaries between private life and public spectacle are increasingly blurred. A single smartphone video at a **Coldplay concert in Boston** spiraled into a global morality debate—highlighting how moments of personal discomfort are transformed into viral sensations, leading to profound consequences for the individuals involved. This scenario underscores urgent questions about **privacy**, **digital ethics**, **and society's role in amplifying spectacle online**.

Key Challenges

- 1. Lack of Informed Consent: Viral videos often circulate without the knowledge or consent of those depicted, exposing them to unwanted scrutiny and harm.
- 2. **Digital Vigilantism and Moral Policing:** The public, empowered by technology and social media platforms, acts as informal judges, resulting in disproportionate punishment especially for the vulnerable.
- **3. Verification and Misinformation:** Social media's speed encourages amplification of unverified content (such as doctored videos or false statements), compounding reputational and emotional damage.
- **4. Algorithmic Amplification:** Platforms like Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) are driven by attention economies, turning personal trauma into widely shared content for profit.
- 5. Legal and Policy Gaps: Laws often lag behind the rapid evolution of digital sharing, leaving a gap in protection and redress for victims.

Important Provision: The absence of robust **data protection regulations** and effective implementation of laws like India's **Information Technology Act, 2000** complicate redressal for digital privacy violations.

Global Practices

- 1. **GDPR (European Union):** Enforces strict rules on personal data processing, consent, and "right to be forgotten," setting a gold standard but challenging to implement globally.
- 2. Right to Be Forgotten: Recognized in the EU, allowing individuals to request removal of personal data from digital platforms.
- 3. **Public Interest Exemptions:** Most democracies allow media reporting on matters of high public interest but stress ethical boundaries and respect for dignity.

Reference Committee: The **UK's Leveson Inquiry** into media ethics recommended greater responsibility for digital platforms in content moderation and user privacy.

Indian Committee Suggestions

- 1. Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2018): Proposed the Personal Data Protection Bill, recommending explicit consent, stronger safeguards against data misuse, and user rights over personal information.
- 2. Standing Committee on Information Technology: Emphasizes social media accountability, improved grievance redressal, and mandatory reporting and takedown mechanisms for harmful viral content.
- **3.** Law Commission of India: Advocated for clear regulations governing digital evidence use and dissemination, particularly in cases affecting individual dignity and privacy.

Way Forward

- 1. Enact Robust Data Protection Legislation: Fast-track comprehensive data protection law (based on Srikrishna Committee recommendations), ensuring explicit consent for sharing personal content.
- 2. **Platform Accountability:** Mandate platforms to implement ethical content moderation, rapid takedowns, and transparent algorithms to mitigate harmful virality.







- 3. **Digital Literacy Campaigns:** Educate citizens, especially in regions with **low digital literacy**, about online privacy, verification, and responsible sharing.
- **4. Strengthen Legal Remedies:** Expand provisions under the **IT Act** and related statutes, making legal recourse accessible and effective for victims of digital harm.
- **5. Promote Ethical Journalism:** Media organizations must reaffirm their gatekeeping role, prioritizing verification, context, and proportionality over sensationalism.

Conclusion

Digital sharing in the age of spectacle demands a careful balance between freedom of expression and privacy. As personal moments are transformed into public entertainment, society must move towards a framework where platforms, policymakers, and individuals prioritize **consent, verification, empathy, and accountability**. Only then can technology serve as a tool for connection rather than harm, ensuring dignity and justice for all in the digital public sphere.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Which of the following provisions or bodies is directly related to advancing data privacy and digital rights in India?
 - 1. Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2018)
 - 2. Information Technology Act, 2000
 - 3. GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
 - 4. Law Commission of India

Choose the correct answer:

- a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A) 1, 2 and 4 only

Mains Practice Question

Q1. Discuss the importance of parliamentary debate and oversight on matters of national security in India. Evaluate the challenges faced in ensuring effective, accountable, and dignified discussions in Parliament and suggest reforms based on Indian committee recommendations and international examples.

Student	Notes	4





The Debate must go on

Source: Indian express

GSPAPER: Polity & Governance, Parliament

Introduction

Parliamentary debate forms the bedrock of Indian democracy, especially when it comes to critical issues like national security. The recent discussions in Parliament around sensitive operations such as Operation Sindoor—triggered by a terror attack in Pahalgam—as well as major incidents in the Kashmir Valley, have highlighted both the vital role of legislative oversight and the challenges of maintaining decorum and **transparency** in highly charged circumstances.

Key Challenges

- 1. Politicization of Security Issues: The tendency of both government and opposition to use national security as a tool for political gains can erode the objectivity and seriousness required for such debates.
- 2. Lack of Detailed Disclosure: The government's reluctance to share details citing operational secrecy creates an information gap and undermines Parliament's oversight role (as mandated by Articles 74 and 75 of the Constitution).
- 3. Breakdown in Parliamentary Decorum: Frequent disruptions, personal accusations, and competitive chest-thumping often dilute serious policy discussions, as noted by the Rules Committee.
- 4. Accountability vs. Secrecy Dilemma: There is a persistent tension between the need to withhold sensitive information for security reasons and the constitutional obligation of the executive to remain answerable to Parliament.
- 5. Failure to Reach Bipartisan Consensus: Lack of cross-party cooperation makes it difficult to build unified national security strategies.

UPSC KEY FACT: The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and various Standing **Committees** provide institutional mechanisms for in-camera briefings and confidential discussions.

Global Practice

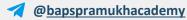
- 1. United Kingdom: The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament reviews sensitive security matters through confidential hearings; detailed public reports are released after redaction.
- 2. United States: Congressional Oversight Committees hold closed-door sessions with intelligence and defense officials, ensuring both transparency and security.
- 3. Germany & Australia: Statutorily mandated parliamentary oversight structures ensure regular, nonpartisan scrutiny of government actions on security issues.

Best Practice: Global models illustrate that robust legislative oversight of security does not undermine national interest if complemented by clear procedure, mutual respect, and confidentiality where required.

Indian Committee Suggestions

- 1. Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC): Advocated for greater powers and autonomy to Parliamentary Committees to vet even classified matters on defense and internal security.
- 2. Standing Committee on Defence: Regularly calls for structured briefings to select MPs, allowing for informed but discreet questioning.
- Rules Committee: Recommends expanding the scope of in-camera proceedings for sensitive discussions, balancing transparency and security.
- 4. Committee on Privileges & Ethics: Addresses breaches in parliamentary conduct related to leaks or disruptive behavior, emphasizing dignity in debate.

UPSC FACT: The **Parliamentary Committees' system** is designed to act as a robust check on executive power, including in matters of national security.









Way Forward

- 1. Institutionalize Confidential Briefings: Mandatory, structured, and confidential briefings on sensitive operations for designated Parliamentary Committees (as recommended by the ARC and Standing Committees).
- 2. Enforce Code of Conduct: Strictly implement norms to maintain decorum and promote informed debate, discouraging personal or partisan attacks.
- 3. Foster Cross-Party Consensus: Encourage bipartisan working groups on national security for mature policy agreement, as seen in global best practices.
- 4. Enhance Public Awareness: Sensitize citizens to the balance needed between operational secrecy and democratic accountability.
- 5. Strengthen Legal and Procedural Frameworks: Regularly update Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha rules to keep pace with evolving national security challenges and ensure responsible legislative behavior.

Conclusion

The recent Parliament session has underscored the necessity of respectful, informed, and effective debate on matters of national security. True democratic strength lies in Parliament's capacity to hold the executive accountable—even on the gravest issues—while maintaining unity, decorum, and national interest. By following the recommendations of various committees and the constitutional framework, India can ensure robust security oversight without endangering operational effectiveness or parliamentary dignity.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

- Q1. Which of the following statements regarding parliamentary oversight of national security matters in India is/are correct?
 - 1. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission has recommended strengthening the autonomy and capabilities of Parliamentary Committees to scrutinize classified security matters.
 - 2. Articles 35 and 51 of the Indian Constitution emphasize the executive's accountability to Parliament regarding national security.
 - 3. The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha provide for in-camera proceedings to discuss sensitive security issues.

Choose the correct answer:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: B) 1 and 3 only

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "In the digital age, the boundaries between personal privacy and public spectacle are increasingly blurred." Critically analyze the challenges posed by viral content and digital vigilantism in India. Evaluate the adequacy of existing legal frameworks and committee recommendations, and suggest comprehensive reforms to balance privacy, digital freedom, and accountability.

Student Notes 🦾









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