Pramukh
sameeksha

African swine fever (ASF)

COP30
BRASIL
AMAZONIA

IBSA

Senkaku Islands

Child Protection
POCSO Act -2012

MONTHLY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Practice Questions (Prelims+Mains)

Preface

PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA MAGAZINE compilation attempts to encapsulate crucial NEWS analysis published in **The Hindu and The Indian Express** from **November 1 to November 30, 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 — servant-leaders 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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Table of Content

Consent Is All: Intolerance of Sexual Violence, Support for Survivors

Source: The Hindu

> **UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 4)**
> - **GS2:** Governance (Justice System, Legal Reform, Gender Rights, Victim Support)
> - **GS4:** Ethics (Consent, Gender Justice, Stigma)
> - **Essay/Society:** Rights, Social Stigma, Social Change

Introduction

Societies often make their deepest progress after arduous battles for rights. The recent French law defining rape as any non-consensual sexual act marks a global milestone for survivor-centered justice. India—despite constitutional guarantees and recent legal reforms—continues to face challenges in translating "consent" into robust, stigma-free support for sexual violence survivors.

Key Issues

1. **Legal Foundation and Conviction Barriers**
   - Legal recognition of consent is necessary but insufficient: societal stigma, skepticism of survivors, and legal hurdles still block justice.
   - *Example*: High-profile cases like the Gisele Pelicot trial in France changed the law; in India, recent judicial statements still reflect cultural bias, and conviction rates are low even when cases reach trial.

2. **Stigma, Social Bias, and Power Inequality**
   - Survivors, especially from marginalized groups, face police apathy, victim-blaming, and inability to navigate complex procedures.
   - *Example*: Public figures and political leaders often question women's credibility, diminishing access to fair trials and deterring reporting.

3. **Need for Comprehensive Support**
   - Beyond punitive action, survivors need prompt medical, legal, and psychological assistance to recover and pursue justice.
   - *Example*: Survivor resource centers, proactive legal aid, and trauma-informed policing are rare but essential; international examples (e.g., Scandinavia) show integrated support boosts reporting and healing.
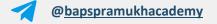
4. **Shaping Preventive Social Norms**
   - Fighting sexual violence means early gender-sensitive education, community engagement to dismantle patriarchy, and policy to shift public attitudes.
   - *Example*: France's reform followed years of feminist mobilization—India's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and SAFE City initiatives require deeper grassroots buy-in and evaluation.

> **Key Fact**
> - France's new law establishes that "**force is the crime**," meaning any sex without explicit consent is criminal, inspired by survivor-led advocacy.
> - India's own reforms (Nirbhaya case, Criminal Law Amendments, 2013 and 2018) recognize criminal force and acknowledge consent in Section 375/376 of IPC and Section 219 Bharat Nyaya Sanhita, yet rape conviction rates remain low (27%-

Global Practices

Sweden/France	Explicit legal codification of consent, survivor-centered courts, trauma-informed policing.

Australia/Canada	National victim-support frameworks, comprehensive sexual health education in schools.
UK	Rape Crisis Centres mandated for survivor care and coordination with local authorities.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministry of Women & Child Development	Standardize survivor support services, invest in one-stop crisis centers, and fund public awareness/education.
Law Commission of India	Eliminate regressive courtroom practices and propose uniform guidelines for judges.
Parliament Standing Committee on Home Affairs	Mandate police sensitivity training, digital tracking of sexual offence cases, and strict timelines for trial completion.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen and Enforce Consent-Based Laws**
   ➢ Tighten evidence standards, support swift enforcement, and eliminate ambiguous legal provisions.
2. **Ensure Robust, Survivor-Centric Support**
   ➢ Guarantee access to legal, medical, and counselling services; invest in rapid, trauma-informed response systems.
3. **Combat Stigma and Promote Gender Equity**
   ➢ Reform curricula, media, and community outreach to shift beliefs about consent, agency, and victim dignity.
4. **Invest in Sensitive Policing and Judiciary**
   ➢ Mandatory gender-sensitization; penalize victim-blaming statements by officials.
5. **Set up Monitoring and Evaluation**
   ➢ Public dashboards to track sexual violence cases, outcomes, and ensure accountability at all levels.

Conclusion

True intolerance for sexual violence demands not only better laws but also a compassionate, stigma-free system for survivors and a public culture of consent education. Only by rooting legal change in social transformation can justice and safety become the lived reality for all.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which step is fundamental for survivor-centric justice in cases of sexual violence?
   a) Police confession
   b) Legal definition of consent and access to comprehensive survivor support
   c) Bail denial for accused
   d) Delayed trial process
   Answer: B) Legal definition of consent and access to comprehensive survivor support

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Consent-based legal reform, survivor-centric support, and stigma-free society are key to combating sexual violence in India." Critically discuss with examples. (250 words)

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India & Superpowers: Diplomatic Dexterity and Domestic Strength in a Bipolar World

Source: Indian express

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** International Relations (Global Order, Major Power Rivalry)
- **GS3:** Economy (Tech, Trade, Strategic Investment)
- **Essay:** Strategic Autonomy, Geopolitics

Introduction

With US–China detente returning to the global stage—evident in summits and trade resets—India faces its perennial challenge: how to navigate between the gravitational pull of two superpowers while securing its interests. While the G2 **(US–China) sets the rules for great power engagement,** New Delhi must blend diplomatic skill with investments in domestic capabilities to remain influential and resilient.

Key Issues

1. **G2 Diplomacy and India's Strategic Space**
   - ➤ The G2's ability to set rule frameworks means their cooperation or competition shapes everything from tech flows to regional security.
   - ➤ *Example*: US–China agreements on climate or trade undercut global volatility, but their rivalry (tariffs, Indo-Pacific alliances) forces India to hedge and diversify.

2. **Investment Gap and the Imperative of Domestic Reform**
   - ➤ India's FDI, technology, and production capacities must keep pace with shifting global "friendshoring" trends; lagging behind makes external engagement defensive, not proactive.
   - ➤ *Example*: Persistent trade deficit with China, technology catch-up, and underwhelming ease of doing business limit India's bargaining power.

3. **Leveraging Multilateral and Regional Groupings**
   - ➤ India should engage G2 dynamics through ASEAN, Quad, G20, and South–South cooperation to create alternative poles, rather than rely solely on bipolar alignment.
   - ➤ *Example*: Japan, EU, Brazil hedge by deepening links with both G2 and each other; India's

Key Fact
- Recent high-level summits (like Biden–Xi in Busan) highlight the G2's role in brokering major trade, technology, and security frameworks; **India and other powers observe how G2 moves impact global order, supply chains, and alliance options**.

WHAT IS CAATSA?
Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. Enacted in August 2017, came into effect in January. Targets Iran, North Korea and Russia

INDIA'S WORRY
One of its provisions targets Russian defence firms and countries doing business with them. India has defence deals worth over $12 billion in the pipeline with Russia

THE SOLUTION
New clauses inserted by the US in the National Defense Authorization Act (US military budget), which empower the Trump administration to suspend CAATSA sanctions, but it has to certify that India is reducing its dependence on Russia

- China consistently invests in advanced manufacturing, digital networks, and agri-purchases; the US reinforces alliances and resets supply chains—**but India faces pressure from both sides (e.g., CAATSA risk, trade, and border standoffs)**.

participation in Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is one such strategy.

4. **Cultivating Internal Cohesion and Innovation**
   - ➤ India's democratic diversity and scale are assets—if tapped for coordinated R&D, skills, digital infrastructure, and coherent policy—making it more resilient to global swings.
   - ➤ *Example*: India's push to become the world's largest exporter of digital services and pharmaceuticals, but quality, regulatory, and skilling gaps remain.

Global Practices

Japan, South Korea, Brazil	Simultaneously deepen US and China links while investing in homegrown innovation and multilateral hedging.
EU	Strategic autonomy: insulated supply chains, regulation-driven leverage, cross-block FTA networks.
ASEAN	Use forums to balance security and economic ties amid big-power rivalry.

Indian Committee Recommendations

NITI Aayog	Map FDI, supply chain, and R&D requirements for self-reliance in sunrise sectors.
MEA/Strategic Affairs Council	Run scenario exercises on G2 crises; build diplomatic corps' skilling for nimble negotiation.
Commerce & Industry Ministry	Accelerate ease of doing business; incentivize technological upgradation and value-added manufacturing.

Way Forward

1. **Balance Engagement without Dependency**
   - ➤ Maintain dialogue with both G2; build issue-based "coalitions of the willing" for diversified leverage.
2. **Invest in Innovation and Infrastructure**
   - ➤ Aggressively reform R&D, upskill workforce, and boost domestic industrial base to attract quality investments.
3. **Deepen Multilateral and Regional Agency**
   - ➤ Amplify voice and alliances in Quad, G20, ASEAN; push for rules-based frameworks that fit Indian interests.
4. **Strengthen Crisis and Scenario Planning**
   - ➤ Prepare diplomatic toolkit for global shocks, sanctions, or supply disruptions rooted in G2 dynamics.
5. **Promote Social and Economic Cohesion**
   - ➤ Reduce internal divides, enhance regulatory and educational quality to build enduring resilience.

Conclusion

India's true global influence will rest not on choosing sides but mastering internal capabilities and external dexterity. Amid US–China rivalry, it must move from "balancing" to "leading" by investing in both people and diplomacy.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. According to the editorial, what is the key message for India from renewed US–China detente?
   a) Focus only on non-alignment
   b) Prioritize internal investment and strategic diplomatic flexibility

c) Cut all economic ties with China

d) End all defence ties with the US

Answer: B) Prioritize internal investment and strategic diplomatic flexibility

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "US–China G2 diplomacy will dominate global order, but only by building domestic capability and external strategic agency can India ensure its influence." Critically discuss. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍️

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Engage the Taliban, Don't Recognise Them: India's Afghanistan Dilemma

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** International Relations (Afghanistan, India–Pakistan, Strategic Engagement, Regional Security)
- **GS3:** Internal and External Security (Terrorism, Humanitarian Assistance)
- **Essay:** Diplomacy, Ethics, South Asia

Introduction

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, backed by Pakistan and now recognized by Russia and China, poses a major test for India's foreign policy. Caught between historic investments in Afghan society and the ethical complications of legitimizing theocratic rule, New Delhi must walk a tightrope—engaging to secure interests, but withholding formal recognition to uphold principles of pluralism and democracy.

Key Issues

1. **Strategic Engagement but Not Endorsement**
   - India's policy seeks to protect past investment, retain influence, and safeguard against terrorists, while not conferring legitimacy on Taliban's exclusionary regime.
   - *Example*: High-level contacts between Indian officials and Taliban envoys to secure the Indian mission, but no ambassador or formal embassy relaunch.

2. **Political and Regional Risks**
   - Recognition would undermine India's values and alienate Afghan pluralist groups (urban, women, minorities); it risks emboldening Pakistan's strategic depth and giving regional legitimacy to harsh Taliban rule.
   - *Example*: Pakistan's cross-border attacks and influence operations have spiked since Taliban's return;

Key Fact

India–Afghanistan: Key Facts (Summary)
- India and Afghanistan share **historic, cultural, and strategic ties**, formalized in **1950**.
- In **2011**, both countries signed a landmark **Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)** covering security, trade, and development.
- India has invested **over $3 billion** in Afghanistan—one of the **largest regional donors**.

Major Indian Projects
- **Salma Dam (Afghan–India Friendship Dam)**
- **Zaranj–Delaram Highway** enabling access to **Chabahar Port**
- **New Afghan Parliament Building**
- Over **400 development projects** across all 34 provinces
- India has invested over $3 billion in Afghan reconstruction since 2001 and recently resumed its Kabul technical mission and development projects—without extending diplomatic recognition.
- Major regional players (China, Russia) and neighbours (Iran, Pakistan) have formal or pragmatic relations with the Taliban, increasing diplomatic complexity for India.

India faces a complex competition amid major power recalibration (Russia/China–Taliban).
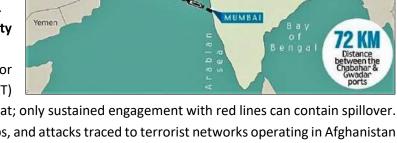
3. **Humanitarian Compulsion and People-Centric Policy**
   - Despite government repression, millions of Afghans urgently need aid, education, and healthcare—areas where India remains a respected partner.
   - *Example*: India's continued food, medical and educational support, direct-to-civil-society engagement (scholarships, girls' schools, SMEs).

4. **Deep Networks and Long-Term Security Threats**
   - Taliban's close ties with terror groups (Al-Qaeda, IS-K, LeT) maintain a persistent regional threat; only sustained engagement with red lines can contain spillover.
   - *Example*: Continued training, camps, and attacks traced to terrorist networks operating in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions.

5. **International Consensus, SAARC/UN/Quad Coordination**
   - India benefits from maintaining alignment with global policy—waiting for signs of Taliban moderation and wider consensus before any diplomatic shift.
   - *Example*: The US, EU, and other democracies preference engagement over recognition, imposing clear criteria on women's rights, inclusion, and counter-terrorism.

Global Practices

US/EU/Japan	Humanitarian aid, technical assistance, intelligence-sharing, but no official diplomatic recognition; conditional, monitored engagement only.
Central Asia/Iran	Border security engagement, selective recognition for economic/trade needs, but persistent skepticism about Taliban reliability.
China/Russia	Strategic engagement and project cooperation—formal recognition when coinciding with national interest.

Indian Committee Recommendations

MEA/Foreign Policy Institutes	Maintain "no recognition" until pluralism and inclusive governance are evident; continue flexible track-II dialogue and aid.
National Security Council	Monitor terror threats and escalate cross-border and border management measures.
Parliament/Strategic Affairs Think Tanks	Institutionalize standing crisis teams for refugees, humanitarian delivery, and disaster scenarios in Afghanistan.

Way Forward

1. **Uphold Conditional Engagement**
   - Provide humanitarian support to Afghans, coordinate with pluralist actors; insist on red lines for women's rights and counter-terrorism.

2. **Strengthen Regional and Multilateral Dialogue**
    ➢ Actively participate in Quad, SAARC, SCO, and UN efforts for coordinated, principle-based regional policy.
3. **Prepare for Long-Term Contingencies**
    ➢ Plan for spillovers—including refugees, border instability, and terror risks—through scenario planning and swift mobilization.
4. **Promote India's Civil Society Diplomacy**
    ➢ Supplement state channels with people-to-people contact, scholarships, and partnerships supporting Afghan civil society.
5. **Monitor and Adapt Diplomacy**
    ➢ Remain flexible and data-driven; respond to shifts in Taliban behaviour, regional alignments, or humanitarian needs.

Conclusion

India's Afghanistan policy must defend its interests and uphold ethical norms by engaging the Taliban without legitimizing their authority—championing pluralism, humanitarianism, and patient diplomacy in a region where quick fixes can have long, destabilizing consequences.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is India's stance on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as of 2025?
    a) Full diplomatic recognition
    b) Military intervention
    c) Engagement without recognition, conditional on pluralism and security
    d) Complete disengagement
    Answer: C) Engagement without recognition, conditional on pluralism and security

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's policy towards the Taliban balances engagement for security and aid, but rightfully withholds recognition in the absence of pluralism and inclusion." Discuss the regional, ethical, and strategic considerations. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Cruising Ahead: Unleashing India's Shipping Sector Through Policy Support

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 3)
- **GS3:** Infrastructure (Shipping, Transport, Industrial Policy)
- **GS3:** Economy (Logistics, Trade Facilitation, Blue Economy)
- **Essay:** Industrial Strategy, Public Sector Reform

Introduction

India's shipping sector is at a crossroads: **historically hampered by underinvestment and erratic policymaking**, it is now receiving overdue government attention as a strategic growth engine. **Maritime Week 2025 and the Prime Minister's recognition** that shipping is fundamental—beyond mere business—signal a potential transformation, but sustainable growth hinges on reforms and focused policy incentives.

Key Fact
- After decades of neglect, the Modi government is reviving attention to shipping via policy reforms, new educational initiatives, infrastructure investment, and by revamping the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI).
- India's shipping comprises only a fraction of its overseas cargo movement, with SCI formerly a global leader but privatization, capacity deficits, and inconsistent support eroded this lead.

Important Schemes in India's Shipping Sector (UPSC Notes)
- **Sagarmala Programme (2015)**
  - Aim: Port-led development.
  - Focus: Modern ports, port connectivity, coastal economic zones (CEZs).
  - Goal: Reduce logistics cost & strengthen coastal economy.
- **Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030**
  - 10-year roadmap for modern ports, smart logistics, shipbuilding, waterways.
  - Focus: Digital ports, green shipping, port privatization, capacity expansion.
- **PM Gati Shakti – National Master Plan (2021)**
  - Integrated planning of ports + rail + road + waterways.
  - Improves last-mile connectivity to major ports.

Key Issues

1. **Fragmented Policy and Limited Institutional Support**
   - Ideological vacillation and privatization without clear regulatory vision have stalled sectoral growth, with government focus only episodic.
   - *Example*: SCI's fluctuating fortunes and the withdrawal from the tankers/fleet sector amid hasty privatization.

2. **Human Capital Deficit**
   - Investment in training, maritime education, and shore-based professional skills has lagged, limiting India's ability to climb the value-chain in global shipping.
   - *Example*: Current government push for seafarer training and technical institutes addresses a long-neglected gap.

3. **Infrastructure and Logistics Gaps**
   - Major ports, shipyards, and related infrastructure remain underdeveloped and uncompetitive relative to global peers.

> *Example*: Congestion and outdated facilities hurt India's share in container and cruise traffic.

4. **Need for Green Transition**
   > The global push for green shipping (LNG-fueled or hybrid vessels) creates new technological and investment demands.
   > *Example*: Policy, R&D, and green incentives are needed to position India at the forefront of sustainable marine solutions.

5. **Revitalizing Domestic Industry and PPPs**
   > Shipping policy must move past ownership/privatization binaries to foster public–private partnerships, attract FDI, and maximize India's long coastline and maritime trade potential.
   > *Example*: Supporting ship repair, MRO, and cruise infrastructure through PPPs offers job creation and multiplier gains.

Global Practices

Singapore/South Korea	Integrated maritime clusters, world-class seafarer training centers, innovation hubs for green shipping.
China	State-supported shipping giants, rapid port and yard modernization, global fleet expansion.
Norway/Denmark	Government/PPP-led innovations in sustainable shipping, digital navigation systems, and zero-emissions vessels.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministry of Shipping	Launch dedicated shipping funds, comprehensive long-term logistics action plan, and green transition strategies for Indian lines.
NITI Aayog	Incentivize upskilling, FDI, and research; set up a national council for blue economy startups.
Maritime State Development Boards	Modernize port governance, support cruise/MRO industry, and drive PPPs for shipbuilding.

Way Forward

1. **Draft a National Shipping Masterplan**
   > Integrate infrastructure, R&D, and training for a globally competitive sector.
2. **Link Policy to Skilling and Green Growth**
   > Fund high-quality maritime education and decarbonization efforts; promote green shipbuilding and retrofitting.
3. **Reform and Expand Institutional Support**
   > Upgrade SCI and other public institutions into innovation/policy hubs; drive PPPs in all core sectors.
4. **Incentivize Modernization and FDI**
   > Attract technology and capital for shipyards, fleet renewal, and cruise/repair infrastructure.
5. **Anchor Shipping in National Logistics and Trade Vision**
   > Ensure logistics, coastal movement, and shipping reforms align with overall industrial policy and export ambitions.
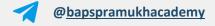
Conclusion

India can only truly cruise ahead in shipping by anchoring policy in innovation, skilling, and green transition—not just ownership or asset sales. The right support will translate India's strategic location and ambition into a globally respected maritime power.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is highlighted as the critical need for India's shipping sector?

    a)   Only privatization of SCI

    b)   Policy continuity, infrastructure, skilling, and green transition

    c)   Focusing only on global trade

    d)   Reduced port fees

Answer: B) Policy continuity, infrastructure, skilling, and green transition

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's shipping growth depends on policy reform, infrastructure, skilling, and environmental innovation—not mere asset privatization." Discuss reform priorities. (250 words)

Student Notes 🖐

India's IT Dream at a Crossroads: From Mass Coding to Future-Proofing Skills

Source: Shashi Tharoor, The Hindu

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 3)
- **GS3:** Economy (IT/ITeS Sector, Employment, Skilling)
- **GS3:** Technology (AI, Automation, Industry 4.0)
- **GS2:** Governance (Education, Policy Innovation)

Introduction:

India's IT industry has been the symbol of modern economic success for three decades—a source of jobs, mobility, and global ambition. Yet, with mass layoffs, AI disruptions, and shrinking traditional contracts, India's IT sector faces an urgent metamorphosis. The era of labour-driven, low-cost coding is fading; adapting to a future built on innovation, higher skills, and resilience is critical.

Key Issues

1. **End of the Assembly-Line Model**
   - Old models—mass coding, maintenance, and low-value support—are being edged out by automation, AI, and client demand for innovation.
   - *Example*: Clients now want expertise in AI, data science, domain knowledge, cybersecurity, user experience—not just coders for routine application maintenance.

2. **Demand for New-Age Digital Skills**
   - The future belongs to professionals with capabilities in AI, generative tech, deep architecture, and business understanding.
   - *Example*: TCS's target—upskilling 500,000 employees in new tech; India must scale such reskilling to all IT graduates for sustained relevance.

3. **Shrinking Outsourcing and Cost Arbitrage**
   - US/EU budgets are tight; digital transformation is now done in-house or with fewer, more agile tech partners. The "wave" of job outsourcing is past its peak.
   - *Example*: Hiring from India for basic Java/.NET or SAP support is no longer globally competitive.
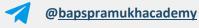
4. **Necessity for Strategic Reinvention**
   - India must lead—not follow—in product design, engineering, digital platforms, and niche software areas by fostering research, quality, and entrepreneurship.
   - *Example*: Startups, R&D investments, public–private partnership models, and "moonshot" innovation policies.

5. **Policy and Education Overhaul**

Key Fact
- IT/ITeS now provide barely 4% of total formal Indian employment, but contribute about 7% of GDP.
- Nearly 20,000 jobs were lost in a single quarter in 2025, with industry majors like TCS reducing headcount and global clients tightening spends and offshoring to cheaper, automated solutions.

➢ Systemic reforms are needed in engineering education, continuous learning, curriculum modernization, and industry-academia collaboration.

➢ *Example*: "Upskilling" on a massive scale, learning to adapt to cyclical contractions and to seize emerging global tech opportunities.

Global Practices

Israel/ South Korea	Heavy government investment in R&D, innovation incubators, and direct industry–university ties.
US	Deep culture of tech entrepreneurship, encouragement for high-value patents and product innovation.
China	Focus on AI, chip design, automation, and "full-stack" talent creation through aggressive skilling and research policies.

Indian Committee Recommendations

NITI Aayog/ Ministry of Skill Development	Prioritize AI/data/cybersecurity upskilling, mandate curriculum reform for all engineering colleges by 2028.
IT Industry Council	Facilitate public–private partnerships to accelerate retraining and create platforms for product startup growth.
Finance Ministry	Tax breaks, incentives, and a dedicated R&D fund for next-gen IT and software innovation.

Way Forward

1. **Scaled, Purposeful Upskilling**
   ➢ Launch a national effort—driven by partnerships between government, industry, and academia—to rapidly upskill at least five million professionals in modern digital skills by 2030.

2. **Promote Product and Platform Innovation**
   ➢ Incentivize deep-tech entrepreneurship; shift focus from IT services to IP, software platforms, and value-added domains.

3. **Reform Engineering Education**
   ➢ Overhaul curricula, embed project-based learning, and bridge industry–academia gaps in real time.

4. **Foster Future-Fit, Agile Policies**
   ➢ Use public investments and incentives to support innovation, research hubs, and next-gen tech clusters.

5. **Anchor Social Mobility and Inclusion**
   ➢ Ensure IT's transition sustains opportunities for new entrants, women, and underrepresented groups, leveraging tech for broad-based growth.

Conclusion

India's IT sector is not ending, but evolving—towards a future led by innovation, upskilling, and resilience—not volume or routine work. The next tech boom will belong to those who reinvent, not those who reminisce.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which skillset is now most critical for a future-ready IT workforce in India?
   a) Mass coding on SAP and Java
   b) Data science, AI, cybersecurity, product/platform innovation

c) Routine application maintenance

d) Call center services

Answer: B) Data science, AI, cybersecurity, product/platform innovation

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's IT edge lies in future-ready upskilling, product innovation, and tech-driven entrepreneurship—not in legacy outsourcing." Analyse needed reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍️

An Indian Way for G2: Managing Multipolarity with Strategic Initiative

Source: Sanjaya Baru, Indian express

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** International Relations (US–China, Multipolarity, India's Diplomacy)
- **GS3:** Economy (Trade, Global Governance, Strategic Autonomy)
- **Essay:** Foreign Policy Strategy

Introduction

As the US and China revive G2-style coordination on global trade and economy, **India faces a distinct diplomatic challenge: how to preserve maneuverability in a system shaped by two superpowers.** While some earlier global crises saw India back US priorities for broader gains, the new era demands "Indian thinking"—creative engagement with both, strategic neighbourhood initiatives, and protection of domestic interests.

Key Fact
- The 2008–09 crisis saw G2 (US–China) influence on world economic recovery; since then, G2 detente has cycled between strategic cooperation and competition.
- Recent trends show India often triangulating—engaging China to balance/tame the US, or vice versa—yet the rules of engagement and leverage have changed, especially in trade, high tech, security, and global governance fora.

Key Issues

1. **From Alliance-Borrowing to Multipolar Maneuvering**
   - Earlier, Delhi counted on Washington to help secure India's interests globally; now, success increasingly depends on navigating US–China dynamics independently and with regional partners.
   - *Example*: India's nuanced post-pandemic participation in Quad, SCO, and G20—while deepening South Asian, Eurasian, and Indo-Pacific connectivity.

2. **The Limits of Using China to Manage the US**
   - Overreliance on China as leverage can backfire; shifting geopolitics (trade wars, Indo-Pacific ambitions, US–EU policy realignments) means India needs more diversified agency.
   - *Example*: The Trans-Asian Financial Crisis (TAFC) era delivered benefits from G2 mediation, but today's regional realities—Russia's assertiveness, rising protectionism—demand nimbleness.

3. **Strategic Autonomy, Not Alignment or Hedging Alone**
   - India must invest in both institutional muscle (WTO, BRICS+, IMF reforms) and neighbourhood trust-building to buffer volatility from G2 deals.
   - *Example*: Neighbourhood-first policies and "Make in India" advanced as counterweights to global supply chain shocks.

4. **Institutional and Domestic Strengthening**
   - Foreign policy excellence increasingly flows from strong economic, regulatory, and skill foundations.
   - *Example*: Coordinated digital and economic reforms, leveraging India's market size as bargaining power rather than just diplomatic signaling.

Global Practices

ASEAN/EU	Organize regional mini-lateral coalitions to maximize negotiating leverage in a G2-centric world.

Brazil/South Africa	Advocate for Global South voice in setting trade and climate rules—neither aligning entirely with US nor China.
Australia/South Korea	Invest in alliance ties but hedge with regional multilateralism.

Indian Committee Recommendations

NITI Aayog/MEA/Commerce Ministry	Diversify trade partnerships, pursue FTA and logistics corridors with multiple blocs, sharpen WTO/IMF negotiation teams.
Parliamentary Standing Committees	Task taskforces to monitor G2 agreements' impact on Indian interests and pre-empt regulatory spillovers.
Strategic Affairs Council	Anchor scenario planning units to react nimbly to emergent G2 risks and windows.

Way Forward

1. **Craft Creative, Independent Diplomacy**
   - Move beyond "balancing" or bandwagoning—prioritize India-first goals in every G2-related negotiation.
2. **Reinforce Institutional and Domestic Capabilities**
   - Invest in market, regulatory, and digital strengths—use India's size as leverage, not just politics.
3. **Lead Regional and Global South Coalitions**
   - Mobilize mini-laterals, South–South forums, and neighbourhood groups to amplify agency.
4. **Enhance Scenario Preparedness**
   - Be ready for G2 shocks (trade, security, tech) via rapid inter-ministerial coordination and strategic foresight.
5. **Link Diplomacy to Economy**
   - Integrate export, digital, and domestic policy with external strategy—especially in technology and trade.

Conclusion

India's route through the G2 era is not simply about managing superpowers, but leading with self-confidence—leveraging strengths, championing neighbourhood, and setting the tone for multipolar engagement in a world being reshaped by US–China powerplay.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is the editorial's main suggestion for India in the evolving US–China G2 order?
   a) Total alignment with the US
   b) Use China solely to manage the US
   c) Craft independent, multipolar diplomacy and invest in internal capability
   d) Withdraw from global institutions
   Answer: C) Craft independent, multipolar diplomacy and invest in internal capability

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Success for India in a G2-shaped world lies in institutional strength and regional leadership, not transactional balancing." Critically analyze. (250 words)

PRAMUKH academy

US Sanctions on Russian Oil: Shielding Its Own Shale Industry, Not Supporting Ukraine

Source: Ajay Srivastava – *The Hindu (Business & Economy Section)*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 2:** International Relations (US-Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Global Sanctions)
- **GS Paper 3:** Indian Economy (Energy Security, Oil Prices, Trade, Strategic Reserves)
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment & Energy (Shale Gas, Fossil Fuel Dependence)

Introduction:

The recent US sanctions on Russian oil giants — *Rosneft* and *Lukoil*, which account for over half of Russia's crude production — have been framed as a geopolitical response to the Ukraine conflict. However, a deeper look reveals that these sanctions primarily serve to protect the **US shale oil industry**, which has been struggling against low global prices. By limiting Russian oil in the market, the US aims to push prices higher and revive its own shale sector's competitiveness.

Key Issues

1. **Impact on Global Oil Prices:**
   - Sanctions led to an immediate spike in crude prices from **$61 to $66.5 per barrel**.
   - This benefits US shale producers who rely on higher prices for profitability.

2. **Sanctions Broader Than UN Measures:**
   - The **US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)** enforces these sanctions.
   - Even non-US firms risk penalties if they engage with Russian entities.

3. **Economic Repercussions Beyond Ukraine:** Despite being framed as punishment for Russia's actions in Ukraine, the true effect is global — disrupting energy trade, finance, and logistics.

4. **US Shale Industry's Role:**
   - The US shale sector needs higher oil prices since shale drilling is **70% more expensive** than conventional oil.
   - Sanctions artificially tighten supply, pushing prices up to help US shale remain viable.

5. **Global Trade Dependence:**
   - The US imports around **$174 billion worth of crude oil** annually, exporting refined products worth $115 billion.
   - Sanctions don't solve dependence but instead create trade imbalances.

6. **Industrial Bottlenecks in the US:**
   - US refineries are configured for heavy crude, not shale oil.
   - America cannot easily refine or replace Russian oil due to lack of suitable refining capacity.

Global Practices:

Energy Diversification	**EU** is diversifying energy imports via LNG terminals in Spain and floating storage units.

	China stockpiles strategic oil reserves and secures long-term contracts in Africa and the Middle East.
Sanction Neutralization	Countries like **India** and **Turkey** use alternate payment systems (rupee-rouble, local currencies) to bypass dollar sanctions.
Shale Policy Balance	**Canada** and **Argentina** have introduced environmental regulations to stabilize shale output while reducing dependency.

Indian Committees / Reports Recommendations:

Kelkar Committee (2013)	Suggested a clear strategy for reducing import dependency by investing in domestic oil exploration.
Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)	Encouraged private participation and technology infusion for domestic energy security.
NITI Aayog's Energy Vision 2040	Recommended diversifying import sources and increasing renewable integration to buffer global shocks.

Way Forward:

1. **Promote Energy Self-Reliance:**
   - Expand domestic oil and gas exploration (especially in Assam and Rajasthan basins).
   - Encourage investment in shale gas technology under environmental safeguards.
2. **Strengthen Strategic Reserves:**
   - India must increase its **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)** capacity beyond the current 5.33 MMT.
3. **Diversify Import Partners:**
   - Build long-term partnerships with the **Middle East, Africa, and Latin America** to reduce vulnerability to Western sanctions.
4. **Boost Renewable Energy:**
   - Accelerate solar, wind, and green hydrogen projects to mitigate oil price volatility.
5. **Diplomatic Balancing:**
   - Maintain a neutral and pragmatic stance between the US and Russia to protect national energy interests.

Conclusion:

The uncomfortable truth is that **geopolitics often masks economic motives**. The US sanctions on Russian oil, though presented as support for Ukraine, strategically safeguard its own shale industry by keeping global oil prices elevated. For India, this underlines the urgent need to fortify **energy security, diversify sources**, and insulate itself from the ripple effects of global power plays.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements about Shale Oil:
1. Shale oil extraction requires hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking.
2. Shale oil production is cheaper than conventional oil production.
3. India has significant recoverable shale reserves in Assam and Cambay basins.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 and 3 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2 only

d) 1, 2, and 3
Answer: A. 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "US sanctions on Russian oil reflect the intersection of geopolitics and economic self-interest." Discuss in the context of global energy security and implications for India.

Student Notes ✍

India's Forests Hold the Future: Balancing Growth, Climate, and Community

Source: *C.K. Mishra (Former Secretary, MoEFCC) & Suryaprabha Sadasivan (Senior VP, Chase Advisors)*
Published in: *The Hindu (Environment & Climate Section)*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment, Conservation, Afforestation, Climate Change, Sustainable Development
- **GS Paper 1:** Geography (Natural Resources, Vegetation)
- **GS Paper 2:** Governance (Decentralisation, Participatory Forest Management)
- **Essay Paper:** "Forests and Climate Change", "Balancing Ecology and Economy"
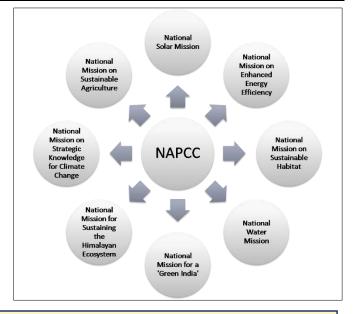
Introduction:

As India strives to balance economic growth with ecological sustainability, forests have re-emerged at the heart of its climate policy. The **revised Green India Mission (GIM)** aims to restore **26 million hectares of degraded forest and non-forest land by 2030**, directly contributing to India's climate pledge of **3.39 billion tonnes of CO_2 sequestration**. However, the real challenge lies not in planting trees, but in restoring **ecosystems**, empowering **communities**, and ensuring **climate resilience** through sustainable forest management.

Key Issues

1. **Declining Photosynthetic Efficiency:** A 2025 IIT Kharagpur–BITS Pilani study found a **12% decline** in the photosynthetic efficiency of dense Indian forests, meaning forests are growing but absorbing **less carbon**.

2. **Shifting from Tree Count to Ecosystem Health:** The old assumption — *"more trees equal more carbon sinks"* — is outdated. The new focus must be on **ecological resilience**, biodiversity, and soil-water balance, not just canopy cover.

3. **Three Persistent Gaps in Afforestation Policy:**
   - **Community Participation:** Many plantations bypass local communities despite the *Forest Rights Act, 2006*, leading to weak ownership.
   - **Ecological Design:** Overreliance on **monocultures** like eucalyptus degrades biodiversity.

Green India Mission –
The Green India Mission (GIM), one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), aims to enhance India's forest and tree cover and restore degraded ecosystems. The mission targets adding 5 million hectares of new forest/tree cover and improving the quality of another 5 million hectares through a landscape-based eco-restoration approach. Implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the mission emphasizes community participation through gram sabhas and JFMCs. By improving biodiversity, soil and water resources, and supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, GIM plays a crucial role in helping India achieve its Paris Agreement goal of creating an additional carbon sink.

- ➢ **Financing:** Afforestation funds under **CAMPA** remain underutilized (Delhi used only **23% of approved funds, 2019–24**).

4. **Green India Mission (GIM) Performance:** From 2015–21, **11.22 million hectares** afforested, covering **18 states**, yet sustainability and local participation remain weak.

5. **Innovative State-Level Experiments:**
   - ➢ **Himachal Pradesh:** Biochar programme for carbon credit markets.
   - ➢ **Uttar Pradesh:** 39 crore saplings planted and exploring **carbon village models**.
   - ➢ **Chhattisgarh:** Forest departments reviving cattle shelters and integrating ecology with rural livelihoods.

6. **Scientific and Institutional Challenges:**
   - ➢ **Fragmented institutional structure** and slow disbursement of funds delay implementation.
   - ➢ Need for trained forest managers and modern monitoring tools.

Global Practices:

Brazil – Amazon Fund Model	Uses international carbon finance and transparent reporting dashboards to monitor reforestation.
Costa Rica – Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)	Farmers are paid to conserve forests and maintain biodiversity.
China – Grain for Green Programme	Converts degraded farmland into forest through livelihood-linked incentives.
African Great Green Wall	Focuses on integrating **community-based restoration** with **carbon financing** across the Sahel.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations:

National Forest Policy (1988)	Advocates people's participation in forest management.
Forest Rights Act (2006)	Empowers tribal communities to manage and protect forest resources.
Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (CAMPA), 2016	Provides institutional funding for forest restoration, but utilization gaps persist.
Subramanian Committee (2015)	Recommended integrating **livelihood enhancement** with afforestation schemes.

Way Forward:

1. **Community-Centric Afforestation:** Empower **Gram Sabhas**, Joint Forest Management Committees, and local institutions to plan, implement, and monitor afforestation.

2. **Diversify Plantation Species:** Prioritize **native, climate-resilient species** suited to local ecology instead of fast-growing monocultures.

3. **Green Finance and Carbon Markets:** Enable states to access **voluntary carbon markets** and invest proceeds in livelihood-linked restoration.

4. **Data Transparency & Accountability:** Launch **public dashboards** tracking plantation survival, fund utilization, and biodiversity impact.

5. **Integrate Climate Adaptation:** Align afforestation with **National Adaptation Plans** and **watershed programmes** for holistic ecosystem recovery.

6. **Technology Integration:** Use **remote sensing, GIS, and AI** tools to track forest growth and survival rates scientifically.

Conclusion:

Forests are no longer just a green cover — they are **climate infrastructure** vital to India's survival. The Green India Mission's success depends not on tree counts but on **community ownership, ecological design, and transparent finance**. As India positions itself as a global climate leader, the forest revival story must evolve from a plantation programme into a **people's movement for sustainable restoration**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Green India Mission (GIM):

1. It is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
2. The mission aims to enhance forest cover and improve ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration.
3. It is implemented solely by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only   b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 only   d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only
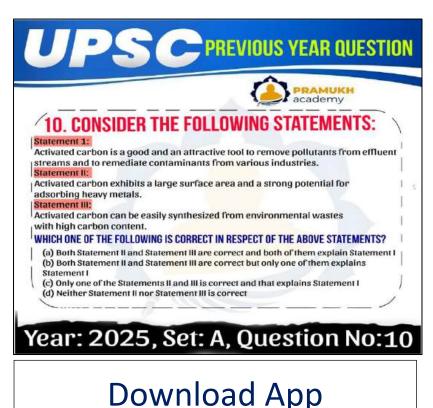
UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Afforestation in India has often focused on quantity rather than ecological quality." In light of the revised Green India Mission, discuss the importance of community participation and ecological design in ensuring sustainable forest restoration.

UPSC PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

PRAMUKH academy

10. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Statement 1:
Activated carbon is a good and an attractive tool to remove pollutants from effluent streams and to remediate contaminants from various industries.

Statement II:
Activated carbon exhibits a large surface area and a strong potential for adsorbing heavy metals.

Statement III:
Activated carbon can be easily synthesized from environmental wastes with high carbon content.

WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS CORRECT IN RESPECT OF THE ABOVE STATEMENTS?

(a) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I
(b) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct but only one of them explains Statement I
(c) Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I
(d) Neither Statement II nor Statement III is correct

Year: 2025, Set: A, Question No:10

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COP30: Brazil's Call for a Climate of Action, Equity, and Global Justice

Source: *Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – President of Brazil,* Published in *The Hindu*, Opinion Section.

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment – Climate Change, COP Summits, Global Environmental Governance.
- **GS Paper 2:** International Relations – Global South, Multilateralism, Climate Diplomacy.
- **Essay Paper:** Topics on *Climate Justice, Sustainable Development, Multilateral Reform*.
- **Prelims:** COP mechanism, NDCs, Climate Funds, Brazil's climate initiatives.

Introduction:

As the world prepares for **COP30 in Belém, Brazil**, President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** calls it the "COP of Truth." This summit, set in the Amazon rainforest, aims to transform global climate dialogue from rhetoric into **real, equitable action**. Lula stresses that the world can no longer afford empty promises; the moment has come to restore trust, act on climate commitments, and ensure **justice for the Global South** — the regions that have contributed least to emissions but suffer most from climate impacts.

Key Issues

1. **From Speeches to Action:**
   - Despite decades of climate summits, real progress remains slow.
   - Lula urges that **COP30 must move beyond symbolic pledges** to measurable outcomes, especially on **emission cuts and deforestation control**.

2. **Amazon as the Epicenter:**
   - The **Belém Summit (Amazon Basin)** will serve as a live demonstration of both the challenges and solutions to climate change.
   - The Amazon — "lungs of the planet" — faces severe deforestation pressures, yet Brazil has **reduced deforestation significantly in two years**, proving that concrete action is possible.

3. **Equity and Climate Justice:**
   - Lula reaffirms the **principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)** as *non-negotiable*.
   - The **Global South** demands fair access to climate finance and technology — not as aid, but as **justice**, since the rich North has benefited most from carbon-based growth.

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is a global treaty designed to address and mitigate the threat of climate change caused by human activities. Its central aim is to prevent harmful human interference with the Earth's climate system by limiting the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.

The Convention was adopted in **1992** at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)**, commonly known as the **Earth Summit**, held in **Rio de Janeiro**, and it came into effect on **21 March 1994**. Initially signed by **154 countries**, the UNFCCC now has **198 parties** (as of 2022).

The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** serves as the Convention's highest decision-making body and convenes annually to review progress and negotiate further commitments. The **UNFCCC Secretariat**, based in **Bonn, Germany**, oversees and supports the implementation of the Convention and its related agreements.

4. **Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF):**
   ➤ An innovative **investment-based fund** (not donation-based) to reward nations and communities that preserve forests.
   ➤ Brazil has pledged **$1 billion**, urging others to follow suit.
   ➤ The TFFF embodies a *"win-win" model*: protecting forests while supporting livelihoods.
5. **Brazil's Updated NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution):**
   ➤ Brazil commits to **reduce GHG emissions by 59–67%** and to eliminate illegal deforestation by **2030**.
   ➤ With **88% renewable electricity**, Brazil's energy system is already among the greenest globally.
6. **Linking Climate and Social Justice:**
   ➤ Climate policies must center on people — especially vulnerable groups facing hunger and poverty.
   ➤ Brazil plans to launch a **"Declaration on Hunger, Poverty, and Climate"** at COP30, recognizing the deep interconnection between **environmental sustainability and social equality**.
7. **Reform of Global Governance:**
   ➤ Lula calls for reforming **multilateral institutions**, especially the **UN Security Council**, which has failed to address global crises.
   ➤ Proposes a **UN Climate Change Council** with real authority to ensure accountability and equitable representation of developing nations.

Global Practices & Comparisons:

Country	Initiative	Key Feature
Brazil	Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF)	Investment-based fund for forest protection
EU	Green Deal	Binding carbon neutrality by 2050
USA	Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)	Domestic climate funding; limited global equity
China	South–South Climate Cooperation Fund	Financial support for developing nations
African Union	Great Green Wall	Community-based reforestation and carbon sinks

India's Context & Policy Parallels:

1. India also adheres to **CBDR** in international forums.
2. India's **NDC** targets include:
   ➤ Reducing emissions intensity by **45% by 2030**,
   ➤ Achieving **50% electricity from non-fossil sources**,
   ➤ **Net zero by 2070**.
3. India supports **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** and **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, promoting South-South climate cooperation similar to Brazil's vision.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Subramanian Committee (2015)	Suggested integrating climate finance with development programs and local governance.
NITI Aayog's SDG Localization Framework	Links environmental targets with social and economic indicators — a model aligning with Brazil's "Hunger, Poverty and Climate" triad.
National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	India's domestic model balancing growth with environmental goals — a reflection of what Lula calls "developmental climate justice."

Way Forward:

1. **Operationalize Climate Finance:**
   ➢ Developed nations must deliver on the **$100 billion annual promise**, shifting to **predictable, accessible, and equitable** funding.
2. **Promote South-South Climate Leadership:**
   ➢ Emerging economies (India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa) should lead collective platforms for climate equity.
3. **Reform Global Climate Governance:**
   ➢ Create a **UN Climate Council** or empowered COP secretariat for implementation and compliance.
4. **Integrate Social and Climate Agendas:**
   ➢ Embed **poverty alleviation, gender equity, and food security** in climate policy frameworks.
5. **Encourage Innovation-Based Mechanisms:**
   ➢ Expand forest investment funds like **TFFF** across tropical regions — linking private finance to measurable environmental outcomes.

Conclusion:

As COP30 approaches, the world stands at a crossroads. Brazil's call for a **"COP of Truth"** is a reminder that speeches cannot substitute for action. The fight against climate change must be rooted in **justice, shared responsibility, and human welfare**. If the Amazon is the planet's lungs, then the global conscience must be its heartbeat — one that beats for **equity, sustainability, and solidarity**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to COP30 and Brazil's climate initiatives, consider the following statements:

1. COP30 will be held in Belém, located in the Amazon Basin.
2. Brazil has announced the Tropical Forests Forever Facility as a donation-based mechanism for forest protection.
3. Brazil's updated NDC targets a 59–67% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A. 1 and 3 only

Explanation: TFFF is **investment-based**, not donation-based.

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Equity and justice must be at the heart of global climate governance." In light of Brazil's initiatives ahead of COP30, discuss how the Global South can shape a fair and effective response to the climate crisis.

Student Notes ✍

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Death on the Move

Source: *The Hindu Editorial, November 2025*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, Policy Implementation, Government Schemes
- **GS Paper 3:** Infrastructure – Transport & Road Safety, Disaster Management, Inclusive Development
- **Essay Paper:** "Public Accountability in Infrastructure" / "India's Urbanization and Safety Crisis"

Introduction:

India has one of the **highest road accident fatality rates** in the world — accounting for nearly **13% of global deaths** from road crashes. Despite multiple reforms, such as the **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019**, accidents continue to rise due to weak enforcement, poor road engineering, and inadequate driver training. The recent **Hyderabad accident (Nov 3, 2025)** that killed 19 people reflects deep-rooted flaws in **India's transport infrastructure and licensing system.**

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
Government of India

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019
Provision of Penalties

Offence:
Penalty for failure to allow free passage to emergency vehicles

Penalty: Fine of Rs 10,000 and/or imprisonment up to 6 months

Be responsible, follow traffic rules

Key Issues

1. **Faulty Licensing System:**
   - Driving tests focus on vehicle control rather than safety awareness or defensive driving.
   - Lack of uniformity and digitization in RTO procedures encourages corruption and negligence.
2. **Poor Infrastructure & Engineering:**
   - Absence of **road dividers, streetlights, and signages** contributes to frequent head-on collisions.
   - Example: The **Chevella-Hyderabad NH-163** stretch has no dividers and poor visibility, leading to repeated accidents.
3. **Weak Enforcement of Safety Norms:**
   - States often ignore **National Road Design Guidelines** and provisions of the **Motor Vehicles Act (2019)**.
   - No mandatory safety audits before highway openings.
4. **Neglect of Trauma Care:** Lack of trauma centers or emergency response networks — especially in rural stretches — increases fatalities post-crash.
5. **Institutional Gaps:** No single coordinating body ensuring convergence of road engineering, enforcement, and medical response.
6. **Human Behaviour & Road Culture:** Over-speeding, tailgating, drunk driving, and disregard for lane discipline worsen accident rates.

Global Practices:

Country	Key Measure	Impact
Sweden	*Vision Zero Policy* (1997): Zero fatalities target by redesigning roads, enforcing speed limits	Reduced deaths by 50% in two decades

Japan	Strict driving tests + school-based road education	Among the world's lowest accident fatality rates
UK	Intelligent Traffic Management & CCTV-based penalty system	Improved compliance with lane discipline
Australia	Compulsory *trauma response network* every 30 km	Reduced on-site fatalities by 40%

Indian Committees & Recommendations:

Sundar Committee on Road Safety (2007)	Recommended setting up a **National Road Safety and Traffic Management Board.**
Justice Radhakrishnan Committee (2014)	Suggested **road safety audits** and **zero tolerance zones** for violations.
Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019	Strengthened penalties, mandated **electronic monitoring**, and proposed **Good Samaritan provisions.**
SaveLIFE Foundation Recommendations	Integration of RTOs with digital platforms (like Passport Seva Kendras). Creation of crash investigation units and trauma response systems.

Way Forward:

1. **Transparent & Technology-driven Licensing:** Link all RTOs to a national database, ensuring online testing, facial recognition, and driving simulation-based assessments.
2. **Safer Road Design & Engineering Audits:** Mandatory *pre-opening audits* for all national highways; black-spot mapping using GIS.
3. **Empowered Road Safety Authority:** Constitute an **independent National Road Safety Authority** for coordination between Centre, States, and private contractors.
4. **Public Awareness & Behavioural Change:** Nationwide "**Sadak Suraksha – Jeevan Raksha**" campaign focusing on seat belt, speed, and alcohol laws.
5. **Emergency Trauma Network:** Mandate trauma care units every 50 km; integrate ambulance GPS systems with traffic police.

Conclusion:

India's road accident crisis reflects not just individual carelessness but **systemic policy inertia.**

Ensuring safety demands a multi-sectoral approach — integrating engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency care.

As the editorial notes, **"road accidents are not resulting in an overhaul"** — and unless India treats road safety as a **public health priority**, its demographic dividend will continue to bleed on the highways.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements about road safety in India:

1. The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 provides for Good Samaritan protection.
2. Road design and engineering come under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Union Government.
3. India has a legally mandated target of zero road deaths by 2030.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Only statement 1 is correct. The Good Samaritan provision protects bystanders helping accident victims. Road design and safety are shared subjects (Centre + State). There is no statutory target of zero fatalities by 2030.

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Despite multiple legislations and awareness campaigns, India continues to witness alarming levels of road fatalities. Discuss the institutional, infrastructural, and behavioural factors responsible for this trend and suggest a comprehensive national strategy for road safety."

Student Notes ✍️

PRAMUKH academy

Justice in Food

Source: *The Hindu Editorial, November 2025*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 2:** Issues relating to Food Security, Government Policies, and Welfare Schemes
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment, Sustainable Agriculture, Climate Change, and Food Systems
- **Essay Paper:** "Sustainable Diets for a Sustainable Planet" / "Food Security and Climate Justice"

Introduction:

The *EAT–Lancet Commission* report highlights that **food systems are central to global sustainability**, accounting for nearly **30% of greenhouse gas emissions** and driving five of the six **planetary boundary breaches**.

This editorial, *"Justice in Food"*, argues that ensuring **justice in food systems** requires a **transition towards healthy, sustainable, and affordable diets**, along with equitable access and responsible production.

Key Issues

1. **Environmental Impact of Current Food Systems:**
   - Agriculture contributes heavily to **climate change**, **biodiversity loss**, and **water pollution**.
   - Animal-based foods dominate emissions, while crop-based nitrogen and phosphorus use breach ecological limits.

2. **Unsustainable Agricultural Practices:**
   - India's food system is heavily **grain- and calorie-oriented**, with overuse of fertilizers, poor soil health, and groundwater depletion.
   - The system prioritizes production quantity over nutrition and environmental sustainability.

3. **Affordability and Access Challenges:**
   - Nutritious foods like pulses, fruits, and nuts remain **expensive and vulnerable to price shocks**, limiting access for the poor.
   - A calorie-heavy diet leads to **malnutrition and lifestyle diseases** coexisting in India.
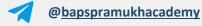
4. **Policy-Driven Inequality:**
   - Subsidies on rice and wheat under the PDS distort consumption, while nutritious crops receive little policy support.
   - Fiscal and trade measures fail to encourage healthy or sustainable food choices.

5. **Behavioral & Cultural Factors:** Food preferences are shaped by **religion, caste, income, and convenience**, making dietary change a sensitive issue.

6. **Economic Concerns:** The EAT–Lancet projection that GDP will grow 127% in 30 years is optimistic; if growth falters, **climate-related hunger** may rise.

Global Practices & Examples:

Country	Best Practice	Outcome
Denmark	Introduced "Climate-friendly Diet" guidelines reducing red meat consumption	Reduced food-based CO_2 emissions by 15%
Brazil	Adopted national dietary guidelines emphasizing local, minimally processed food	Improved nutrition & reduced obesity
Netherlands	Government incentives for plant-based proteins and lab-grown meat	Cut agricultural emissions and diversified food economy

| Sweden | Integrated food, health, and climate policies under "One Planet Plate" campaign | Enhanced citizen awareness of sustainable diets |

Indian Committees & Policy Framework:

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013	Ensures access to subsidized food grains but lacks nutrition diversity.
National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan)	Focuses on child and maternal nutrition, emphasizing fortified and balanced foods.
NITI Aayog's National Policy on Biofortified Crops (2022)	Promotes iron-, zinc-, and protein-rich staples like biofortified rice and millet.
M.S. Swaminathan Committee (2006)	Recommended moving from **food security to nutrition security** and promoting crop diversification.
UN Food Systems Summit Commitments (India's 2021 Declaration)	Align agricultural policies with climate-resilient, equitable food systems.

Way Forward:

1. **Diversify Cropping Patterns:** Incentivize millets, pulses, oilseeds, and fruits instead of excessive rice-wheat cycles.
2. **Make Nutrition Affordable:** Use fiscal tools like lower GST on healthy foods, subsidies for pulses and fruits, and taxes on ultra-processed items.
3. **Promote Local, Climate-Smart Foods:** Encourage *Farm-to-Fork* supply chains, urban gardens, and millet-based diets (aligned with **International Year of Millets 2023**).
4. **Reform Food Subsidy & Distribution:** Integrate nutrition indicators into PDS; include fortified foods and pulses for the poor.
5. **Education and Behavioural Change:** School curricula and community programs should promote "Planetary Health Diets."
6. **Strengthen Farmer Incomes:** Support crop diversification with price assurance and market access for non-cereal crops.

Conclusion:

"Justice in food" means not just **feeding people**, but **nourishing them without harming the planet.**

For India, achieving this balance demands a **paradigm shift in agriculture, consumption, and policy**, ensuring that food is not only available but also **healthy, equitable, and ecologically responsible.**

True justice in food will emerge only when our plates reflect both **human health and planetary wellbeing.**

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Which of the following statements regarding sustainable food systems are correct?

1. The EAT–Lancet Commission focuses on linking diet, health, and planetary boundaries.
2. Livestock-based food production is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.
3. India's National Food Security Act, 2013 explicitly promotes crop diversification.

Select the correct answer:

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

d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. **"Ensuring justice in food systems requires more than ensuring availability; it requires equity, sustainability, and health." Discuss in the context of India's agricultural and nutritional policies.**

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

The Second Issue (surrogacy law)

Source: *The Hindu Editorial – November 2025*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Human Development, Issues related to Health, Women, and Family
- **GS Paper 1:** Role of Women, Social Empowerment, Family and Society
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** Ethics in Reproductive Rights and Autonomy

Introduction:

The Supreme Court's recent deliberations on whether couples can opt for **surrogacy for a second child** have revived a crucial debate about the **scope of reproductive rights** and the **interpretation of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**.

At its core, the issue questions whether the **state can restrict the right of a couple to have a second child via surrogacy**, especially when secondary infertility is medically proven.

This case tests the balance between **individual autonomy**, **medical ethics**, and the **legislative intent** behind India's surrogacy law.

Many barriers

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 was introduced to curb unethical practices related to issues such as sex selection and exploitation of surrogate mothers, with provisions for jail term in case of violations

- Under the Act, a couple can opt for surrogacy only on medical grounds and should produce certificates of eligibility

- The couple should have been married for five years and not have a living child

- The surrogate mother

has to be a close relative of the couple, a married woman with a child of her own and aged between 25 and 35

- Though the law allows a single woman to resort to surrogacy, she has to be a widow or a divorcee between the age of 35 and 45

- Single men are not eligible

Key Issues

1. **Restrictive Definition of Infertility:**
   - ➤ The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 allows surrogacy only if a couple is *infertile* and has no surviving child (biological, adopted, or through surrogacy).
   - ➤ Couples facing **secondary infertility** — who have one child but are unable to conceive again — are excluded.
   - ➤ Example: Women suffering from **Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)** or **uterine scarring** post-first childbirth are not eligible for surrogacy, despite genuine medical reasons.

2. **Violation of Reproductive Autonomy:**
   - ➤ The right to **reproductive choice** flows from **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)**.
   - ➤ Restricting couples from having a second child through surrogacy interferes with **private life choices**.

Surrogacy – Basics

Surrogacy is a method of assisted reproduction where a woman (the *surrogate mother*) agrees to carry and deliver a child for another person or couple (the *intended parents*).

Types of Surrogacy
- **Traditional Surrogacy**
  - o Surrogate's own egg + sperm of intended father/donor.
  - o Surrogate is *genetically related* to the child.
- **Gestational Surrogacy (Most common today)**
  - o IVF technique.
  - o Embryo created using intended parents'/donor gametes.
  - o Surrogate has **no genetic link** with the child.

Why Surrogacy is Used
- Infertility
- Medical conditions where pregnancy is risky
- Absence of uterus
- Repeated IVF failures
- For single men/women or couples depending on national laws (India restricts this)

➢ The Supreme Court has earlier held in *Suchita Srivastava v. Chandigarh Administration (2009)* that reproductive rights are a part of personal liberty.

3. **Legislative Overreach vs Individual Rights:**
   ➢ The law was intended to regulate **commercial surrogacy**, not to control personal decisions on family size.
   ➢ The blanket ban on second-child surrogacy disregards genuine medical needs, diluting the spirit of Article 14 (Equality before Law).

4. **Ethical and Gender Dimensions:**
   ➢ Women with secondary infertility often face **social stigma**, especially in patriarchal setups that equate womanhood with motherhood.
   ➢ Denying access to surrogacy exacerbates gender inequality and psychological distress.

5. **Ambiguity in Implementation:**
   ➢ Recent government guidelines have also **allowed age relaxation** for couples with frozen embryos, reflecting policy inconsistency.
   ➢ Absence of clear distinction between primary and secondary infertility causes confusion in medical and legal interpretation.

Global Practices:
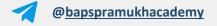
Country	Approach to Surrogacy	Highlights
UK	Altruistic surrogacy allowed under Surrogacy Arrangements Act (1985)	Includes both primary & secondary infertility with court approval
USA	Permits both altruistic & commercial surrogacy (state laws vary)	Reproductive autonomy recognized as a constitutional right
Canada	Only altruistic surrogacy allowed	No restriction on number of children
Israel	Legal for all couples under supervision	Ensures equality and medical ethics

Indian Committees & Legal Background:

Law Commission Report No. 228 (2009)	Recommended banning commercial surrogacy but supported altruistic surrogacy.
Parliamentary Standing Committee (2017)	Warned against over-regulation and urged protection of reproductive autonomy.
ART (Assisted Reproductive Technology) Act, 2021	Regulates ART clinics, requiring registration and ethical oversight.
Supreme Court Observations (2024–25)	Emphasized that **infertility** must include both *primary* and *secondary* cases for just application of the law.

Way Forward:

1. **Expand Legal Definition of Infertility:** Amend the Surrogacy Act to include medically diagnosed secondary infertility.

2. **Balance Regulation with Rights:** Regulate clinics and commercial exploitation without infringing reproductive liberty.

3. **Strengthen Medical Ethics:** Ensure mandatory counselling and medical certification by ethics boards to avoid misuse.

4. **Promote Gender Sensitivity:** Recognize reproductive health as a gender justice issue, not just a medical one.

5. **Create Uniform Guidelines:** Align surrogacy and ART rules under a common regulatory framework for consistency.

Conclusion:

The ongoing judicial review reflects India's struggle to harmonize **law, morality, and autonomy** in matters of reproduction.

A **progressive interpretation** of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act — one that includes secondary infertility — will uphold the **spirit of individual liberty** while maintaining ethical safeguards.

In the end, laws must **enable choice**, not restrict it, especially in domains as personal and humane as childbirth.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, consider the following statements:

1. The Act allows only altruistic surrogacy and bans commercial surrogacy.
2. Surrogacy is permitted only if the couple has no surviving child, including adopted or surrogate child.
3. Secondary infertility is explicitly recognized under the Act.

Select the correct answer:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Reproductive rights are integral to the right to privacy and personal liberty under Article 21."
In the context of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, discuss how law can balance ethical regulation with reproductive autonomy.

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

Maoist Insurgency is Dying — Now Tackle Its Causes

Source: *The Hindu Editorial (by Prakash Singh, Nov 2025)*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
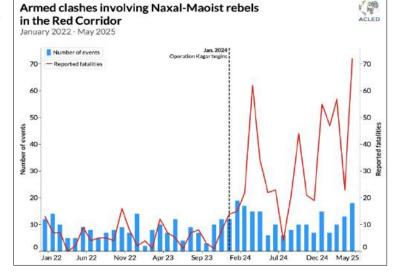
- **GS Paper 3:** Internal Security – Left Wing Extremism (LWE), Insurgency, Role of Security Forces, Governance Challenges
- **GS Paper 2:** Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections, Governance & Implementation Issues
- **Essay Paper:** Social Conflict, Development, and Security Nexus

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Introduction:

The Maoist insurgency, once termed by PM Manmohan Singh as *"the gravest internal security threat to India"*, is now in visible decline.

While **security operations and coordinated intelligence** have dismantled its organisational strength, the **socio-economic grievances** that fueled the movement—tribal alienation, land dispossession, and inequality—remain unresolved.

The real challenge lies not in defeating Maoism militarily, but in **addressing its causes sustainably**.

Armed clashes involving Naxal-Maoist rebels in the Red Corridor
January 2022 - May 2025

Key Issues

1. **Decline of Maoist Presence**
   - According to the **South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)**, over **333 Maoists killed and 398 arrested** in 2024–25.
   - Active districts reduced from **90+ (2010)** to **less than 45 (2025)** due to successful operations under *SAMADHAN* and *Aspirational Districts Programme*.

2. **Persistent Socio-Economic Deprivation**
   - *Example:* HDI of **Malkangiri (Odisha)** is just **0.357** vs India's average of 0.597.
   - Tribal regions face **poor healthcare, malnutrition, low education, and lack of infrastructure.**

3. **Ideological Disconnect**
   - Maoist ideology, imported from China, lacked Indian grounding.
   - Marxism-Leninism failed to resonate with new generations facing modern aspirations.

4. **Governance Deficit in Tribal Areas**
   - Weak enforcement of **PESA (1996)** and **Forest Rights Act (2006)** has alienated Adivasi communities.
   - Administrative neglect and corruption reduce faith in democratic institutions.

5. **Violence and Fear:**
   - Maoist tactics—kidnappings, extortion, targeting teachers and officials—eroded local support and trust.

Global Practices:

Country	Practice	Lesson for India

Colombia	Reintegration of FARC rebels through rehabilitation, livelihood, and education	Combine peace talks with rural reforms
Philippines	"Balik Loob" Program – surrender and reintegration scheme for insurgents	Focus on community acceptance
Nepal	Inclusion of Maoists in mainstream politics after peace accord	Political inclusion and amnesty can end conflict

Indian Committees' Recommendations:

1. **Expert Committee on Left Wing Extremism (2008)** – Suggested *"clear and sustained governance presence"* in affected districts.
2. **Planning Commission Report (2011)** – Emphasized tribal land rights, education, and forest-based livelihoods.
3. **Niti Aayog (2018)** – Called for *"security, development, and governance triad."*
4. **2nd ARC Report (2008) on Public Order** – Recommended improving police training, intelligence, and community policing.

Way Forward:

1. **Consolidate Security Gains:** Continue *SAMADHAN Doctrine* with modern technology, drone surveillance, and inter-state coordination.
2. **Governance & Development Focus:** Implement *Aspirational Districts Programme* effectively with last-mile delivery in LWE zones.
3. **Strengthen Tribal Institutions:** Operationalise **Gram Sabhas under PESA** and ensure ownership of Minor Forest Produce.
4. **Education & Employment for Youth:** Skill-based training, Eklavya Model Schools, and entrepreneurship support for local youth.
5. **Political Dialogue & Rehabilitation:** Encourage surrender, provide land, livelihood, and dignity for ex-Maoists.
6. **Inclusive Economic Growth:** Ensure mining and infrastructure projects share revenue with local populations (as per DMF Act).

Conclusion:

The Maoist insurgency is **no longer a military challenge** but a **governance challenge**.

Security operations have weakened its structure, but **poverty, alienation, and lack of justice** still persist.

India's long-term peace depends on **empowered tribal governance, equitable development, and restoration of faith in democracy**.

In short — **eliminate the grievance, not just the gun.**

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in India, consider the following statements:

1. The movement began in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal in 1967.
2. The PESA Act, 1996, provides constitutional status to local self-governance in Scheduled Areas.
3. The SAMADHAN doctrine is a coordinated strategy to tackle LWE combining security and development.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d)
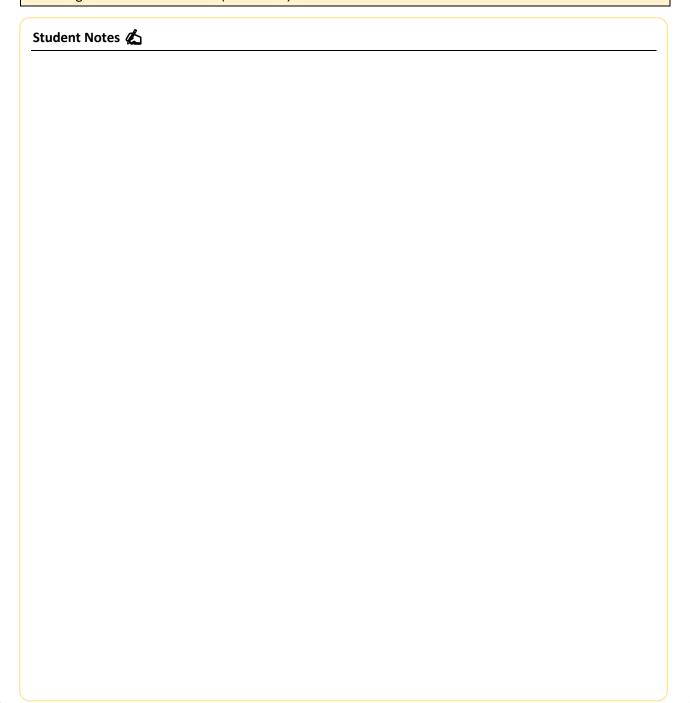
UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "The Maoist insurgency is not merely a law-and-order problem but a symptom of developmental failure."

Critically examine this statement and suggest a multi-pronged strategy to permanently eliminate Left Wing Extremism from India. *(250 words)*

Student Notes ✍

Turnout Bump – Voter Awareness Surged after SIR Controversy

Source: *The Hindu Editorial (November 2025)*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 2:** Salient features of the Representation of People's Act, Electoral Reforms, Role of Election Commission, and Voter Awareness
- **GS Paper 1:** Indian Society – Political Participation and Social Empowerment
- **Essay Paper:** Electoral Behaviour and Strengthening Democracy

Introduction:

The recent **Bihar Assembly elections** witnessed an impressive voter turnout of around **67%**, signaling a renewed enthusiasm for democratic participation.

Following the **SIR (Seat Identification and Redistribution)** controversy, public debate on electoral fairness, representation, and awareness appears to have mobilized citizens more actively.

Such a rise in turnout indicates **growing voter consciousness**, an encouraging sign for deepening democracy in India.

Key Issues

1. **Higher Voter Turnout as a Democratic Positive**
   - Over **121 constituencies** recorded impressive participation between **56% and 68%**, showing citizens' trust in the electoral process.
   - Similar turnout trends were observed during **2019 Lok Sabha polls**, when national turnout reached 67.4%.
   -

2. **Impact of Controversies on Awareness**
   - The **SIR controversy**—regarding alleged bias in constituency restructuring—triggered greater debate on representation, fairness, and inclusion.
   - Public discussion led to civic activism, social media campaigns, and NGO involvement in voter registration drives.

3. **Rural and Youth Engagement**
   - Rural areas and first-time voters showed higher participation, reflecting growing political awareness due to digital outreach and community mobilisation.
   - Example: *SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation)* programme successfully motivated youth and women to vote.

4. **Challenges Remain**
   - Urban apathy continues—especially among the middle class.
   - Persistent issues like **money power, caste polarization, and fake news** affect the quality of electoral participation.

Global Practices:

Country	Practice	Lesson for India

Australia	Compulsory voting with penalties for abstention	Increases accountability and inclusiveness
Sweden	High transparency, automatic voter registration	Simplified registration boosts turnout
Brazil	Electronic voting and mobile voter awareness drives	Shows that tech + civic education can mobilize voters

Indian Committees' Recommendations:

Law Commission (255th Report, 2015)	Called for measures to improve voter education and stricter control on paid news.
Election Commission of India (ECI)	Recommended expansion of **Voter Helpline (1950)** and **National Voters' Service Portal**.
Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)	Suggested local-level voter facilitation centers and targeted awareness campaigns for urban youth.
Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998)	Stressed on state funding of elections to reduce money power and enhance fairness.

Way Forward:

Deepening Electoral Literacy	Integrate electoral education into school and college curricula.
Strengthen SVEEP & Digital Campaigns	Use influencers, regional media, and local icons to promote participation.
Reform Urban Voting	Encourage absentee and proxy voting for migrants and urban professionals.
Transparency in Candidate Selection	Mandatory disclosure of criminal and financial background.
Political Parties' Responsibility	Promote internal democracy and issue-based campaigning to enhance trust.
Technology for Inclusion	Wider use of **remote EVMs**, **blockchain-based transparency systems**, and **AI-driven misinformation checks**.

Conclusion:

Rising voter turnout is a **positive sign of a maturing democracy**.

While controversies like the SIR issue initially sparked polarization, they ultimately **triggered civic debate and awareness**—a necessary process for a healthy democracy.

Sustained efforts in voter education, transparency, and inclusivity can ensure that **elections remain not only free and fair but also meaningful and participatory**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding electoral reforms in India:

1. The SVEEP programme is an initiative of the Election Commission to promote voter awareness.
2. India follows a system of compulsory voting as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
3. The Election Commission can use Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) under law.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only   b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only   d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. Rising voter turnout reflects growing political awareness, but also exposes the limits of electoral reforms in India.

Discuss the factors influencing voter participation and suggest measures to ensure greater inclusivity and transparency in elections. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

The Unspoken in the Classroom — Teaching Power with Empathy

Source: *The Hindu Editorial — by Ponmythili Muralidharan*

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude)** – Emotional intelligence, values, attitude, empathy, leadership
- **GS Paper 2 (Education, Human Resource Development)** – Role of value-based education
- **Essay Paper:** Education, Power, Empathy, Leadership, Moral Values
- **Optional Relevance:** Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy

Introduction

Education today focuses excessively on academic grades and performance metrics, neglecting emotional and moral development. The editorial argues that schools must go beyond marks and teach students the **responsible use of power** — blending privilege with empathy, leadership with humility, and competition with compassion.

Key Issues

1. **Marks over Meaning:**
   - Education today values grades over character, turning learning into competition rather than growth.
   - Example: Students excel in exams but struggle in teamwork or empathy-driven decision-making at work.

2. **Unspoken Curriculum — Power & Politics:**
   - Schools rarely discuss how power operates in social and institutional contexts.
   - Children grow up unaware of how to handle authority responsibly.

3. **Dependence & Responsibility:**
   - Power depends on interdependence — those who recognize others' contributions lead better.
   - *E.g., Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's leadership style blended knowledge with humility.*

4. **Empathy as Real Power:**
   - Power without empathy leads to dominance, while empathy builds cooperation.
   - *Example:* Jemimah Rodrigues' calm and supportive leadership in cricket shows strength with grace.

5. **Grades vs Growth:**
   - Examinations assess memory, not emotional maturity.
   - The unseen "exam" of life tests kindness, reliability, and courage.
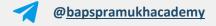
6. **Need for Value-Based Education:**
   - Current education prepares students for success, not significance.
   - Schools must focus on nurturing moral imagination — the ability to act justly and compassionately.

Global Practices:

Finland	Curriculum emphasizes *emotional literacy, collaboration, and empathy* over rote learning.
Japan	*Moral Education (Dōtoku)* is part of the national curriculum, focusing on social responsibility and humility.
UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework	Promotes "learning to be and learning to live together" as key global educational goals.

IN Indian Committees and Policy Recommendations:

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Stresses *holistic development, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence* alongside academic skills.
Kothari Commission (1964–66)	Advocated moral and social value education to build responsible citizens.
Yashpal Committee (1993)	Criticized rote-based learning; promoted creativity and human values.

Way Forward:

1. **Integrate Value Education:** Introduce empathy, ethics, and emotional intelligence as part of classroom pedagogy.
2. **Teacher Training:** Teachers must be equipped to model empathy and leadership through example.
3. **Assessment Reform:** Shift from marks-based evaluation to multi-dimensional assessment (emotional, social, moral).
4. **Leadership Curriculum:** Include real-life projects that encourage teamwork, social service, and reflective learning.
5. **Promote Role Models:** Highlight leaders like A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Nelson Mandela, and Jacinda Ardern who exemplify power with compassion.

Conclusion:

Power, when combined with empathy, transforms authority into service. Education must teach not just how to excel but how to *care, lead, and live responsibly.* Exams will fade, but the wisdom to hold power with empathy will shape the kind of human beings our society produces.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to "Value-Based Education," consider the following statements:

1. It focuses primarily on cognitive learning outcomes.
2. It promotes empathy, responsibility, and moral decision-making.
3. The National Education Policy (2020) emphasizes value-based learning at all stages of education.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: NEP 2020 stresses holistic and ethical learning, not merely cognitive achievement.

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Power without empathy leads to dominance, while empathy transforms power into leadership."
   Discuss in the context of the role of education in shaping responsible citizens. *(GS Paper 4 – 2023 level)*

Student Notes ✍

Greater Openness – India must not squander global trust in its management of wildlife

Source: The Hindu Editorial — November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance:
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment, Biodiversity Conservation, Wildlife Protection, International Conventions
- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, Transparency, International Relations (Environmental Diplomacy)
- **Essay Paper:** Environmental Ethics, Global Reputation, Transparency in Governance
- **Prelims:** CITES, Wildlife Protection Act 1972, Conservation Institutions

Introduction

India's credibility in wildlife management, built over decades, faces scrutiny following global observations about the transparency of animal import procedures. The editorial emphasizes that **greater openness and proactive communication** are crucial for sustaining international trust — especially under frameworks like **CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).**

Key Issues

1. **Case Background – Vantara Project, Jamnagar (Gujarat):**
   - The Supreme Court-appointed SIT cleared the Reliance Foundation's **Vantara Zoo** of irregularities in acquiring over **3,000 wild animals from abroad**.
   - The report found due permits and proper animal care facilities.

2. **Transparency Deficit:**
   - The **SIT report was not made public**, only summarized in the Court's order.
   - Lack of full disclosure triggered doubts, especially when the **CITES committee** visited Jamnagar and observed similar issues.

3. **CITES Committee's Concerns:**
   - CITES (global convention regulating wildlife trade) recommended that India **pause new import permits** until stronger traceability mechanisms were established.
   - The concern was not about Vantara itself but about **India's broader wildlife management system**.

4. **Permit Code Inconsistencies:**
   - Discrepancies noted in documentation between **exporting and importing countries**.
   - Example: Czech Republic categorized animal transfers as "sales," while India reported them as "gifts," creating traceability confusion.

5. **Legal Distinction in India:**
   - **India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** prohibits **commercial procurement** of wild animals.
   - However, differing international documentation can unintentionally create legal ambiguities.

6. **CITES Objective:**
   - Prevent animal trafficking and promote traceable, legal, and ethical animal transfers.
   - Encourages nations to ensure **proactive verification and transparency** in cross-border animal movement.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

This Act provides for the protection of the country's wild animals, birds, and plant species, in order to ensure environmental and ecological security.
Among other things, the Act lays down restrictions on hunting many animal species.

- It extends to the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir
- It has sex schedules which give varying degrees of protection
- Schedule I and part II of the schedule provide absolute protection
- offences under these are prescribed as the highest penalties
- Species listed in schedule III and IV are also protected, but the penalties are much lower
- Schedule V includes animals which may be hunted
- The plants in Schedule VI are prohibited from cultivation and planting

7. **Global Trust at Stake:**
   ➤ India is a global leader in conservation — hosting **tigers, elephants, lions, and rhinoceros**, and housing key biodiversity hotspots.
   ➤ Opaque procedures can harm India's global reputation for ethical wildlife management.

Global Practices:

Kenya	Maintains open digital databases of wildlife imports and exports under **CITES e-permitting system** for global scrutiny.
South Africa	Uses **DNA tagging** for exported animals to ensure genetic traceability.
European Union	Employs **centralized wildlife trade registers** for transparency and periodic public audits.

ɪɴ Indian Committees and Legal Framework:

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Prohibits trade of endangered species and mandates licensing for zoos and safaris.
Central Zoo Authority (CZA)	Regulates and monitors animal exchange programs, ensuring welfare and non-commercial use.
CITES Management Authority (India)	Coordinates with exporting countries to ensure documentation aligns with CITES norms.
Supreme Court's Role	Ordered creation of an **SIT for transparency** in wildlife imports — but public access to findings remains restricted.

Way Forward

1. **Transparent Disclosure:** Make SIT and CITES reports public to dispel misinformation and demonstrate accountability.
2. **Digitized Wildlife Permitting:** Implement a **CITES e-Trace Portal** for real-time tracking of animal imports/exports.
3. **International Coordination:** Strengthen dialogue with exporting nations to align documentation and avoid discrepancies.
4. **Independent Audits:** Conduct periodic third-party audits of zoos and private conservation projects.
5. **Public Engagement & Education:** Raise awareness that ethical animal exchanges support conservation, not exploitation.
6. **Strengthen Domestic Laws:** Amend the **Wildlife (Protection) Act** to integrate explicit clauses on digital traceability and CITES compliance.

Conclusion:

India's global credibility as a conservation leader rests on its **transparency and accountability**. Secrecy breeds suspicion; openness builds trust. In managing biodiversity — a shared planetary heritage — India must not only act rightly but also be seen to act rightly. Sustained transparency will preserve both **wildlife integrity and India's environmental reputation**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:
Q1. With reference to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), consider the following statements:

1. CITES aims to prevent the illegal trade and trafficking of endangered species.
2. It is legally binding on member countries but lacks enforcement powers.
3. India is a signatory to CITES and implements it through the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

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: (d)

Explanation: All statements are correct — CITES provides an international framework, implemented in India via the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q1. "Transparency in environmental governance is not just a domestic virtue but a global necessity."
Discuss this statement in the context of India's wildlife management and international obligations under CITES. *(GS Paper 3 – Environment)*

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

What South Asia Wants from COP30: Climate Solutions, Equity, and Regional Resilience

Source: Arunabha Ghosh & Jhalak Aggarwal, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** International Relations (Climate Diplomacy, Regional Cooperation)
- **GS3:** Environment (Climate Change, Adaptation, Technology)
- **Essay:** Sustainability, Global Justice

Introduction

With the **Paris Agreement's promises fraying and climate threats intensifying, South Asia emerges as a frontline region—**facing catastrophic floods, heatwaves, and landslides. Nearly two billion people across the subcontinent demand not lofty pledges, but urgent, region-focused action—scalable finance, technology, justice, and pragmatic adaptation from COP30 and beyond.

Key Issues

1. **Regional Focus and "Coalitions of the Willing"**
   - South Asia's governments now push for pragmatic, collaborative strategies: investing in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture, shared disaster management, and region-wide adaptation.
   - *Example*: India's Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and **Nepal's SagarMatha Samabard** initiative showcase successful cross-border partnerships.

2. **Equitable, Predictable, and Direct Finance**
   - Multilateral funding (**Green Climate Fund, Loss & Damage Fund, Adaptation Fund)** remains opaque and slow; countries demand transparent, needs-based flows, and simplified access to support the vulnerable.
   - *Example*: Civil society and government consultations highlight failures in post-disaster finance (delays, dilution), with urgent calls for tailored and climate-justice-based financial reform.

3. **Technology Flow and Capacity Building**
   - Adaptation and decarbonization **depend on affordable, context-relevant technology—**geared to local conditions and populations, not global "one size fits all."
   - *Example*: Knowledge networks and shared demonstration projects—like mountain hydrology in Himalayas or saline farming in Sri Lanka—can drive effective climate tech diffusion.

4. **Climate-Resilient Development and Social Protection**
   - Integration of adaptation into core development planning is non-negotiable; local science and community priorities must shape policy, with special attention to women and vulnerable groups.

Key Fact
- **COP30 consultations highlighted c**onvergence across South Asian countries—including island, mountainous, and delta states—on adaptation priorities, disaster financing, and technology for climate resilience.
- The region expects over 200 annual days with temperatures exceeding 35°C by 2100, with severe socioeconomic and health impacts (e.g., melting Nepalese glaciers, water stress in Sri Lanka, Maldives, India).

➢ ***Example***: Designing early warning systems, support for women farmers, and targeted insurance for climate risks.

5. **Global North Responsibilities and Genuine Partnership**
   ➢ Developed countries must lead on mitigation, tech transfer, and finance—honoring differentiated responsibility and enabling "just transitions."
   ➢ ***Example***: Realignment of NDCs and climate funds to align with Loss and Damage targets for the most at-risk.

Global Practices

Africa/ Caribbean	Advocacy for simplified, direct access to climate funds and context-based adaptation.
EU	"Team Europe" concept for coordinated regional climate action and disaster risk reduction.
SIDS (Small Island States)	Focus on insurance, "blue economy," and migration adaptation frameworks.

South Asia Committee Recommendations

Ministries of Environment/External Affairs	Form regional bloc at COP30 to negotiate for climate finance, direct technology, and validation of unique adaptation pathways.
SAARC Secretariat	Launch shared data platforms for climate risk and adaptation, build early warning and evacuation protocols.
Finance/Commerce Ministries	Mobilize resources for green infrastructure and climate-resilient livelihoods, ensure private and public sector delivery.

Way Forward

1. **Negotiate as a United Regional Bloc**
   ➢ Use shared platforms, coalition building, and clear agenda-setting for COP30 and climate summits—demand just, direct, and predictable finance.

2. **Drive Context-Appropriate Tech Flows**
   ➢ Create climate technology networks and demonstration hubs; promote capacity building for locally relevant solutions.

3. **Integrate Adaptation into All Policy**
   ➢ Mandate climate adaptation in core development, agriculture, and social protection, especially for women and marginalized groups.

4. **Hold Global North Accountable**
   ➢ Insist on fair burden-sharing, accelerated mitigation, and transparent fund disbursal.

5. **Foster Long-Term, Inclusive Partnerships**
   ➢ Move from donor–recipient models to joint innovation and participatory resilience-building.

Conclusion

COP30 is a watershed for South Asia: regional survival means actionable finance, fair tech transfer, and equitable climate adaptation—not just rhetoric. Pragmatism and coalitional unity are South Asia's best leverage for justice and results.

Prelims Practice Question
Q1. What is cited as the most urgent demand of South Asia from COP30?

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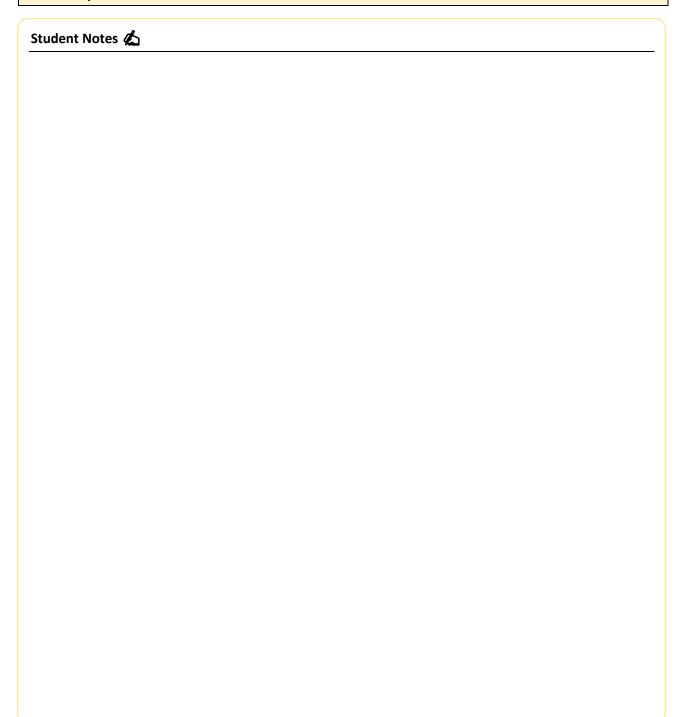
a)   Only more climate summits
b)   Predictable finance, tailored tech, and regionally led adaptation
c)   Ocean treaty reform
d)   Ban on fossil fuel entirely

Answer: B) Predictable finance, tailored tech, and regionally led adaptation

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "For South Asia, climate resilience at COP30 requires united negotiation, equitable finance, context-based technology, and social inclusion." Discuss reforms needed at global and regional levels. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

Celebrating a Sage King: Lessons and Legacy in India–Bhutan Relations

Source: Gautam Bambawale, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2)
- GS2: International Relations (Neighbourhood Policy, Bilateral Cooperation, Hydro Diplomacy)
- Essay/Society: Leadership, Strategic Geography, Soft Power

Introduction

The 70th birthday of Bhutan's former king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck—beloved as the "Bodhisattva King"—underscores the unique depth and continuing vitality of India–Bhutan ties. Wangchuck's legacy of wisdom and reform propelled Bhutan into modernity, anchored national contentment around Gross National Happiness (GNH), and fostered one of South Asia's most reliable bilateral relationships.

Key Issues

1. **Two Nations, Deep Trust**
   - India is Bhutan's closest external partner, actively investing in infrastructure, education, and regional development; Bhutan reciprocates by respecting India's core interests and acting as a stabilizing buffer in Himalayan geopolitics.
   - *Example*: Indian PMs have highlighted Bhutan as the model for "Neighbourhood First" policy; reciprocal high-level visits and enduring goodwill.

2. **Hydropower Diplomacy, Shared Prosperity**
   - Decades of flagship hydropower projects—beginning with Chukha and now including Punatsangchhu and more—generate Bhutanese export revenue, Indian clean energy, and local livelihoods.
   - *Example*: India helped construct Bhutan's dams; now, Bhutanese companies and Indian private firms (Tata, Adani Power) are joint partners on new green projects.

3. **Modernization with Values**
   - King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's vision balanced economic growth with tradition, environmental stewardship, and progressive social reforms.
   - *Example*: Bhutan's unique GDP/GNH model, culture-based education, and sustainable development championed by the monarchy.

4. **Security, Continuty, and Mutual Sensitivity**

INDIA-BHUTAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

- India opened an office of a Special Representative in Thimphu in 1968, Bhutan reciprocated in 1971.
- The two offices of special representatives were upgraded to full-fledged embassies in 1978.
- India and Bhutan are founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that deals with the economic, social, and cultural development of the South Asian Region.
- Both of them also share other multilateral forums such as BBIN(Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

Key Fact
- Jigme Singye Wangchuck ruled from age 17, abdicating in 2006 after guiding Bhutan into the 21st century with peaceful democratization and enlightened development.
- India and Bhutan's strategic partnership has produced exemplary models in cross-border cooperation, hydropower diplomacy, and regional stability.

➢ Bhutan's leadership—especially K4 and now K5—consistently seeks India's guidance on national security, border integrity, and military modernization, while India respects Bhutanese priorities in sensitive policy matters.

➢ *Example*: Close consultation on operational readiness of the Royal Bhutan Army, integrated disaster response, and border security with Assam/West Bengal.

Global Practices

Sweden/ Norway	Long-term bilateral trust and joint investments in sustainable energy and cross-border infrastructure.
Singapore–Malaysia	Strategic partnership leveraging economic complementarities and social goodwill.

Indian Committee Recommendations

MEA/ Bhutan Desk	Prioritize capacity-building, community investments, and people-to-people exchanges alongside official projects.
Ministry of Power	Fast-track next-gen hydropower projects, technical upskilling for joint ventures, and grid integration with NE India.
Home/Defence Ministries	Enhance joint disaster preparedness, regularize strategic dialogues, and bolster defense education for Bhutanese officers.

Way Forward

1. **Anchor Soft Power with Strategic Investment**
   ➢ Broaden pillars of partnership to include education, tech, green tourism, and cultural heritage collaboration.
2. **Advance Hydropower, Climate Resilience**
   ➢ Prioritize new hydro/green infrastructure, sustainable energy markets, and climate-adaptive projects with Indian–Bhutanese leadership.
3. **Safeguard Security through Joint Planning**
   ➢ Deepen engagement in shared border security and military exchanges to counter evolving regional challenges.
4. **Modernize with Respect for Tradition**
   ➢ Foster social and economic reform without compromising Bhutan's cultural values or national identity.
5. **Promote People-Led Diplomacy**
   ➢ Expand scholarships, knowledge bridges, and citizen exchanges to keep the India–Bhutan friendship future-ready.

Conclusion

The legacy of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck is not just in Bhutan's successes, but in the India–Bhutan bond fashioned by mutual trust and strategic vision. As the region evolves, this relationship remains a regional exemplar of stability, reform, and partnership—worth celebrating, sustaining, and deepening.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is the hallmark of India–Bhutan cooperation, as highlighted in the editorial?
   a) Only trade agreements
   b) Hydropower diplomacy and broad-based strategic trust
   c) Aid without accountability

d) Cultural exchange only

Answer: B) Hydropower diplomacy and broad-based strategic trust

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India–Bhutan relations exemplify how modernization, soft power, and strategic trust together can anchor regional peace and partnership." Discuss the evolution and future priorities. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Exploited Workers, A Labour Policy's Empty Promises: From "Ease" to Justice

Source: Rejimon Kuttappan, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** Welfare Schemes, Rights Issues, Social Justice (Labour Law, Vulnerable Sections)
- **GS3:** Economy (Informal Sector, Employment, Skill & Reskilling)
- **GS4:** Ethics (Dignity, Rights, State Duty)

Introduction

Despite reforms and "**future-ready**" rhetoric, Indian labour policies often fail the most vulnerable. From seafood workers peeling fish on cold slabs to contract employees in mines, India's **"ease of employer"** approach leaves 11 million people in forced or near-bonded labour. Policy must now move from digital dashboards and nostalgia to ensuring dignity, rights, and effective enforcement.

Key Fact
- 90% of India's workforce is informal, with most denied legal contracts, social security, and meaningful protections—even as the draft Shram Shakti Niti 2025 aspires to futuristic planning.
- ILO reports and field investigations reveal widespread wage theft, denial of EPF/ESI, and routine violations of woman, child, and senior workers' rights.

Key Issues

1. **Employer Ease vs. Workers' Protection**
   - ➢ Regulatory "**reform**" often translates to fewer audits, weak bargaining, and widespread contract fraud, with workers stripped of legal safeguards and benefits.
   - ➢ *Example*: Seafood and quarry workers demoted from permanent to "**daily wage**," losing all insurance and pension rights after workforce "**conversion**."

2. **Digital Divide and Gender Gaps**
   - ➢ Digital IDs and tech-based schemes exclude those with low literacy, especially women, elderly, and migrants—38% of women are still functionally illiterate.
   - ➢ *Example*: New AI-based platforms for skilling and job-matching widen urban–rural divides and favour cities over poorer states.

3. **Superficial Just Transitions**
   - ➢ Green jobs and social security pledges miss real social and wage support; "**transitions**" lack protection for coal, informal, and migrant workers—400 million job transitions are barely mapped.
   - ➢ *Example*: Coal reskilling is planned, but without minimum wage guarantees or income support.

4. **Fragmented Enforcement and Labour Rights**
   - ➢ Policies promise universal social security but lack mandates for strict audits or penalty enforcement, leaving most schemes loophole-ridden or voluntary.
   - ➢ *Example*: With contractor workforce, most workers are paid below minimum wage, denied maternity, safety, and pension, and have little recourse.

Global Practices

Brazil	Universal labour audits and strict contract enforcement for employers, especially in export sectors.
South Africa	Wage guarantee schemes for migrants and informal workers.

Germany/France	Tripartite funding for training and welfare, with strong social partners and union representation in governance.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministry of Labour/Employment	Mandate surprise union-led audits, raise penalties for worker violations, and digitize grievance redressal for informal workers.
NITI Aayog	Ensure all climate "just transition" funds include wage, reskilling, and social security provisions with tripartite oversight.
Parliamentary Committee	Guarantee effective enforcement, timelines for contract regularization, and annual public reporting on compliance.

Way Forward

1. **Enforce Audits and Social Security Mandates**
   ➤ Legal benefits (maternity, ESI, wage, pension) must cover all workers, with random audits and severe penalties for violators.

2. **Bridge Digital and Gender Gaps**
   ➤ Design tech and policy with low-literacy and rural users in mind; provide digital literacy to vulnerable communities.

3. **Guarantee Real Just Transition Support**
   ➤ Link climate and skills reform to actual wage/income safety nets for those impacted.

4. **Elevate Worker Voices and Local Bargaining**
   ➤ Foster union representation, community monitoring, and rapid grievance mechanisms.

5. **Make Dignity and Justice Non-Negotiable**
   ➤ Prioritize rights and welfare over optics by upholding fundamental protections (Articles 14/16/19/23).

Conclusion

India's labour vision will succeed only when "**future-ready**" means every worker—woman, migrant, informal—receives justice, rights, and dignity. Laws and policies must deliver real change, not rhetorical progress, to turn the reality of millions from symbolic reform to lived protection.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is highlighted as the key gap in India's labour landscape, according to the editorial?
   a) Not enough digitization
   b) Absence of universal legal enforcement and real worker protection
   c) Only low productivity
   d) Only wage increases
   Answer: B) Absence of universal legal enforcement and real worker protection

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's next phase of labour reform must bridge digital, gender, and enforcement gaps—turning policy promise into real worker rights." Analyse solutions. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Act of Evil: Social Harmony as Core to Counterterrorism

Source: Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS3:** Internal Security (Terrorism, Law & Order, NIA, UAPA)
- **GS2:** Polity & Governance (Justice, Social Cohesion, State Duty)
- **GS4:** Ethics (Public Rhetoric, Responsibility, Unity)

Introduction

The Red Fort blast in Delhi on November 10, killing 13 and injuring several, has reignited fears about terrorism in India's heartland. While the government has responded with legal and investigative action, the event underscores the need for restraint, transparency, and above all, social harmony in any effective counterterror strategy.

NIA (National Investigation Agency)

1. **Central agency** to investigate offences under UAPA and other scheduled offences.
2. **Pan-India jurisdiction** — can take over cases from states without state consent.
3. Officers have powers under **CrPC** — arrest, search, seizure, investigation.
4. Cases are tried in **Special Courts** for speedy justice.
5. Plays a **central role in India's counter-terrorism framework**.
6. Investigates **terror networks, funding channels, cross-border conspiracies**, and other national security threats.
7. Its role has expanded with **emerging threats like cyber-terrorism and transnational crime**.

Key Fact
- NIA is probing the attack under UAPA and Explosives Act; initial reports indicate links to cross-border and Kashmir-based terrorist cells.
- Political leaders must avoid hasty speculation; the pattern of mindless violence in urban centers is becoming a deeply alarming trend.

UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)

1. Enacted in 1967 to prevent unlawful activities threatening India's sovereignty and integrity.
2. Amended multiple times (2004, 2008, 2012, 2019) to include terrorism, funding, and individual terrorist designation.
3. Allows banning of organizations and individuals involved in terrorism.
4. Strict bail provisions — accused can be detained up to 180 days without charge-sheet.
5. Punishments include life imprisonment or death for grave offences.
6. Covers both Indian and foreign nationals, even if offences are outside India.
7. Aims to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of terrorism and anti-national activities.

Key Issue

1. **Security Response: Legal, Swift, Transparent**
   - Fast, fact-based investigation sets the tone for public trust; hard laws should not mean secretive or arbitrary state action.

> ➤ *Example***:** Notable that chemical and large-scale terror attacks have, in the past, been averted through stringent intelligence, yet each incident demands open communication until facts are verified.

2. **Danger of Politicization and Rhetoric**
   > ➤ Rushed political blame or polarizing narratives risk dividing society and feeding radicalism—media and policymakers must prioritize calm over sensationalism.
   > ➤ *Example***:** Prior experience shows that preventive action and social unity are more effective than reactive blame.

3. **Role of Social Harmony in Deterrence**
   > ➤ Terrorism aims not only at physical harm but also at undermining civil trust, inter-community solidarity, and democratic values.
   > ➤ *Example***:** State and civil society must actively promote and safeguard peace, especially after crises, to deny terrorists their psychological victory.

4. **Comprehensive Counterterrorism**
   > ➤ Effective security is multi-pronged: police, intelligence, legal reform, and community engagement must reinforce one another.
   > ➤ *Example***:** The "soft state" debate since 2014 focused on empowering investigators, but also requires regular reforms to safeguard rights and prevent abuse.

Global Practices

UK/France	Post-attack emphasis on rapid evidence-based investigation, community outreach, and clarity in official communication.
Singapore	Strong social cohesion policies and public trust-building as a bulwark against violent radicalization.
Israel	Security response always paired with community reassurance and victim support.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Home Ministry/NIA	Issue daily briefings during investigation to minimize rumors; ensure transparent progress reporting and timely justice.
Legal Affairs Ministry	Regular review of UAPA and anti-terror statutes for proportionality and rights protection.
Ministry of Social Justice	Launch post-crisis interfaith peacebuilding programs and support affected families.

Way Forward

1. **Balance Security with Social Unity**
   > ➤ Prioritize calm, fact-based law enforcement while rapidly bridging divides stoked by violence.
2. **Transparency and Public Engagement**
   > ➤ Clear, official communication to preempt rumors; broad engagement with civil society and media.
3. **Promote Social Harmony as Core Strategy**
   > ➤ Enlist religious, educational, and civic leaders in peace initiatives; bolster inter-community trust.
4. **Regularly Reform Security Laws**
   > ➤ Ensure robust protections for civil rights and proportional use of powers.
5. **Integrate Soft and Hard Counterterror Tools**
   > ➤ Blend intelligence and prosecution with resilience-building and anti-radicalization education.
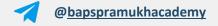
Conclusion

Every terror attack tests India's unity and resolve. Lasting security depends not just on policing, but on a society committed to peace and resilience—making social harmony integral to any counterterror strategy.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What additional strategy, besides policing and investigation, is vital for countering terrorism in India?
   a) Only technology upgrades
   b) Promoting social harmony and unity
   c) Exclusive military trials
   d) Censorship of reporting
   Answer: B) Promoting social harmony and unity

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "An effective counterterrorism strategy must combine strong investigation with public trust, restraint, and social cohesion." Discuss with Indian and global examples. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍️

The Limits of International Branch Campuses: Navigating Opportunity and Uncertainty

Source:

Philip G. Altbach & Eldho Mathews, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2)

- **GS2:** Governance (Education Policy, Regulation, International Collaboration)
- **GS3:** Economy (Skill Development, Innovation, Reforms)
- **Essay:** Higher Education, Globalization

Introduction

With U.K. universities and their chancellors visiting India to expand branch campuses, India's new regulatory enthusiasm is clear. Branch campuses are touted as a tool for educational excellence and global integration. Yet hard questions remain: will foreign campuses offer real value, or only replicate what's already available? Can they overcome regulatory, economic, and operational risks?

> **Key Fact**
> - India–U.K. educational reforms now permit foreign branch campuses with UGC approval; British universities face financial crises as outbound student flows decline due to high fees.
> - Experience from US/Middle East/China shows global branches are often "teaching outposts" with uncertain research/innovation impact.

Key Issues

1. **Branch Campuses: Substitute or Supplement?**
   - Will foreign campuses offer unique, high-quality programs or only provide what is already available domestically?
   - *Example*: Texas A&M's failed branch in Qatar and New York University's in Abu Dhabi, propped by government funding, show financial and operational fragility.

2. **Regulatory Complexity and Student Protection**
   - UGC lacks a clear safety net for students if a branch campus suddenly shuts; operational certainty is not assured.
   - *Example*: India's history with for-profit education and unregulated private institutes raises questions about long-term academic integrity and support.

3. **Academic Quality and "Real" Branches**
   - Genuine value lies in replicating core faculty, research networks, and a diverse offer—not just remote lectures or fly-in professors.
   - *Example*: Most "real" branches abroad are expensive and rare; globally, few have become true academic or research powerhouses.

4. **Funding, Autonomy, and Reputational Risk**
   - Many branches depend on host country (not home university) finances, risk regulatory interference, and are vulnerable to shifts in government policy or market demand.
   - *Example*: UAE and Chinese campuses have faced sudden pivots; loss-making models can erode trust.

5. **Uncertain Impact on Research and Capacity**
   - Research and innovation culture is rarely replicated in branches; linkage with Indian research funding and schemes is unclear.

➢ *Example*: Only select branch campuses show global research outputs; others remain isolated "teaching factories."

Global Practices

China	Invited select Western branch campuses to Shanghai and Suzhou, but research and social impact remain limited.
UAE/ Qatar	Subsidized "showcase" branches focused on prestige, not always on skills/innovation transfer.
Singapore/ Hong Kong	Stringent regulation and partnership standards; some branches delivered sustained value.

Indian Committee Recommendations

UGC/MoE	Mandate enforceable student protection measures, clear closure protocols, and operational transparency.
NITI Aayog	Incentivize Indian–foreign faculty and research collaborations, co-developing programs meeting national needs.
Accreditation Agencies	Establish joint quality assessment and regulatory frameworks, with mandatory regular review and student surveys.

Way Forward

1. **Focus on Uniqueness and Complementarity**
   ➢ Admit only those branches that fill genuine gaps—not just replicate or "brand" what Indian universities already provide.
2. **Enforce Transparency and Student Safeguards**
   ➢ Require clear disclosure on faculty, funding, and exit protocols; monitor compliance actively.
3. **Promote Collaborative Innovation**
   ➢ Encourage joint research ventures, faculty exchange, and curriculum co-design for mutual benefit.
4. **Align with National Priorities**
   ➢ Approve branches that serve strategic needs (STEM, sustainability, global skills) and align with India's education reforms.
5. **Balance Ambition with Realism**
   ➢ Set clear expectations on outcomes, monitor delivery, and remain aware of capacity-building limits.

Conclusion

International branch campuses can play a role in India's higher education landscape if policy rigorously prioritizes quality, transparency, and unique value—otherwise, they risk being costly experiments with limited benefit, best approached with cautious optimism.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Why does the editorial urge caution about opening international branch campuses in India?
   a) Too many regulations
   b) Fragility, repetition of local offerings, risk of sudden closure, unclear student protections
   c) No foreign staff available
   d) Cost of tuition only
   Answer: B) Fragility, repetition of local offerings, risk of sudden closure, unclear student protections

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Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Foreign university branch campuses can upgrade Indian higher education, but only if they offer genuine value, enforce transparency, and meet regulatory standards." Critically discuss. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Act of Evil: Why Social Harmony Is Integral to Counterterror Policy

Source: Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS3:** Internal Security (Terrorism, UAPA, Legal Measures)
- **GS2:** Polity & Governance (Rule of Law, Social Cohesion)
- **GS4:** Ethics (Restraint, Public Trust, Justice)

Introduction

A deadly explosion at Delhi's Red Fort has revived anxieties around terrorism and the official response. While law enforcement moves swiftly under anti-terror legal frameworks, real security also demands restraint in rhetoric, trust in institutions, and continuous societal harmony.

Key Fact
- The Red Fort attack killed 13 and injured many, triggering NIA investigation under UAPA and Explosives Act.
- Early information points to cross-border terror cells, but official updates urge avoiding premature blame and speculation.

Key Issues

1. **Prompt, Transparent Security Response**
   - ➢ Security agencies must provide regular, fact-based updates and avoid secrecy or arbitrary detentions, upholding due process.
   - ➢ *Example*: Hard laws and sweeping powers may curb immediate threats, but excessive secrecy generates distrust and rights concerns.

2. **Danger of Political Rhetoric**
   - ➢ Opposition and media must avoid divisive blaming; politicians' statements risk stoking polarization and helping extremist agendas.
   - ➢ *Example*: In past attacks, hasty political accusations have divided communities and distracted from measured investigation.

3. **Importance of Social Harmony**
   - ➢ Terror aims to disrupt civil trust, communal unity, and confidence in the state—responsive counterterrorism must actively prevent scapegoating and build peace.
   - ➢ *Example*: Global models (UK, France, Singapore) stress inclusive outreach and community reassurance alongside police action.

4. **Balanced CounterTerror Strategy**
   - ➢ Effective strategy blends strong law enforcement, robust intelligence, and preventive community engagement.
   - ➢ *Example*: India's record of preventing several mass-casualty attacks shows that coordinated, transparent security planning works best when paired with outreach and reassurance.

Global Practices

UK	Post-attack transparent briefings, support for victims, anti-islamophobia campaigns.
Singapore	Community policing and proactive multifaith trust-building to counter radicalization.
France	Police–community synergy and continuous public engagement after terror episodes.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Home Ministry/ NIA	Daily bulletins during investigations, prompt updates to quash rumors and maintain calm.
Ministry of Social Justice	Launch inter-community solidarity initiatives after attacks to heal divides and prevent backlash.
Law Ministry	Periodic review of UAPA and anti-terror laws for proportionality, rights protection, and rapid, fair trials.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Lawful, Accountable Security**
   ➢ Ensure fair, rights-based investigation and timely justice; resist arbitrary detentions and media leaks.
2. **Promote Peace and Social Unity**
   ➢ Involve civic, faith, educational, and media leaders in building calm and resilience post-attack.
3. **Transparent Public Communication**
   ➢ Prioritize fact-based, official statements on progress and threats to pre-empt misinformation.
4. **Combine Hard Measures with Soft Outreach**
   ➢ Balance tough policing with continued dialogue with at-risk communities for prevention and trust.
5. **Regularly Review Security Laws**
   ➢ Update anti-terror statutes to reflect both effectiveness and human rights concerns.

Conclusion

Counterterrorism is most effective when it relies not just on force but on legitimacy and public confidence. Social harmony—reinforced by inclusive outreach and transparent governance—is as vital as any security tool in defeating violence.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What does the editorial identify as essential alongside security measures for effective counterterrorism?
   a) Only new technology
   b) Social harmony and restraint
   c) Shutdown of the internet
   d) Curfews and lockdowns
   Answer: B) Social harmony and restraint

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "A resilient counterterrorism policy must combine effective law enforcement with public trust, social harmony, and measured rhetoric." Critically discuss with Indian and foreign examples. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Urgent Update: India's Consumer Price Index Needs Reform for Accuracy and Policy Trust

Source: Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 3)
● **GS3:** Economy (Inflation, Indices, Monetary Policy, Data Reliability)
● **GS2:** Governance (Statistical Systems, Policy Design)
● **Essay:** Evidence-based Policy, Economic Institutions

Introduction

October's low retail inflation rate (0.25%) signals a data anomaly, not genuine relief. India's Consumer Price Index (CPI), with outdated weights and a 2012 base year, urgently needs revision to ensure monetary policy, fiscal programming, and public trust are not compromised by misleading signals.

Key Fact

Retail Inflation

1. Retail inflation—commonly known as **Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation**—measures the change in the **retail prices of goods and services** that households purchase for their everyday consumption.
2. The CPI is constructed using a **fixed basket of goods and services**, which the government may revise periodically.
3. Any change in this price index over time represents **CPI-based inflation**, or retail inflation.

What Does the CPI Indicate?

The CPI provides insights into:

1. The **cost of living** for households
2. The **purchasing power** of consumers
3. The **relative expensiveness** of the goods and services they use
4. The **value of the Indian rupee** in terms of real buying capacity

How Is CPI Calculated?

1. CPI is expressed as a **percentage**, comparing the overall price level in the current period with that of a **base year**.
2. The current **base year is 2012**.
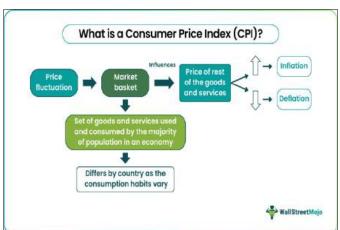
Formula:

CPI = (Cost of the Basket in the Current Year / Cost of the Basket in the Base Year) × 100

The **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) compiles both **All-India** and **State-wise** CPI for **Rural, Urban, and Combined** categories and releases the data every month.

Uses of CPI

CPI serves as:

1. A **macroeconomic indicator** to measure inflation
2. A tool for **inflation targeting** by the government and RBI
3. A measure for assessing **price stability**
4. A **deflator** in national income accounting

It also helps evaluate:

1. The **real value of wages, salaries, and pensions**
2. The **purchasing power** of the national currency
3. The need for adjustments in **interest rates**, social sector payments, and economic policy
4. Food prices fell 3.7% (largest in the series), but this is overshadowed by last year's unprecedented 9.7% spike, creating a misleading "base effect" of negative food inflation.
5. Nearly every other major CPI basket—fuel, housing, tobacco—shows higher inflation than last year, highlighting the problem of outdated basket weights.

Key Issues

1. **Statistical Anomalies and Policy Distortion**
   - ➤ Outdated weightages (2012 base year) mean current consumption patterns are misrepresented, distorting measured inflation and policy reactions.
   - ➤ *Example*: Food and beverages still have nearly 46% weight, yet their true share in modern household budgets is much less.

2. **Mismatch Between Reality and Index**
   - ➤ RBI's September 2025 household survey put perceived inflation at 7.4%, starkly different from CPI's 0.25%—this gap undermines the index's credibility and usefulness for monetary decisions.
   - ➤ *Example*: The difference complicates rate decisions, market signals, and the government's own programme planning.

3. **GST, Data Lags, and "Base Effects"**
   - ➤ GST changes, delayed government spending, and statistical base effects regularly distort month-to-month index shifts.
   - ➤ *Example*: Temporary reductions in inflation from GST rate cuts or delayed food supplies may spike up again, but CPI smooths over these with outdated or lagging weights.

4. **Programme Impact and Fiscal Planning**
   - ➤ Major government transfers, subsidies, and social programme rollouts (like DBT) may either mask or exaggerate inflation if the CPI is not updated in real-time.
   - ➤ *Example*: Without revision, flagship anti-poverty or farm welfare initiatives could be miscalibrated.

Global Practices

US/UK/EU	Update CPI baskets every five years or less; use large-scale consumption surveys, digital data, and dynamic weights for greater responsiveness.
Japan	Incorporates real-time scanner and e-commerce data into inflation measurement for accuracy.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	Immediately update the CPI base year; use periodic household consumption/reality surveys, GST/e-commerce data for weights.

RBI/Monetary Policy Committee	Flag concerns about the accuracy of headline inflation; rely more on core, services, and real-term indices until revision.
Parliamentary Standing Committee	Mandate automatic five-year CPI updates, continuous evaluation of index relevance.

Way Forward

1. **Revise CPI Base Year and Weights**
   ➢ Shift to a 2022–2023 base using latest survey and GST data for realism.
2. **Improve Real-Time Data Capture**
   ➢ Integrate retail scanner, e-commerce, and digital payments data to update weights dynamically.
3. **Align Policy Use with Perceived Inflation**
   ➢ Use perception and alternate indices to cross-check inflation before critical policy choices.
4. **Strengthen Statistical Independence**
   ➢ Secure autonomy and technical capacity for the National Statistical Office and allied data bodies.
5. **Communicate Changes Clearly**
   ➢ Ensure seamless stakeholder communication and public awareness as methods evolve.

Conclusion

India's CPI can meaningfully inform policy and public trust only if it reflects reality—delivering clear, up-to-date signals for the RBI, ministries, and the public. Statistical inertia must not be the enemy of economic accuracy.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is most urgently needed for India's Consumer Price Index, according to the editorial?
   a) More base effects
   b) Revision of base year, real-time updating, and aligning with today's consumption patterns
   c) Higher weights for food
   d) Abandoning the index

Answer: B) Revision of base year, real-time updating, and aligning with today's consumption patterns

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "An outdated Consumer Price Index distorts policy, monetary decisions, and public trust. What reforms are needed to make inflation data credible and useful for 21st-century India?" (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Air Pollution and the Politics of Inaction: Why Public Anger Lacks a Political Voice

Source: Pratap Bhanu Mehta – Editorial Analysis, November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2

1. Governance, Public Policy, Role of Civil Society
2. Federalism, Cooperative & Competitive Federalism
3. Accountability, Regulatory Institutions

GS Paper 3

1. Environmental Pollution & Degradation
2. Urbanisation, Industrial Regulation
3. Disaster Management

Introduction

Air pollution in India has evolved from being a seasonal concern to a persistent public health emergency. Yet, despite the rising public anger, it has **not translated into political accountability**. Pratap Bhanu Mehta argues that India's pollution crisis is rooted not only in weak infrastructure or complex economics, but in **toxic politics, institutional paralysis, scientific silence, and fragmented governance**.

The crisis reflects a deeper democratic challenge: **people are suffering, but the political system is refusing to listen.**

Key Issues

Depoliticisation of Air Pollution

Air pollution has never become a decisive electoral issue.

1. Political parties focus on identity, welfare schemes, and polarisation, not clean air.
2. **Example:** Despite Delhi having hazardous AQI every winter, no major party campaigns primarily on air quality.

Fragmented Governance and Lack of Single Accountability

Multiple agencies share responsibility, but none are fully accountable.

1. Environment Ministry, State PCBs, Municipalities, Transport Departments, Agriculture Departments all work in silos.
2. **Example:** NCR pollution—Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi blame each other for stubble burning.

Weak Scientific and Institutional Voice

Scientific institutions avoid pressuring the government due to political control or fear of backlash.

1. Environmental activism is often labelled "anti-national" or "foreign-funded".
2. **Example:** Delay in releasing industrial emission data or real-time construction dust monitoring.

Government Measures

1. **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) 2019** – aim to reduce PM2.5 and PM10 levels by **20–30% by 2024 (baseline 2017)**.
2. **Promotion of electric vehicles, stricter emission norms (BS-VI), rooftop solar, and urban green cover**.
3. **Air Quality Index (AQI)** monitoring implemented across major cities.

Global Significance

1. India contributes significantly to **global air pollution load**; transboundary pollution affects neighboring countries.
2. Tackling air pollution is key to achieving **SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being)** and **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities)**.

Media Complicity and Suppression of Environmental Discourse

Media devotes limited airtime to air pollution unless AQI becomes extreme.

1. Hard questions are rarely asked to elected leaders.
2. **Example:** Prime Minister or Chief Ministers seldom questioned on pollution-related governance failures on mainstream TV debates.

India's Committees & Recommendations

1. **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) Committee**
   - Target: **20–30% reduction in PM2.5 by 2024**.
   - Recommended city-specific action plans and emission inventories.
2. **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment (2022 & 2024)**
   - Found PCBs severely understaffed.
   - Recommended strengthening monitoring networks and punitive measures.
3. **CAG Report on Pollution Control Boards (2021)**
   - Highlighted <40% staff vacancy, outdated labs, weak prosecution.
   - Recommended capacity building and digital monitoring.
4. **High-Level Committee on NCR Air Pollution**
   - Advocated integrated governance through **CAQM** (statutory body).
   - Called for coordinated action across Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, UP.
5. **NITI Aayog's Clean Air Report**
   - Output-based funding for cities.
   - Incentives for electric mobility, cleaner fuels, and waste processing.

Way Forward

1. **Make Clean Air a Legal Right**
   - Introduce a **Clean Air Act** ensuring enforceable national standards.
   - Recognise clean air as part of Article 21.
2. **Strengthen Regulators with Real Power**
   - Empower PCBs and CAQM with:
     - ✓ penalty powers
     - ✓ independent staffing
     - ✓ transparent reporting
3. **Mission-Based Political Accountability**
   - Annual PM-led or CM-led "Air Quality Report" to Parliament/State Assemblies.
   - Mandate air quality targets in government performance metrics.
4. **Science-Driven Governance**
   - Automatic public release of AQI, industrial emissions, construction dust data.
   - Institutional protection for scientists and whistleblowers.
5. **Citizen-Centric Solutions**
   - RWAs, schools, youth groups to monitor compliance.
   - Incentives for EVs, cleaner industries, decentralised waste management.

CONCLUSION

Air pollution in India is not just an environmental crisis but a governance failure shaped by political denial, weak institutions, and fragmented responsibility. Despite rising public anger, its political voice remains muted.

The way forward lies in transforming clean air into a democratic demand, empowering institutions with autonomy and enforcement powers, and adopting a science-led, citizen-driven approach. Only then can India shift from **toxic air and toxic politics** to a future of clean, breathable, and accountable governance

Mains Practice Question

Q1. **"Toxic air is sustained by toxic politics." In the context of India's air pollution crisis, critically analyse the role of political priorities, institutional fragmentation, and media narrative in shaping environmental outcomes.**

Student Notes ✍

Investing in People's Resilience and Clean Energy: Lessons from the Global Carbon Project 2025

Source: *Based on the news report on global carbon emissions linked with COP30, Brazil (2025).*

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 3:
- Environment (Climate Change, Emission Trends, Renewable Energy)
- Energy (Clean Energy Transition, Decarbonisation)
- Disaster Management (Climate Resilience, Adaptation)

GS Paper 2: Governance (Climate Negotiations, International Agreements)

Essay: Climate Justice, Sustainable Development, Global Leadership

Introduction

The 2025 Global Carbon Project report, released alongside COP30 in Brazil, highlights a worrying rise in global carbon emissions—expected to hit a **record high** by the end of 2025. While countries like the US show a large increase, India's emission growth has slowed significantly due to expanded renewable energy deployment and a favorable climate season.

However, the report warns that the **current pace of decarbonisation is far too slow**, pushing the world dangerously close to breaching the **1.5°C limit**. The findings underline the urgent need to invest not only in **clean energy** but also in **people's climate resilience**, especially as extreme events become more frequent.

Global Carbon Project (GCP) 2025 – Key Facts

1. The GCP tracks **global CO_2 emissions, carbon sinks, and budgets** to monitor climate change.
2. **Global fossil-fuel CO_2 emissions in 2025** are projected to rise by **~1.1%**, reaching a **record ~42.2 billion tonnes**.
3. **Coal, oil, and natural gas** are the main contributors to the emissions increase.
4. **Land-use change emissions** (deforestation/degradation) are projected to **decrease slightly** in 2025.
5. **Natural carbon sinks** (land & ocean) absorb ~50% of emissions — land ~21%, ocean ~29%.
6. Atmospheric CO_2 concentration is projected to **exceed 423 ppm** in 2025.

Key Issues

1. **Global Emissions Rising Despite Climate Targets**
   - 2025 will mark **record-high global carbon emissions**.
   - The US saw a **19% increase**, China and EU also reported rises.
   - **Example:** Post-pandemic industrial rebound in many countries increased energy demand, reversing earlier declines.

2. **India's Emission Slowdown—Positive but Not Enough**
   - India's emissions rose more slowly due to **large-scale renewable energy expansion**.
   - Electricity-sector emissions decreased in early 2025 due to **cooler summer and early monsoon**.
   - **Example:** Solar installations hitting record capacity addition in 2024–25.

3. **Falling Carbon Intensity but Rising Total Emissions**
   - India's **carbon intensity** has been declining steadily, yet absolute emissions still rise because of economic growth.
   - **Example:** Transition from coal to renewables is happening, but coal still dominates base-load energy.

4. **World on Track to Exceed 1.5°C Warming**

➤ The report warns that current actions are **insufficient** to keep global warming below 1.5°C.
➤ **Example:** Unprecedented heatwaves and floods worldwide signal crossing of climate tipping points.

5. **Slow Pace of Decarbonisation Across Major Economies**
   ➤ Even as renewables expand, fossil-fuel use has not reduced significantly.
   ➤ **Example:** Global oil demand touched historic highs in 2024 due to transport and petrochemical needs.

Global Practices

EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)	Taxes high-carbon imports to push global clean production.
US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)	Massive subsidies for solar, wind, EVs, green hydrogen.
China's National Carbon Trading Market	World's largest cap-and-trade system covering power and manufacturing.
Brazil's Amazon Protection & Sustainable Forest Programmes	Slowing deforestation to enhance global carbon sinks.
Japan's Hydrogen Society Roadmap	Aggressive adoption of hydrogen in transport and industry.

Indian Committees & Recommendations

Kasturirangan Committee (National Environment Policy)	Advocates low-carbon pathways, climate-resilient infrastructure.
NITI Aayog Expert Committee on Energy Transition	Calls for 500 GW non-fossil capacity and faster coal phase-down.
India's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (UNFCCC submission)	Emphasizes green hydrogen, e-mobility, natural farming, energy storage.
Standing Committee on Energy (Parliament)	Recommends strengthening DISCOMs, accelerating rooftop solar.
National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) Review Panel	Advocates updating missions to reflect new climate realities (heatwaves, floods).

Way Forward

1. **Accelerate Coal Phase-Down**
   ➤ Prioritize retiring inefficient coal plants and replacing them with RE + storage.
2. **Invest in Climate-Resilient Communities**
   ➤ Early-warning systems, heat-action plans, climate insurance for farmers.
3. **Expand Green Financing**
   ➤ Green bonds, carbon markets, climate budget tagging.
4. **Strengthen Urban Climate Planning**
   ➤ Cool roofs, nature-based solutions (urban forests, wetlands).
5. **Promote Clean Technology Adoption**
   ➤ Scale-up hydrogen, EVs, offshore wind, pumped storage.
6. **Global Collaboration**
   ➤ Push for fair climate finance at COP30; ensure technology transfer from developed nations.
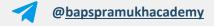
Conclusion

The Global Carbon Project's 2025 findings present a sobering reminder that the world is dangerously close to breaching climate thresholds. While India shows promising signs through renewable energy expansion and declining carbon intensity, this is not enough to counter rising global emissions.

A balanced approach—**rapid clean energy transition combined with strong investments in people's climate resilience**—is essential for meeting global temperature goals and safeguarding communities from escalating climate disasters.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Global Carbon Project (GCP):
1. It tracks global carbon emissions and carbon sinks.
2. It is coordinated by a team of scientists under UNFCCC.
3. Its reports are often released during major climate conferences like COP.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 1 and 3 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

(Statement 2 is incorrect — GCP is a scientific collaboration, not an UNFCCC body.)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "The Global Carbon Project 2025 reveals that decarbonisation worldwide is progressing too slowly to prevent dangerous climate impacts." Discuss the major challenges highlighted by the report and suggest a comprehensive strategy for India to balance development needs with climate commitments.

Student Notes ✍

The Great Nicobar Project: Development vs. Ecological Responsibility

Source: *Based on an analysis from The Hindu (November 2025 edition)*

Introduction

The Great Nicobar Island Development Project—envisioning a transshipment port, airport, power plant, and township—has emerged as one of India's most contested infrastructure plans. While the project promises strategic and economic gains, recent submissions before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) reveal that the Environment Ministry itself has admitted the project's **significant impact on biodiversity hotspots** such as Galathea Bay. The issue now sits at the intersection of **ecological vulnerability, procedural lapses, coastal regulation violations, and governance accountability**.

Key Issues

Ecological Sensitivity Being Overlooked

1. Galathea Bay hosts **20,000+ live coral colonies, sea grass beds, mangroves, megapoed nests**, and is a **major nesting site of the leatherback turtle** (Schedule I species).
2. Example: The Andaman & Nicobar Forest Department recorded **600+ leatherback turtle nestings in 2024**, one of the highest globally.
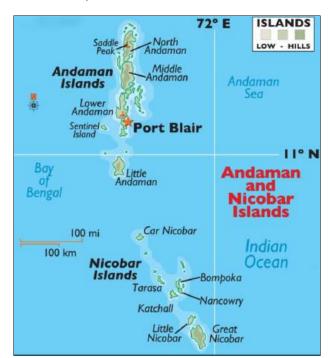
Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Violations
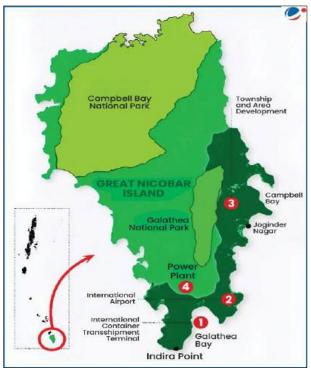
1. The project site **clearly falls under CRZ-IA**, the highest-protection zone where ports are *not permissible*.
2. Example:
   - An NGT order (April 2023) noted 20,668 coral colonies in the prohibited zone.
   - Despite this, the Environment Ministry attempted to treat it as CRZ-IB/CRZ-II to allow construction.

Procedural Lapses and Conflicting Reports

1. The Ministry's own submissions conflict with the reports of:
   - The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)
   - Project proponent ANIIDCO
2. Example: NCSCM's ground-truthing survey was *not made public*, raising transparency concerns.

"Conservation Measures After Damage" Approach

1. Ministry admitted that conservation and mitigation measures would be implemented **till 2052**, implying acceptance that the project may harm biodiversity but measures would follow later.
2. This reflects a **fait accompli** approach rather than precautionary planning.

Weak Environmental Governance & Lack of Accountability

1. The Ministry justified non-disclosure by citing "defence relevance", although the port is **entirely commercial**.
2. Example: Failure to disclose committee reports to NGT violates principles of **natural justice and environmental transparency**.

Global Practices

Australia – Great Barrier Reef Protection Framework	Strict bans on dredging near coral ecosystems; all port development must undergo climate vulnerability assessments.
USA – Endangered Species Act	Any project threatening habitats of endangered species (like turtles) must undergo mandatory Biological Assessments.
Costa Rica – Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	Coastal infrastructure around turtle nesting beaches is heavily restricted; eco-tourism is prioritized over ports.
Philippines – Coastal Greenbelt Strategy	Restoration of mangroves is mandatory before undertaking large coastal construction.

IN Indian Committees & Their Recommendations

Madhav Gadgil Committee (Western Ghats)	Stronger focus on protecting ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs). Emphasizes **no-go zones** for large infrastructure.
Kasturirangan Committee	Calls for a balance between development and conservation. Strong monitoring and scientific review for projects in fragile regions.
Swaminathan Committee (Coastal Zone Management)	Protect nesting sites of marine species. Strengthen CRZ enforcement for island ecosystems.
National Biodiversity Authority Recommendations	Ensure mandatory biodiversity impact assessments for all island development projects.

Way Forward

1. **Respect the Ecological Limits of Great Nicobar**
   - Declare Galathea Bay a **No-Development Zone** due to its CRZ-IA and Schedule-I species importance.
2. **Conduct a Fresh, Independent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**
   - Involve independent scientists, NCBS, SACON, ZSI, and coastal experts.
   - Make all reports public to ensure transparency.
3. **Adopt a "Development with Ecological Fencing" Model**
   - Restrict infrastructure to already-modified land areas.
   - Avoid building in coral, mangrove, or turtle-nesting zones.
4. **Strengthen Coastal Regulation Enforcement**
   - Empower NGT and National Coastal Zone Authorities with real-time monitoring tools.
   - Penalize misreporting or downgrading of CRZ categories.

5. **Promote Low-Impact Development Alternatives**
   - ➢ Eco-tourism, research stations, and biodiversity conservation hubs
   - ➢ Renewable energy micro-grids instead of thermal power projects.

Conclusion

The Great Nicobar Project highlights the urgent need for **science-led planning, transparent governance, and strict adherence to environmental law**. While development is essential, it cannot override fragile island ecosystems that host globally significant biodiversity. A balanced approach—anchored in ecological integrity and sustainable development—must guide India's policy choices for its strategic island territories.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements about Galathea Bay:
1. It is classified under CRZ-IA as per Indian coastal regulation laws.
2. It is a major nesting site for the Leatherback Turtle, a Schedule I species.
3. Large port construction is permissible in CRZ-IA areas under certain conditions.

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

Correct Answer: A

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. The Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project exposes major contradictions in India's environmental governance framework. Discuss the ecological, legal, and institutional issues involved. Suggest a balanced pathway for development in ecologically sensitive areas. (15 marks)

Student Notes ✍️

Too Little, Much Later: The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules and RTI Rights

Source: Editorial analysis, November 2025
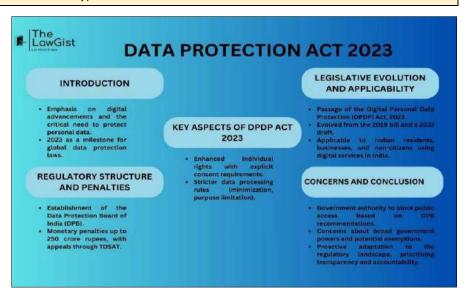
UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2)
- **GS2:** Governance (Digital Laws, RTI, Fundamental Rights)
- **GS3:** Technology (Privacy, Data Economy)
- **GS4:** Ethics (Transparency, Accountability)

Introduction

Eight years after the Supreme Court recognized privacy as a fundamental right, India's Digital Personal Data Protection Rules (2023) have finally been notified. While the rules offer some overdue privacy safeguards, they are marred by delays, complexity, and—crucially—by amendments that undermine the Right to Information (RTI), risking the country's hard-won culture of transparency.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 2023

Key Issues

1. **Delayed Policy and Accountability Gaps**
   - Delayed implementation has allowed inconsistent data handling and erosion of public trust and oversight.
   - Example: Many provisions have been hurried through, with poor inter-departmental consultation and little Assembly-level debate on public impact.

2. **Undermining RTI and Open Governance**
   - The rules amend the RTI Act to weaken citizens' access to information—potentially shielding government databases and decisions from scrutiny.
   - Example: Centralizing more power in the Data Protection Board without matching enforcement or appeal safeguards.

3. **Corporatization and Compliance Overreach**
   - Small entities and NGOs face rising compliance burdens, while large firms retain leeway in self-regulation and cross-border data flows.
   - Example: The new law's vague accountability structure may dilute consumer recourse and place citizens' rights at the mercy of opaque systems.

4. **Risk of Bureaucratic and Executive Overreach**

> **Key Fact**
> The 2023 rules arrived after three draft laws and long policy limbo, but incorporate dilutions of RTI (Section 8(1)(j)), making access to public information harder and shifting the balance toward state secrecy and exemption.

- The law empowers government agencies to exempt themselves from disclosure obligations on vague grounds of national security or "public order."
- Example: Without effective independent oversight, the spirit of privacy and transparency could be lost in rule-based exemptions.

Global Practices

EU (GDPR)	Strong, independent regulatory bodies, clear appeal systems, minimal "national security" exemptions.
UK/Canada	Strong data ombudsmen and regular, public impact assessments for major digital laws.
Brazil	Civil society consultation and periodic review of impacts on information rights.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Parliamentary Standing Committee	Restore and clarify RTI protections, mandate broader public consultation before major data privacy changes.
Ministry of Electronics & IT	Specify clear, transparent grievance redress and periodic review mechanisms for the Data Protection Board.
Justice Ministry	Institute annual public audits on the impact of data laws on access to information.

Way Forward

1. **Protect Open, Accountable Governance**
   - Amend digital privacy rules to restore RTI protections and require independent oversight of exemptions.
2. **Safeguard Individual and Public Rights**
   - Ensure transparent appeal processes, public audits, and proportionality in compliance requirements.
3. **Balance Privacy with Transparency**
   - Enable digital privacy without weakening public interest access to information or enabling secrecy.
4. **Consult and Empower Civil Society**
   - Mandate regular stakeholder input and public reporting on data law impacts.
5. **Upgrade Digital Lawmaking Procedures**
   - Align data governance reforms with global best practices and India's constitutional values.

Conclusion

India's digital future depends on rules that protect both privacy and transparency. The new data protection regime must evolve to genuinely balance these rights—or risk turning privacy into a shield that blocks, rather than builds, public trust.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is the principal danger of the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules as criticized in the editorial?
   a) Only slow implementation
   b) Dilution of Right to Information, risk of secrecy, weak oversight
   c) No impact on government functions
   d) Too much data for citizens

Answer: B) Dilution of Right to Information, risk of secrecy, weak oversight

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's privacy regime must not undermine the RTI and open governance." Critically discuss the tensions between data protection and transparency. (250 words)

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Swing, But Do Not Miss: India's Renewed Battle Against Tuberculosis

Source: Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2 & 3)
- **GS2:** Health (Communicable Disease Control, Governance, Policy Implementation)
- **GS3:** Science & Tech (Innovation in Diagnostics, Drugs, Health Systems)
- **Essay/Society:** Public Health, Social Justice

Introduction

The WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2025 brings mixed news for India: while TB incidence is falling at the fastest global rate, India remains the epicenter—bearing 27% of the world's burden and the highest case numbers. Momentum is strong, but success will now depend on closing stubborn gaps, innovating for multidrug resistance, and sustaining social and political will.

The two main types of tuberculosis (TB) are:

1. **'Pulmonary TB':** This type of TB affects the lungs. It is the most common form and is contagious, spreading through airborne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

2. **'Extrapulmonary TB (EPTB)':** This occurs outside the lungs, affecting organs like lymph nodes, bones, brain, kidneys, or the pleura. It is less contagious and usually spreads within the body from the lungs.

Key Issues

1. **Burden Remains, Despite Acceleration**
   - India's States like UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, and MP lead in cases; Delhi tops for infection rate.
   - Example: Urban slums and migrant hubs remain underdiagnosed zones, highlighting the need for targeted outreach beyond data.

2. **Drug Resistance and Treatment Gaps**
   - India accounts for a third of global MDR-TB and rifampicin-resistant TB cases, with 17% of new and 59% of retreatment cases affected.
   - Example: The report flags continuing shortfalls in successful MDR/rif-TB cure rates and drug access despite recent treatment successes.

Key Fact

TB incidence in India dropped 27% (from 257 to 187 per lakh) between 2015 and 2024. Despite this, India still reports the world's highest MDR-TB burden (33% of cases), and the TB death rate is still three times higher than fleshed-out government estimates.

3. **Sustaining Policy and Innovation**
   - Initiatives like Ni-kshay Mitra, Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan, and DBT have catalyzed community and private sector support—but must deepen in reach and efficacy.
   - Example: Community-volunteer "TB buddies" and digital monitoring, but coverage and upskilling still lag in rural and marginalized areas.

MYCOBACTERIUM TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

WAXY CELL WALL
└ from MYCOLIC ACID
└ "ACID-FAST"

ZIEHL-NEELSEN STAIN

ROD-SHAPED

NEEDS OXYGEN
STRICT AEROBES

BRIGHT RED

4. **Financing, Research, and Systems Reinforcement**

➢ Progress needs consistent financing, modern diagnostics, accelerated vaccine/drug R&D, and well-governed supply chains to prevent relapses and resistance.

➢ Example: TB deaths fell by 22% since 2015, yet absolute mortality remains high, underlining the persistence of health system gaps.

Global Practices

China	Integrated screening and rural mobile clinics for last-mile case finding, with universal MDR-TB drug access.
South Africa	Routine community surveillance and direct incentives for TB screening among high-risk groups.
Brazil	Rapid treatment algorithms, voucher-based adherence for marginalized TB patients.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Expand rapid diagnostics, DNA-based and AI-supported surveillance, and regularize TB drug supply at state and district levels.
Niti Aayog/Finance Ministry	Increase funding for TB innovation, direct transition from donor-funded to self-sustained national programs.
State Health Departments	Train local stakeholders for MDR-TB care and incentivize community detection in high-burden zones.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Case Detection and Cure**
   ➢ Intensify mass awareness, last-mile diagnosis, and ensure timely treatment completion.
2. **Target MDR-TB with Urgency**
   ➢ Make high-tech diagnostics and 2nd-line drugs free and widely accessible, integrate private sector for all rounds of care.
3. **Sustain Financing & Private Engagement**
   ➢ Secure predictable financing streams and incentivize pharma/tech innovation for the TB mission.
4. **Deploy Data, Tech, and Grassroot Volunteers**
   ➢ Expand smart surveillance, digital platforms, and empower "TB Champions" from survivor communities.
5. **Localized Governance and Social Mobilization**
   ➢ Involve Panchayats and urban local bodies in TB drives; sustain anti-stigma campaigns and social safety for affected families.

Conclusion

Steady decline in TB cases shows that national resolve works—but the world's largest burden will only lift if India continually adapts, innovates, and mobilizes at every level to finish the fight.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is currently the largest roadblock to India's TB elimination mission?
   a) Only financing
   b) MDR-TB burden and rural detection/treatment gaps
   c) Urban air pollution
   d) Exclusive reliance on central funds

Answer: B) MDR-TB burden and rural detection/treatment gaps

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's TB elimination drive requires sustained policy, robust R&D, and comprehensive grassroots action—especially to close the rural and MDR-TB gaps." Analyse. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

India–Africa Relations: Connecting, Building and Reviving a New Strategic Partnership

Source: *Based on the editorial by Syed Akbaruddin (The Hindu, November 2025)*

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2
- India's Foreign Policy
- International Relations (India–Africa)

GS Paper 3
- Economic Cooperation, Digital Public Infrastructure
- Energy, Technology, Connectivity

Introduction

A decade after India hosted the landmark India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in 2015—where all 54 African nations participated—India's partnership with Africa stands at a critical juncture. Trade has crossed USD 100 billion, investment is expanding, and India is increasingly seen as a trusted development partner. Yet, as Africa undergoes rapid political, economic, and demographic transformation, India must shift from symbolic engagement to **value-driven, future-oriented cooperation** that reflects shared aspirations for growth, digital transformation, and global representation.

Key Issues & Challenges

1. **Shifting Global & African Priorities**
   - Africa's needs have evolved from traditional aid to **technology, digital connectivity, clean energy, and mobility solutions**.
   - **Example:** India's EXIM Bank extended USD 40 million to ECOWAS Bank (2025) for innovation-driven projects—signalling Africa's new focus.

2. **India's Engagement Still Lags Behind China**
   India is a top investor in Africa but loses ground to China due to:
   - slower project delivery,
   - bureaucratic delays,
   - limited financial instruments.
   - **Example:** Indian firms struggle with improved speed of implementation compared to Chinese-funded mega projects.

3. **New Competition & A Changing African Landscape**

INDIA - AFRICA IN NUMBERS — GATEWAY HOUSE

India and Africa have a combined population of **2.3 billion**

Indian diaspora in Africa consists of nearly **3 million** people.

There is a **50,000**-strong ethnic African diaspora in India who descended from Bantu peoples of Southeast Africa.

India-Africa bilateral trade is estimated to be around **$70 billion**

The trade has increased **20 times** in the past 15 years.

Nearly **4,500** Indian soldiers are on the ground in Africa under various UN peacekeeping missions.

A fully formed Indian female police unit is also present in Liberia.

India offers **900** scholarships to African students each year.

Indian owned/operated companies are **2nd largest employers in Nigeria**.

3% of South African population consists of people of Indian origin.

India is currently spending **$7.5 billion** on infrastructure projects in over **40 countries**.

Africa is asserting its economic identity through frameworks like:

➤ **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**
➤ emerging innovation centres (e.g., Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria)
➤ **Example:** Cities like Kigali and Lagos are becoming digital and fintech hubs competing for global talent.

4. **Underutilised Human Link Potential**
    ➤ India taught over **40,000 African students** through ICCR, ITEC, and e-network programmes.
    ➤ Many are now senior officials, policymakers, entrepreneurs in Africa.
    ➤ Yet India has not fully leveraged these strong alumni networks.

5. **Absence of a New IAFS Summit Since 2015**
    ➤ IAFS-III raised expectations but its momentum has faded.
    ➤ No high-level summit has been held for a decade despite African leaders seeking deeper engagement.

Global Practices

China's Africa Strategy	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Large infrastructure financing Political outreach through FOCAC Summits Learning for India: faster delivery, integrated regional projects.
EU's Global Gateway Initiative	Prioritises digital connectivity and green energy. Learning: Africa wants digital highways, not only physical highways.
US–Africa Digital & Health Partnerships	Focus on areas where Africa's youth can participate. Learning: value-based cooperation wins long-term trust.

IN Indian Committees & Recommendations Relevant to Africa Policy

Committee / Group	Recommendations / Points
IN MEA's Development Partnership Administration (DPA) Review	• Expand grant-based development financing • Prioritise capacity-building over loans
IN NITI Aayog – Global South Strategy	• Use India Stack & UPI for global digital partnerships • Promote co-development of climate and health solutions
IN India–Africa Joint Working Groups (various sectors) Recommend:	• defence cooperation • maritime security • digital payments & fintech partnerships • food & pharma value chains

Way Forward

1. **Connect Finance to Real Outcomes**
    ➤ India must move beyond symbolic lines of credit (LoCs).
    ➤ Focus on **outcome-based financing** for health, mobility, clean energy and education.
    ➤ Use public finance to **de-risk private investment**.
    ➤ **Why?** Africa seeks tangible results, not incomplete projects.

2. **Build an India–Africa Digital Partnership Corridor**
    ➤ Combine **India Stack (UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker)** with Africa's digital strengths.
    ➤ Co-create platforms for:
        ✓ cross-border digital payments
        ✓ telemedicine

- ✓ online education
- ✓ e-governance
- ✓ **Example:** India's IIT Madras–Zanzibar campus proves the model of Indo-African academic collaboration.

3. **Revive the Institutional Backbone – Relaunch IAFS**
   - ➢ A decade has passed since IAFS-III (2015).
   - ➢ A new IAFS-IV is essential to:
     - ✓ set fresh goals
     - ✓ coordinate ministries
     - ✓ remove bureaucratic overlaps
     - ✓ develop 10-year action plans
     - ✓ **Outcome:** Makes Africa a permanent pillar of India's foreign policy calendar.

4. **Expand Security & Maritime Partnerships**
   - ➢ Strengthen anti-piracy cooperation in Western Indian Ocean.
   - ➢ Joint training, naval exercises, and defence manufacturing.
   - ➢ **Rationale:** Africa's east coast is vital for India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

5. **Leverage the Human Link**
   - ➢ Build a **Pan-Africa India Alumni Network**.
   - ➢ Offer joint incubators, innovation labs, and exchange fellowships.
   - ➢ **Why?** Alumni are India's natural ambassadors in Africa.

6. **Promote Green Energy & Climate Collaboration**
   - ➢ Co-develop green hydrogen, solar parks, and electricity corridors.
   - ➢ Align with Africa's needs under **AfCFTA**.

Conclusion

India–Africa relations are entering a decisive phase. With Africa becoming the world's growth engine by 2050, India must adopt a bold, structured, and future-ready approach. The partnership must evolve from transactional engagement to **co-creation, shared innovation, and sustainable development**.

The time has come for India and Africa to **connect, build, and revive** a partnership that shapes the Global South's emerging order.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following initiatives:

1. Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
2. India Stack
3. India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)
4. Pan-African e-Network

Which of the above are mechanisms that can promote digital or economic integration between India and Africa?

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

Correct Answer: A

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Q1. India–Africa relations have grown significantly over the past decade, yet they remain far below their full potential. Examine the opportunities and challenges in strengthening India–Africa cooperation and propose a strategic roadmap for the next decade. (15 marks)

Student Notes ✍

Lower Judiciary Crisis in India: Pendency, Procedural Burdens & the Need for Systemic Reform

Source: Editorial Analysis – *The Hindu*, November 2025

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper 2
- Judiciary: Structure, Functioning, Reforms
- Challenges in Governance
- Separation of Powers & Judicial Accountability
- Access to Justice

GS Paper 3
- Efficient Service Delivery
- Institutional Reforms

Essay
- Justice Delivery System
- Rule of Law
- Public Service Delivery & Governance

Introduction

The lower judiciary—comprising district and subordinate courts—is the foundation of India's justice system. Yet it is overwhelmed by pendency, outdated procedures, shortage of trained judges, and systemic inefficiencies. Recent observations by the Chief Justice of India and data from the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) reveal **over 4.69 crore pending cases**, most of them in district courts. This stagnation not only delays justice but erodes public trust, burdens higher courts, and weakens the rule of law.

Supreme Court of India
- Its decisions are binding on all courts.
- Can transfer Judges of High Courts.
- Can move cases from any court to itself.
- Can transfer cases from one High Court to another.

High Court
- Can hear appeals from lower courts.
- Can issue writs for restoring Fundamental Rights.
- Can deal with cases within the jurisdiction of the State.
- Exercises superintendence and control over courts below it.

District Court
- Deals with cases arising in the District.
- Considers appeals on decisions given by lower courts.
- Decides cases involving serious criminal offences.

Subordinate Courts
- Consider cases of civil and criminal nature

Key Issues

1. **Massive Pendency & Procedural Delays**
   - District courts handle *summons, warrant issuance, filing, evidence recording,* and administrative tasks—leaving very little time for actual hearings.
   - Many cases are listed repeatedly (10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.), yet barely progress.
   - **Example:** Even uncontested matters (like divorce by mutual consent) take months due to cumbersome filing, mediation stages, and repeated adjournments.

2. **Outdated Procedural Laws (CPC & Civil Rules)**
   - Civil Procedure Code (CPC) provisions cause unnecessary listing, re-hearing, and duplication.
   - New provisions—even those introduced for speedy disposal—often worsen delays.
   - **Example:**
   - Section **12A of Commercial Courts Act** mandates pre-institution mediation.
   - But courts misuse it to **delay** proceedings, especially where mediation is not meaningful (e.g., business disputes where negotiation is already attempted).

3. **Clerical Burden on Judges**

Subordinate judges handle:

➢ ministerial tasks,
➢ issuing summons,
➢ receiving vakalatnama,
➢ recording pleadings,
➢ dictating orders.
➢ This drastically reduces the time for actual hearings.
➢ **Example:** A judicial officer's entire morning is spent calling cases and recording appearances instead of advancing trials.

4. **Confusion & Inefficiency in Procedural Requirements**

   Some procedural rules actively *create* litigation:

   ➢ Mandatory written statements within 30 days rarely work.
   ➢ Partition suits and property disputes remain unresolved for years.
   ➢ **Example:** Written statements filed on the 91st day are still being accepted, defeating the purpose of Rule 1 CPC Amendment.

5. **Poor Training & Lack of Institutional Support**

   ➢ Many newly appointed judges lack adequate training.
   ➢ District courts differ widely in process efficiency.
   ➢ **Example:** Some High Courts regularly monitor district backlog; others rarely review subordinate courts' performance.

Global Practices

UK	Online courts, e-filing, digital summons Mandatory pre-litigation resolution
Singapore	"Judge-led case management" ensures strict timelines for each stage.
USA	Plea bargaining, case consolidation, and strong paralegal system
European Union	Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is primary, litigation is last resort
Learning for India	Digitised procedures, strict timelines, ADR-first culture.

IN Indian Committees & Recommendations

Malimath Committee (2003)	Case management systems Increasing judge strength
Law Commission of India (Various Reports)	Simplification of CPC Reducing adjournments Time-bound disposal
Justice N.V. Ramana-led Judicial Infrastructure Authority Proposal	A centralised authority to upgrade court logistics
National Court Management Systems (NCMS)	Monitor judge performance Digital case-flow tracking
e-Courts Phase III Vision Document	Fully paperless courts AI-based listing and cause list management

Way Forward

1. **Separate Judicial & Administrative Functions**

➢ Appoint **court managers**, clerks, and administrative assistants.
➢ Judges should focus solely on arguments, evidence, and judgments.

2. **Strict Case Management & Time Bound Procedures**
   ➢ Mandatory timelines for each stage (filing → hearing → disposal).
   ➢ Automatic closure of stages (e.g., written statements after deadline).

3. **Expand Digital Courts & Virtual Hearings**
   ➢ E-summons, e-warrants, online evidence submission.
   ➢ AI tools for:
     ○ listing,
     ○ scheduling,
     ○ identifying delay-prone cases.

4. **Strengthen Pre-litigation Resolution**
   ➢ Mandatory mediation for civil & commercial disputes.
   ➢ Fast-track and Lok Adalat systems revamped.

5. **Increase Judge Strength & Improve Training**
   ➢ Recruit more judicial officers.
   ➢ Mandatory annual refresher training.
   ➢ Specialised judges for family law, commercial law, tenancy, etc.

6. **Simplify Civil Procedure Code (CPC)**
   ➢ Remove redundant steps, allow summary disposal.
   ➢ Reduce scope for adjournments.

7. **Performance Review of District Courts**
   ➢ High Courts must monitor clearance rate, infrastructure, and productivity.
   ➢ Publish monthly pendency dashboards.

Conclusion

The lower judiciary forms the backbone of India's justice system. But pendency, outdated laws, inadequate staffing, and procedural rigidity have pushed it into a state of stagnation.

Reforms must focus on **administrative optimisation, procedural simplification, digital transformation, and capacity-building**.

A responsive, efficient, and modern lower judiciary is indispensable for ensuring timely justice and strengthening India's democratic foundations.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which of the following issues most severely contributes to pendency in India's lower judiciary, as highlighted in the article?
1. Excessive administrative workload on judges
2. Outdated procedural laws
3. Lack of commercial courts
4. Multiple adjournments

Select the correct answer:
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1, 2 and 4 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer: B

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "The subordinate judiciary in India suffers from structural inefficiencies, outdated procedures and rising pendency." Discuss the causes and suggest long-term reforms to make lower courts efficient and citizen-friendly. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Between US and Saudi Arabia, Israel Is the Elephant in the Room: The Changing Middle East Chessboard
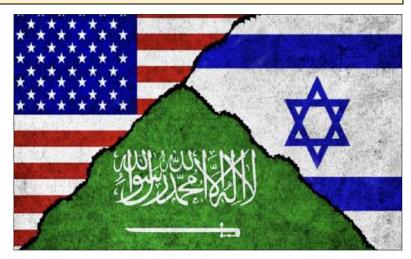
Source: Raja Mohan, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 2)
- **GS2:** International Relations (West Asia, US Foreign Policy, India and the World)
- **GS3:** Security (Geo-Strategy, Energy, Defence)
- **Essay:** Diplomacy and Multilateralism

Introduction

Saudi Crown Prince **MBS's visit to Washington signals a possible diplomatic breakthrough in the US–Saudi–Israel triangle and could reshape the post-Abraham Accords Middle East**. With US interests shifting and regional unstable, Israel's place remains the silent dealmaker in broader strategic calculations.

Key Issues

1. **US–Saudi–Israel Dynamics**
   - The US relies on Saudi support for stabilizing the region and retaining its influence; Riyadh needs US security guarantees, tech, and leverage for internal reforms.
   - *Example*: A Saudi–Israel normalization, building on Abraham Accords, is being quietly encouraged by Washington as a mega shift toward a new political order.

2. **Israel as the Quiet Dealbreaker**
   - Progress on Saudi–Israel ties is pivotal: Riyadh advocates a "credible pathway" to Palestinian statehood as a minimum, while US pressure remains on Netanyahu to show compromise.
   - *Example*: Recent UN Security Council deliberations and "board of peace" formulae make Israeli positions central to regional diplomacy.

> **Key Fact**
> - Saudi Arabia seeks US security, tech transfer, and nuclear cooperation, while the US wants Riyadh's buy-in for its West Asia policy, especially for stabilizing global energy and containing Iran.
> - MBS's reforms, succession plans, and pursuit of strategic autonomy are reshaping Saudi foreign and economic policy.

3. **Riyadh's Multi-Vector Policy (Vision 2030)**
   - MBS is diversifying Saudi economy and security, investing in AI, strategic energy, defence, space—with US and Israel as technology partners, but simultaneously keeping options open with Russia and China.
   - *Example*: Saudi investments in Aramco, energy transition, mega-projects, and arms co-development.

4. **US Global Priorities and Regional Shifts**
   - Washington's posture in the region is complicated by political flux at home, growing China involvement, and Iran. The US weighs how far to press Israeli–Saudi normalization and what concessions to extract.

➤ *Example*: Under Trump and Biden, US–Israel–Arab alignments have oscillated; new formulas now include possible multinational peacekeeping, humanitarian, and economic frameworks.

5. **New Architecture for the Middle East**
   ➤ The future of Middle East order depends on how deftly the US manages the triple axis: Israeli flexibility, Saudi assertion, and sustainable regional frameworks.
   ➤ *Example*: The "credible pathway" for Palestinians and Saudi's board-of-peace ideas might redefine security cooperation, investment, and multilateral diplomacy.

Global Practices

Egypt/UAE/Bahrain	Early Abraham Accords signatories set precedents for normalization without full Palestinian resolution.
Iran/Turkey	Continue rivalry and diplomatic hedging amid shifting regional alliances.
EU/UN	Push for multiparty settlements, humanitarian priorities, and legal frameworks.

Indian Committee Recommendations

MEA/West Asia Division	Monitor normalization talks, scale up energy, trade, and security cooperation with all three actors.
National Security Council	Assess fallout of likely Saudi–Israel–US deals for India's energy basket and diaspora interests.
Strategic Research Cells	Track AI/defence tech transfers and regional economic corridors shaped by evolving trilateral ties.

Way Forward

1. **Support Multipolar Engagement**
   ➤ Build trade and diplomatic bridges with all three, anticipate strategic realignments.
2. **Monitor Regional Security and Tech Flows**
   ➤ Assess ripple effects of defence and innovation partnerships for Indian interests.
3. **Engage Proactively in New Forums**
   ➤ Participate in new Middle East economic and peace arrangements.
4. **Balance Ethical Positions with Interests**
   ➤ Navigate India's support for Palestinian self-determination while pursuing practical partnerships.

Conclusion

The US–Saudi–Israel triangle is the new axis for Middle East transformation. For India and the world, watching how these "elephants in the room" align, diverge, or compromise will determine the next phase of West Asian order—where strategic patience, realism, and nuanced diplomacy matter most.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. What is the core "elephant in the room" in the evolving US–Saudi Arabia dynamic, as per the editorial?
   a) Only Iran's nuclear program
   b) Israel's role as a silent strategic player shaping peace and normalization
   c) Oil prices
   d) Russia's new alliances

Answer: B) Israel's role as a silent strategic player shaping peace and normalization

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "US–Saudi normalization with Israel could transform the Middle East, realigning both security and economic structures." Critically discuss India's interests and the diplomatic way forward. (250 words)

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Student Notes ✍

Time to Sort Out India's Cereal Mess: Fixing Procurement, Stocks, and Crop Diversification

Source: T. Ramakrishnan, Editorial analysis, November 2025

UPSC Relevance (GS Paper 3)
- GS3: Economy (Food Security, Procurement, Subsidy Reform)
- GS2: Governance (Agriculture Policy, Federalism)
- Essay: Agrarian Reform, Sustainable Development

Introduction

The kerfuffle over **Tamil Nadu's paddy procurement is symptomatic of a deeper malaise in India's foodgrain policy—a "paradox of plenty" where excess stocks, mounting fiscal costs, farmer risk aversion, and import dependencies coexist.** Addressing this requires urgent reforms in procurement, data use, and targeted incentives for diversification beyond rice and wheat.

Key Fact
- India procured nearly 19.86 lakh tonnes of paddy (rice) in October 2025 but stocks of rice, wheat, and PDS grains vastly exceed requirements.
- Since 2014, India locked in a minimum 135 lakh tonnes annual edible oil imports, while oilseed and pulse productivity is stagnant or inconsistent.

Key Issues

1. **Procurement Paradoxes and Excess Stock**
   - Procurement routinely overshoots needs; in October 2025, rice stocks were more than three times higher than required for the PDS.
   - *Example*: Despite such surpluses, farm distress and subsidy leakage persist, with actual offtake under schemes much below procurement volumes.

2. **Neglect of Pulses and Oilseeds**
   - India is the world's largest pulse producer, but MSP-based procurement remains ad hoc, and oilseed sectors underperform—fueling massive import bills for edible oil.
   - *Example*: Even states leading in pulse harvests see MSP procurement only for certified lots, not at scale.

3. **Inadequate Diversification Strategies**
   - Crop diversification is touted but undermined by policy uncertainties, uncoordinated market signals, and fear about returns.
   - *Example*: Diversification pilots are small; apprehension over selling non-cereal crops at remunerative prices persists.

4. **Role of Edible Oil Imports and Sectoral Stagnation**
   - About 55% of demand for edible oil is met by imports, despite 25 years of "self-reliance in oilseeds" rhetoric; Ukraine war and price spikes exposed vulnerabilities.
   - *Example*: The 400-lakh-tonne vegetable oil demand plateaued, with domestic market still unable to close the gap.

5. **Federated Reforms and Institutional Innovations**
   - Greater role for FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations), direct buyer linkages, and targeted research/extension can enable sustainable diversification and rational procurement.

> *Example*: Successful crop switches abroad required steady price signals and assured markets, not just administrative orders.

Global Practices

Brazil/Argentina	MSPs tied to multi-year commodity plans, guided by regular review and input from cooperatives.
US/EU	Crop insurance and direct income support, market-aligned subsidies for shifting from core cereals to other crops.
China	Hybrid procurement and real-time digital monitoring systems for pulses, corn, and oilseeds.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Ministries of Agriculture & Food	Update and rationalize MSP, limit open-ended paddy procurement, strengthen procurement of pulses/oilseeds, incentivize sugar/oilseed crop switches.
NITI Aayog	Expand FPOs with capacity-building for direct sales/contract farming; pilot digital market linkage platforms for non-cereal produce.
State Governments	Invest in region-specific crop mapping, model contract design, and agro-processing clusters for new crops.

Way Forward

1. **Restrict Open-Ended Cereal Procurement**
   > Set clear public stock limits, use real-time data, and scale down procurement where stocks are excessive.

2. **Boost Pulses and Oilseed Support**
   > Widen MSP and procurement to include key non-cereals, strengthen extension and credit for pulse and oilseed farmers.

3. **Institutionalize Diversification Incentives**
   > Offer farmers guaranteed price support and market access for diversified crops; use FPOs and public–private tie-ups.

4. **Modernize Data and Supply Chain Practices**
   > Realign procurement, storage, and distribution with tech tools and real-time analytics for efficiency.

5. **Promote Participatory Policy Design**
   > Engage farmers, buyers, state officials, and scientists to pilot support schemes, refine incentives, and ensure durable transitions.

Conclusion

India's food policy must change gears: not just managing surpluses but enabling smarter, diversified, and fairer outcomes for farmers and consumers. Sustainable procurement reform, not crisis-driven patchwork, is the need of the hour.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Why does the editorial argue for urgent reform in India's procurement and crop diversification?
   a) Only high fertilizer use
   b) Excess cereal stocks, neglect of pulses/oilseeds, subsidy waste, and fragile diversification incentives
   c) Lack of irrigation
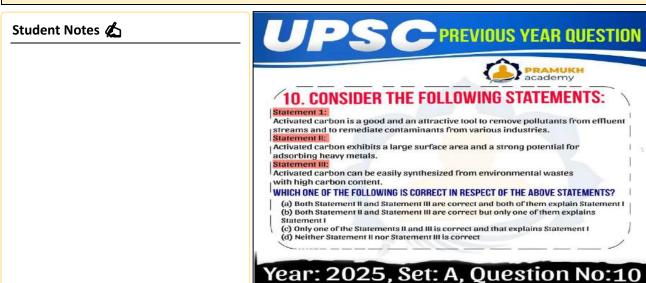
d) No digital tools in use

Answer: B) Excess cereal stocks, neglect of pulses/oilseeds, subsidy waste, and fragile diversification incentives

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "From procurement excess to oilseed imports, fixing India's food policy means real limits and durable incentives for sustainable diversification." Discuss needed reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

UPSC PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

PRAMUKH academy

10. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Statement 1:
Activated carbon is a good and an attractive tool to remove pollutants from effluent streams and to remediate contaminants from various industries.
Statement II:
Activated carbon exhibits a large surface area and a strong potential for adsorbing heavy metals.
Statement III:
Activated carbon can be easily synthesized from environmental wastes with high carbon content.

WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS CORRECT IN RESPECT OF THE ABOVE STATEMENTS?

(a) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I
(b) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct but only one of them explains Statement I
(c) Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I
(d) Neither Statement II nor Statement III is correct

Year: 2025, Set: A, Question No:10

Student Notes ✍

Redefining TB Eradication: India's Innovations and the Future of Global TB Control

Source: *The Hindu* Editorial Analysis, November 2025

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

> **UPSC Subject Relevance**
>
> **GS Paper 2**
> - Health Sector Reforms
> - Government Policies
> - International Health Partnerships
> - Role of Science & Technology in Governance
>
> **GS Paper 3**
> - Biotechnology & Diagnostics
> - Public Health Challenges
> - Inclusive Growth & Innovation
>
> **Essay Topics**
> - Health for All
> - Technology and Human Development
> - Innovation in Public Policy
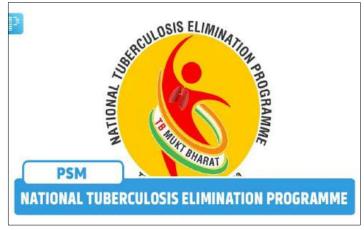
Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, claiming millions of lives annually and disproportionately affecting low-resource countries. While treatments have long existed, **diagnostic delays** and **access inequalities** continue to fuel transmission and mortality.

The article highlights a pivotal shift driven by **portable, point-of-care molecular diagnostics**—particularly India-led innovations—that are transforming global TB detection, treatment, and

eradication efforts. These advancements not only enhance early diagnosis but also reshape the global public health narrative with scalable, low-cost technologies.

Key Issues

1. **Conventional TB Diagnosis Was Slow & Inaccessible**
   - Historically relied on sputum smear microscopy or culture tests, which take weeks.
   - Poor sensitivity often delayed treatment initiation.
   - **Example:** Central-lab culture results could take up to 6 weeks, causing disease progression and further transmission.

2. **Innovation Gap in Low-Resource Countries**
   - High-burden countries lacked affordable, portable molecular diagnostics.
   - **Example:** Many rural health centres in Africa and Asia have no central laboratory support.

3. **Challenges in Diagnosing Drug-Resistant TB**

- ➢ Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) requires quick identification of the rifampicin resistance gene.
- ➢ **Example:** Before portable PCR tools, many patients received wrong or delayed treatment.
4. **Diagnostic Barriers in Children**
   - ➢ Children struggle to produce sputum samples.
   - ➢ **Example:** Nigeria is experimenting with **stool-based Truenat tests**, enabling easier pediatric diagnosis.
5. **Persistent Social and Health Determinants**
   - ➢ Under-nutrition, poverty, and weak surveillance systems hinder TB elimination.
   - ➢ **Example:** Studies indicate undernutrition contributes to ~40% of TB burden in India.

Global Practices

WHO-Endorsed Point-of-Care Diagnostics	WHO approved Truenat, GeneXpert, and other portable PCR platforms. These devices enable rapid, decentralised testing worldwide.
Community-Based TB Screening (Africa)	Mobile clinics in Mozambique and Tanzania provide on-site testing and immediate treatment. Reduced diagnostic delays significantly.
Kochon Prize Initiatives	Recognises global innovations in TB control, emphasising technological and community-driven solutions.

IN Indian Committees / Government Recommendations

National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)	Recommends universal molecular testing for all suspected cases. Mandates decentralised testing through Truenat and GeneXpert.
India TB Report (Various years)	Strengthen active case finding Nutrition support (Nikshay Poshan Yojana) Drug-resistance surveillance expansion
ICMR Scientific Task Force on TB	Advocates innovation in diagnostics, shorter regimens, and AI-based tools.
National Strategic Plan for TB (2020–25)	Calls for point-of-care diagnostics at all Primary Health Centres. Integration of private sector and community volunteers for early detection.

Way Forward

1. **Scale Up Universal Access to Molecular Diagnostics**
   - ➢ Ensure every district and PHC has portable PCR devices.
   - ➢ Subsidise test costs to ensure equity.
2. **Integrate TB Care with Nutrition, Social Protection & Mental Health**
   - ➢ Expand **Nikshay Poshan Yojana**, livelihood support, and community outreach.
   - ➢ TB is not just a medical issue—it is a social disease.
3. **Strengthen Surveillance and Digital Tracking**
   - ➢ Use AI-based chest X-ray interpretation.
   - ➢ Integrate Truenat results into a national real-time dashboard.
4. **Foster Public–Private Partnerships**
   - ➢ Scale manufacturing of indigenous diagnostics.
   - ➢ Use CSR funds for mobile clinics in remote areas.
5. **Support Global South Collaboration**
   - ➢ Share India-led solutions with Africa & Asia.

> ➤ Expand South-South innovation exchange networks.

6. **Invest in R&D for Better Vaccines & Shorter Treatment Regimens**
   > ➤ Enhance funding for ICMR, biotechnology startups, and pharma.
   > ➤ Accelerate trials for TB vaccines like MIP & VPM1002.

Conclusion

India's TB innovations—especially portable diagnostics like Truenat—are redefining global TB eradication efforts. Yet, technology alone cannot eliminate TB. A holistic approach integrating **innovation, nutrition, social support, community engagement, and sustained political commitment** is vital.

With timely diagnosis, equitable access, and strong partnerships, India and the world can move closer to a TB-free future.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements about Truenat:

1. It is a WHO-approved point-of-care molecular diagnostic tool for TB.
2. It can detect both TB and drug-resistant TB within an hour.
3. It requires specialised biosafety laboratories for operation.

Which of the statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Portable molecular diagnostics are transforming TB detection and treatment in India, but technology alone cannot eradicate TB." Discuss.

Student Notes ✍️

Recognising Childcare Workers: The Missing Link in India's Social Protection and Human Development

Source: *The Hindu* Editorial Analysis, November 2025

Author: Nitya Rao, Professor – School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, UK

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 1
- **Society:** Women, Child Development, Vulnerable Sections

Essay
- Gender Inequality
- Care Economy
- Social Infrastructure

GS Paper 2
- Governance & Social Justice
- Welfare Schemes (ICDS, Anganwadi)
- Role of NGOs, SHGs, CSR participation

GS Paper 3
- Human Resource Development
- Inclusive Growth

Introduction

Childcare workers—particularly Anganwadi workers (AWWs) and helpers—form the backbone of India's early childhood development system. Despite their critical role in nutrition, pre-school education, immunisation, and community mobilisation, they remain undervalued, underpaid, and largely invisible in official policy.

The article argues that as India faces urbanisation, climate change, migration, and rising women's workforce participation, recognising and strengthening the childcare workforce is essential for social equity, economic growth, and human development.

Key Issues

1. **Chronic Undervaluation and Low Wages**
   - Most childcare workers are regarded as *volunteers*, not professionals.
   - Their average honorarium (₹8,000–₹11,000 per month) is below most unskilled labour wages.
   - **Example:** Workers handling nutrition, immunisation, surveys, and pre-school education are still denied regular pay and labour rights.

2. **Poor Working Conditions & Lack of Social Security**
   - Limited safety measures, absence of maternity benefits, inadequate infrastructure, and heavy documentation workload.
   - **Example:** Many Anganwadi centres double as small, temporary shelters lacking toilets or drinking water facilities.

3. **Gendered Bias in Care Work**
   - Care work is treated socially as "women's duty", leading to devaluation and invisibility in national accounts.
   - **Example:** Time Use Survey (2024) shows women spend 46 minutes/day on childcare vs men's 12 minutes.

4. **Rising Childcare Needs Due to Climate Change & Urbanisation**
   - Extreme weather events disrupt schooling and create need for emergency childcare.
   - Migration to towns leaves children without proper institutional childcare.
   - **Example:** Only **10% of Anganwadi centres** currently operate in urban areas, despite rapid urbanisation.

5. **Policy Gaps and Lack of Professionalisation**
   - No standardised training, skill certification, or promotion pathways.

- ➤ Childcare work not fully integrated into labour laws.
- ➤ **Example:** ICDS is one of the world's largest childcare programmes, yet workers lack clear career mobility and recognition.

Global Practices

Scandinavian Model	Highest global investment in childcare. Professionalised care workforce with high wages and formal training. Universal access for children below 3 years.
OECD Countries	Allocate 1–1.5% of GDP to early childhood education and care (ECEC). Provide career progression and social protection for childcare staff.
Latin America	Community-based childcare programmes (e.g., Brazil's Criança Feliz) integrate nutrition, health, and early learning.
South Korea	CSR-linked childcare programmes ensure public–private partnerships in upgrading child services.

IN Indian Committees & Recommendations

1. **Shramshakti Committee (2021)**
   - ➤ Recognise unpaid and care work in GDP.
   - ➤ Provide social protection to informal care workers
   - ➤ Create local childcare centres for working women.
2. **National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan)**
   - ➤ Strengthen training for Anganwadi staff
   - ➤ Introduce digital support systems & performance incentives
3. **M.S. Swaminathan-led Group (1972)**
   - ➤ Original vision for ICDS: holistic nutrition + pre-school education + maternal care
   - ➤ Emphasised professional recognition of childcare workers.
4. **Ministry of Women & Child Development Advisory Groups**
   - ➤ Recommended improved infrastructure, formal status, and capacity-building for AWWs.

Way Forward

1. **Professionalise Childcare Work**
   - ➤ Recognise workers as paid professionals with grade-wise salaries.
   - ➤ Introduce **National Childcare Worker Certification** & training modules.
2. **Improve Wages, Infrastructure & Social Security**
   - ➤ Minimum wage parity with other public sector workers.
   - ➤ Provide provident fund, health insurance, and maternity benefits.
   - ➤ Upgrade Anganwadi centres with toilets, water, digital devices.
3. **Build Urban and Migrant-Friendly Childcare Networks**
   - ➤ Establish Anganwadi centres near construction sites, rental housing, slums, industrial clusters.
   - ➤ Mobile childcare units for disaster-prone regions.
4. **Integrate Childcare with Climate & Disaster Resilience Plans**
   - ➤ Equip centres to function as community hubs during heatwaves, floods, cyclones.
5. **Expand Public–Private Partnerships & CSR Funding**
   - ➤ Corporate participation in training, infrastructure upgrade, and capacity building.
   - ➤ Ensure accountability through community-led monitoring.
6. **Strengthen Data, Monitoring & Community Engagement**

- ➤ Regular surveys on childcare worker conditions.
- ➤ Engage parents' committees, local governance bodies, women's SHGs.

Conclusion

Childcare workers are essential for nutrition, early learning, and emotional development of millions of children, yet they remain invisible in policymaking. Recognising them as skilled professionals, ensuring fair wages, and strengthening the childcare ecosystem are crucial for gender justice, workforce participation, and long-term human development. A country cannot grow if the hands that nurture its children are undervalued.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which of the following statements about Anganwadi workers in India is/are correct?

1. They are formally recognised as government employees.
2. They provide nutrition, pre-school education, and health services.
3. Their wages are generally lower than minimum wages for unskilled labour in many states.

Choose the correct answer:

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

Correct Answer: B

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Childcare workers form the backbone of India's early childhood development system, yet remain undervalued and underpaid." Discuss the challenges they face and suggest measures to strengthen childcare services in India.

Student Notes ✍

India's Fisheries and Aquaculture: A Promising Growth Story

Source: The hindu

UPSC Relevance: GS paper 3 Indian Economy **Fisheries**

Introduction

India is the **world's second-largest producer of fish**, generating **32 million tonnes (2022)** of aquatic products valued at **₹3.3 lakh crore**, according to FAO-SOFIA 2024. Over the past decade, India's fisheries and aquaculture sectors have expanded rapidly due to **technological innovation, institutional support, coastal aquaculture reforms, and schemes like PMMSY**. Yet, despite 90% of fishers being small-scale, the sector continues to face challenges such as **overfishing, pollution, climate stress, lack of credit, weak traceability, and poor post-harvest infrastructure**, limiting global competitiveness and domestic sustainability.

Key Issues

1. **Overfishing and Environmental Stress**
   - FAO notes depletion of several species in India due to **overextraction**, pollution, and habitat loss.
   - Coastal aquaculture often strains ecosystems through nutrient loading, salinity changes, and land degradation.
2. **Limited Access for Small-Scale Fishers**
   - **>90% of fishers are small-scale**, but they face constraints in:
     - ✓ formal credit
     - ✓ cold-chain logistics
     - ✓ modern boats and gear
     - ✓ quality seed and feed
   - Result: Loss of income and poor integration into high-value export chains.
3. **Weak Value-Chain Infrastructure**
   - India's **post-harvest losses exceed 20–25%**, reducing export potential.
   - Traceability and certification requirements for EU/US markets still lag behind global benchmarks.
4. **Climate Change Vulnerability**
   - Increasing sea temperatures, acidity, cyclones, coastal erosion directly reduce fish stocks and fishing days.
   - Inland aquaculture faces **water scarcity and extreme rainfall cycles**.
5. **Policy and Regulatory Gaps**
   - Fragmented institutional oversight between Centre, States, and coastal authorities slows approvals.
   - Monoculture plantations (e.g., shrimp-only farms) reduce biodiversity and long-term sustainability.

Global Practices

Norway – Digital Traceability Leadership	Uses blockchain-enabled systems for complete traceability "boat-to-plate". India can adopt similar mechanisms for export competitiveness.

Vietnam – Farmer Clusters for Aquaculture	Organizes small farmers into cooperatives for quality control, feed purchases, and market access.
Chile – Climate-Resilient Aquaculture Zones	Regulates aquaculture spatially to reduce disease risk and environmental strain.
Japan – Integrated Port Infrastructure	Modern fishing harbours provide cold storage, processing, and logistics, boosting value addition.

Indian Committee Recommendations

FAO–BOBLME Small Fisheries Report	Strengthen coastal ecosystem management, co-management, and post-harvest improvements.
Meenakshi Committee (Export Competitiveness)	Calls for modernizing fishing harbours, boosting food safety labs, and global traceability compliance.
National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)	Promote species diversification, RAS (Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems), and modern hatchery technology.
Blue Revolution & PMMSY Review Committees	Strengthen digital fishery records, expand "Matsya Seva Kendras", ensure climate adaptation support.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Small-Scale Fisheries**
   - Expand formal credit through **Kisan Credit Card—Fisheries Edition**.
   - Organize fishers into FPOs/cooperatives to enhance bargaining power.
2. **Climate-Resilient Aquaculture**
   - Promote **IMTA (Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture)**, low-carbon shrimp farming, and climate-resilient seed varieties.
3. **Modernize Fishing Harbours**
   - Implement **FAO Technical Cooperation Projects** to upgrade processing, storage, and value addition facilities.
4. **Ensure Traceability and Certification**
   - Create a **national digital traceability platform**, especially for shrimp and seabass exports.
5. **Promote Sustainable Aquaculture Practices**
   - Reduce monoculture; increase native species production; adopt water-efficient, land-efficient farming systems.
6. **Strengthen Research & Innovation**
   - Invest in genomics, disease-resistant broodstock, data-driven fishery forecast models.

Conclusion

India's fisheries and aquaculture sectors are on a high-growth, high-potential trajectory, supported by reforms, technology, and global demand. However, future success requires shifting from **volume-based expansion to sustainable, climate-resilient, community-centric growth**. Strengthening small-scale fishers, adopting global best practices, and modernizing value chains will define India's leadership in the Blue Economy.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question
Q1. With reference to India's fisheries sector, consider the following statements:

1. India is the second-largest fish-producing country in the world.
2. More than 90% of Indian fishers are classified as small-scale fishers.
3. Green India Mission (GIM) is the main scheme for promoting aquaculture.

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 Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's fisheries and aquaculture sector is growing rapidly, but sustainability, climate resilience, and value-chain modernization remain major challenges." Discuss with examples. (150/250 words)

Election Data Analysis: From the Dark Ages to the AI Era

SOURCE: The Hindu

UPSC Relevance: GS PAPER 2 Election, Election reforms, GS PAPER 3: AI, Technology

Introduction

Election data analysis in India has undergone a massive technological transformation over the past decade. What once required manual scraping of the Election Commission of India's (ECI) website, tedious coding, and hour-to-hour data cleaning is now being performed through AI-powered tools, automated scripts, and real-time visualization dashboards. The 2025 Bihar Assembly polls marked a watershed moment—India entered the **AI-driven election reporting era**, where every table, map, and visual was generated by algorithms, enabling journalists to focus more on storytelling than manual number crunching.

Key Facts
- In 2017, journalists scraped ECI results manually using primitive coding techniques.
- By 2019, Google Sheets + automated scripts replaced manual calculations.
- In 2025, almost **entire election coverage across India was AI-generated**, updating visuals, maps, constituency-wise leads **in real time**.
- Newsrooms now rely on **Google AI Studio**, **Tableau**, and **Stack Exchange tools** for fast, accurate processing.

Key Issues

1. **Heavy Dependence on Manual Scraping Earlier**
   - Pre-2017 workflows depended on copying data from ECI pages and rewriting them repeatedly.
   - Example: Karnataka 2023 polls—entire data had to be manually redone every few minutes.
2. **Slow, Error-Prone Workflows**
   - Multiple rounds of copy-paste increased mistakes.
   - Printing deadlines forced journalists to rush analysis with limited time.
3. **Absence of Visualization Tools in Early Years**
   - No automated charts or constituency maps; everything was handmade.
   - Example: Initial visuals were prepared in Excel and InDesign manually.
4. **Data Overload Due to Expanding Constituencies & Candidates**
   - With more political parties and candidates, manual processing became impossible.
5. **Need for Skill Upgradation in Newsrooms**
   - Journalists had to learn coding, scripting, Tableau, Python/Sheets automation.
   - Many struggled with digitizing workflows.

Global Practices

United States	Real-time election dashboards by AP, NYT, FiveThirtyEight, using AI projections and probabilistic models.
Europe (UK, Germany)	Automated constituency mapping using government APIs and machine-readable result feeds.
Australia	Early adoption of AI-driven tally rooms, with predictive counting.
Africa (Kenya, Ghana)	Digital transparency portals using blockchain for secure election data flows.

Indian Committee Recommendations

Election Commission Reforms Committee	Push for machine-readable data formats to reduce errors.Standardized APIs for media and research bodies.

Law Commission of India – Electoral Reforms	Recommended digitisation and centralization of constituency data.
NITI Aayog – Digital Governance Paper	Encourages AI and big-data tools in governance, elections, and public communication.

Way Forward

1. **Official API Access for Election Data**
   ➢ ECI must provide structured, machine-readable datasets.
2. **Training Journalists in Data Literacy**
   ➢ Mandatory training in AI tools, automation, and data ethics.
3. **Develop Indigenous Election Tech Platforms**
   ➢ Reduce dependence on foreign AI tools.
4. **Transparency & Verification Systems**
   ➢ AI-generated visuals must undergo cross-check validation to avoid misinterpretation.
5. **Ethical and Responsible Use of AI**
   ➢ Prevent bias, misinformation, or manipulated visual outputs.

Conclusion

India's election reporting has transitioned from manual scraping and hand-made charts to a cutting-edge AI ecosystem that transforms raw numbers into instant, interactive insights. This revolution has not replaced journalists but has empowered them—shifting their role from data labor to analytical storytelling. As India moves deeper into the era of digital democracy, strengthening AI ethics, transparency, and newsroom capacity will define the future of credible election journalism.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question (MCQ)

Q1. In the context of election data analysis in India, which of the following correctly explains the "base effect"?

A) Difference between rural and urban voter turnout
B) The influence of last year's data level on the rate of change measured this year
C) Total number of constituencies where results are delayed
D) Errors caused by manual data scraping
Correct Answer: B

UPSC Mains Practice Question (GS2/GS3)

Q1. "AI has transformed election data analysis in India, reducing manual errors while raising new challenges of transparency and digital ethics." Discuss with examples. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Rethinking Green Belts: Why Industrial 'Environmental Responsibility' Demands a Landscape-Centric Paradigm

Source: Editorial Analysis — *The Hindu*, November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance
GS Paper 3
● Environment & Ecology
● Impact Assessment & Regulatory Framework
● Sustainable Industrialisation
GS Paper 2
● Governance & Regulatory Oversight
● Environmental Legislation

Introduction

Industrial green belts have long been used in India as visible markers of environmental responsibility. These green patches are considered compensatory buffers meant to absorb pollutants and soften the ecological footprint of industrial activity. However, recent efforts by certain states to dilute green-cover requirements—based on selective, and often misleading, international comparisons—signal a deeper problem.

While industrial green belts offer **short-term mitigation**, they **cannot replicate the complex ecological functions** of natural forests, wetlands, grasslands, or interconnected ecosystems. For a country grappling with climate stress, habitat loss, and unprecedented land-use pressure, **symbolic greenery is not environmental stewardship**. The need of the hour is a **landscape-scale, science-led, region-specific approach** that transcends narrow green-belt metrics.

Key Issues

1. **Green Belts Mitigate Pollution but Cannot Restore Ecosystems**
   Industrial green belts can indeed filter dust, reduce PM levels by nearly 60–65%, and suppress noise. But environmental restoration is far more complex.
   Natural forests provide:
   ➢ hydrological regulation
   ➢ wildlife connectivity
   ➢ long-term carbon sequestration
   ➢ soil formation and nutrient cycling
   Industrial plantations—often thin, fragmented, and poorly maintained—simply cannot replicate these multi-layered functions.

2. **Global Comparisons Ignore India's Socio-Ecological Realities**
   Borrowing global green-cover norms without accounting for local conditions is fundamentally flawed.
   Countries with low population pressure cannot be compared to India, where:
   ➢ ecological stress is high,
   ➢ industrial density is increasing,
   ➢ landscapes are fragmented, and
   ➢ communities depend on local ecosystems for livelihoods.
   Thus, a 30–33% green-cover benchmark used in Europe cannot be transplanted into India's industrial regions.

3. **Industrial Plantations Often Break Ecological Continuity**

Most industrial plantations rely on fast-growing monocultures—acacia, eucalyptus, or ornamental species. These:

➢ support negligible biodiversity

➢ provide no wildlife movement corridors

➢ fail to enable soil restoration

➢ collapse without maintenance

In fragmented landscapes, such plantations can further sever ecological continuity instead of strengthening it.

4. **Relaxation of Green Norms Can Endanger Sensitive Habitats**

Several ecologically fragile zones—coastal belts, semi-arid regions, river basins—require **stringent green and buffer norms**.

Universal relaxation of norms may:

➢ destabilise coastal wetlands

➢ reduce mangrove buffers

➢ increase flood vulnerability

➢ shrink common lands

A uniform "ease-of-doing-business" framework cannot override ecological carrying capacity.

5. **Industrial Policy Lacks Landscape-Level Thinking**

Most environmental clearances focus on **project-level mitigation**, ignoring cumulative impacts across regions. As a result:

➢ small green islands remain isolated

➢ climate resilience does not improve

➢ flood risks persist

➢ heat island effects intensify

Industrial regions must be planned as **integrated ecological units**, not as fragmented industrial estates.

Global Practices

1. **Japan – Ecological Industrial Integration**

➢ Blends industry with river systems, community forests, and native vegetation buffers. Prioritises watershed and catchment integrity.

2. **Germany – Ecological Zoning**

➢ Mandates strict ecological corridors, habitat passages, and native species plantations. Industrial clusters undergo periodic eco-audits.

3. **United Kingdom – Green Infrastructure Over Green Belts**

➢ Focuses on the **connectivity** of habitats—wetlands, parks, woodlands—integrated across urban-industrial systems.

4. **Singapore – "Nature-Positive" Industrial Design**

➢ Incorporates rooftop forests, rain gardens, and wetland buffers directly into industrial architecture.

5. **Global Shift:**

➢ Green Belt → Green Infrastructure → Landscape Restoration → **Nature-Positive Industrial Policy**

ɪɴ Indian Committees & Expert Recommendations

1. **Expert Committee on Environmental Standards**

➢ Insisted on replacing exotic monocultures with native, region-specific vegetation.

2. **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**
   ➢ Recommended habitat connectivity planning for industrial corridors.
3. **Forest Conservation Act Committees**
   ➢ Stressed avoiding diversion of natural forests and cautioned against purely symbolic compensatory plantations.
4. **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**
   ➢ Emphasised the importance of **cumulative** environmental impact, not isolated project assessment.
5. **MoEFCC Expert Group on Industrial Siting**
   ➢ Advocated ecological-zoning-based siting rather than blanket green-belt prescriptions.

Way Forward

1. **Shift from Plantation Thinking to Landscape Ecology**
   ➢ Eco-regions—not administrative boundaries—should guide industrial planning.
   ➢ Policies must aim at restoring degraded landscapes, not merely beautifying industrial facades.
2. **Integrate Industrial Zones with Regional Ecological Networks**
   Green belts must feed into broader systems:
   ➢ wetlands
   ➢ riverine corridors
   ➢ reserve forests
   ➢ community-managed commons

   This enhances biodiversity flow and climate resilience.
3. **Promote Native Vegetation, Not Monocultures**
   Indigenous species:
   ➢ stabilise soils
   ➢ support pollinators
   ➢ sustain micro-fauna
   ➢ improve long-term ecological health

   Ban or discourage ecologically unproductive species like eucalyptus in industrial buffers.
4. **Mandate Green Infrastructure in Industrial Policy**
   Every industrial zone should adopt:
   ➢ green roofs
   ➢ permeable pavements
   ➢ decentralised stormwater wetlands
   ➢ tree-lined mobility corridors
   ➢ bioswales

   This transforms industries into **active ecological contributors**.
5. **Strengthen EIA With Ecological Restoration Mandates**
   EIA must require:
   ➢ region-specific ecological restoration plans
   ➢ multi-species native plantations
   ➢ assessment of long-term landscape impacts

   Short-term mitigation must not substitute for ecological recovery.
6. **Incentivise Restoration Through Policy Tools**
   Provide:

> ➤ Carbon credits
> ➤ tax rebates
> ➤ CSR-linked restoration zones
> ➤ community-managed ecological projects

Such incentives encourage industries to rebuild rather than merely compensate.

7. **Align Industrial Policy With Climate Adaptation**

Ecological buffers can significantly reduce:

> ➤ urban heat islands
> ➤ flood risks
> ➤ storm impacts
> ➤ groundwater depletion

Vegetation must be treated as **critical infrastructure**, not ornamental compliance.

Conclusion

Industrial green belts offer important pollution mitigation, but they cannot—and must not—be mistaken for ecological restoration. India's environmental future lies in adopting **landscape-scale, science-driven, context-specific ecological planning**. As industrial expansion picks up pace, integrating ecology into design, policy, and long-term planning will be a decisive factor in shaping a climate-resilient, sustainable, and ethically grounded development path.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements about industrial green belts:

1. Industrial green belts can fully restore natural forest functions.
2. They help reduce particulate pollution and noise levels.
3. Monoculture plantations used in industrial green belts often lack biodiversity value.

Which of the statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Industrial green belts mitigate pollution but fail to restore ecological systems. Critically examine how India can move from symbolic greenery to landscape-level ecological stewardship."

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

India's Foreign Policy Pivot: Why the Future Lies in Asia

Source: *The Hindu* Editorial Analysis — November 2025

Author: Mukul Sanwal, Former UN Diplomat

> **UPSC Subject Relevance**
>
> **GS Paper 2**
> - India's Foreign Policy
> - Strategic Autonomy
>
> **GS Paper 3**
> - Geopolitics & Internal Security
> - Strategic Technologies & Defence

Introduction

The global strategic landscape is undergoing its most profound transformation since the end of the Cold War. Economic gravity, political influence, and technological innovation are shifting from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, firmly placing **Asia at the centre of world affairs**. The West continues to view this transition through a lens of rivalry—particularly U.S.–China competition—while India's challenge is significantly more complex: to safeguard **strategic autonomy** without being subsumed into great-power blocs.

The article argues that India's long-term interests—economic, technological, and security-related—are best served not by aligning with Western strategic anxieties, but by **deepening regional partnerships across Asia**, recalibrating security doctrines, and clarifying its role within a multipolar Asian architecture.

Key Issues

1. **Asia Is Now the Primary Theatre of Global Power**

   The global order no longer revolves around Western institutions or trans-Atlantic partnerships.

   Asia today shapes:
   - global GDP growth
   - manufacturing and supply chains
   - energy flows
   - security dynamics

   The U.S. itself acknowledges that strategic competition—and global prosperity—will be shaped in Asia.

   Example: The Xi–Putin–Modi conversations at SCO 2025 reflect an Asian-led geopolitical centre of gravity.

2. **India Rejects Binary Choices in the U.S.–China Rivalry**

   India has repeatedly signalled that its foreign policy will not be dictated by the strategic anxieties of other powers.

   Western attempts to:
   - "pull India away from China,"
   - pressure India to stop Russian energy imports, or
   - align India entirely with U.S. Indo-Pacific objectives

   have been firmly resisted.

   Example: Despite Western sanctions pressure, India continued to buy discounted Russian crude, protecting national economic interests.

3. **India's Growth Imperatives Are Rooted in Asia**

   India's developmental trajectory—population scale, technological ambition, energy needs, and manufacturing aspirations—requires sustained engagement with Asian markets and partners.

Asia offers:

➤ near-shore supply chains

➤ energy security (Gulf, Central Asia, Russia)

➤ technology collaboration (Japan, South Korea, Singapore)

➤ massive trade potential (ASEAN + RCEP region)

Example: Renewed RCEP discussions reflect recognition that India's supply chain future is inseparable from Asian integration.

4. **Western Multilateralism Is Fragmenting**

The rules-based order is being reshaped, often selectively, by the very powers that created it.

➤ WTO dispute settlement is paralysed

➤ U.S. sanctions regimes override multilateral norms

➤ Western trade barriers and tech restrictions are expanding

In contrast, Asian institutions—SCO, ASEAN, BRICS+—offer **inclusive, stability-oriented frameworks**.

Example: China channeling new connectivity financing through the ADB rather than Western-backed alternatives signals Asian institutional confidence.

5. **India Requires a New, Technology-Centric Security Doctrine**

Traditional notions of security—territorial boundaries, conventional warfare—are being overtaken by:

➤ cyber warfare

➤ AI-powered intelligence

➤ unmanned systems

➤ space-based assets

India must integrate technological sovereignty into its grand strategy.

Example: India's rapid advances in AI, digital public infrastructure, and low-cost space systems could become pillars of Asian technological ecosystems.

Global Practices / Comparative Insights

1. **ASEAN's Networked Economic Integration**

➤ ASEAN has created resilient, diversified supply chains without overdependence on any single power.

2. **Middle-Power Balancing by Japan & South Korea**

➤ Both countries maintain deep U.S. ties while expanding autonomous partnerships with China and ASEAN—offering models for India's calibrated approach.

3. **A New Gulf–Asia Strategic Compact**

➤ Gulf states are forging multi-vector partnerships with China, India, and Southeast Asia—reducing reliance on Western security guarantees.

4. **Implication for India:**

➤ A dynamic West Asia offers unprecedented opportunities for energy, diaspora leverage, and defence cooperation.

IN Indian Committees & Policy Recommendations

1. **Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs (2024–25)**

➤ Emphasised **Asia-first economic diplomacy** and building autonomous regional value chains.

2. **NITI Aayog – Asia Growth Corridor Vision**

➤ Called for deeper India–Japan connectivity initiatives spanning Southeast Asia, Bay of Bengal, and Africa.

3. **Defence Acquisition & Defence Space Committees**
   ➤ Prioritised indigenous systems in AI, drones, missile technology, and space platforms.
4. **MEA Strategic Vision 2030**
   ➤ Outlined India's shift towards **multi-vector diplomacy**, integrating Eurasia, West Asia, and the Indo-Pacific.

Way Forward

1. **Rebuild and Strengthen Asian Regional Architecture**

   India must play a leading role in:
   ➤ SCO
   ➤ BRICS+
   ➤ ASEAN-led platforms
   ➤ RCEP (a calibrated re-engagement)

   This will cement India's place in Asia's emerging economic and security frameworks.

2. **Build Indigenous Strategic & Technological Capabilities**

   Asia rewards self-reliance.

   India must:
   - expand domestic defence production
   - build sovereign AI systems
   - secure cyber infrastructure
   - scale space-tech

3. **Shift From "Balancing" to "Shaping" Asia**

   India should articulate a **distinctive strategic worldview**, not merely respond to U.S.–China rivalry.

   Focus areas:
   ➤ digital governance leadership
   ➤ maritime domain awareness
   ➤ fintech diplomacy
   ➤ regional climate resilience

4. **Build Robust Economic Coalitions with Asian Markets**

   India must deepen ties with:
   ➤ ASEAN supply chains
   ➤ Gulf sovereign funds
   ➤ Central Asian energy grids

   The India Stack and UPI can become India's most influential tools for geopolitical outreach.

5. **Redefine National Security Around Technology Sovereignty**

   Security is now intertwined with:
   ➤ data governance
   ➤ encryption standards
   ➤ satellite constellations
   ➤ semiconductor capacity

   India must treat technological ecosystems as critical national assets.

6. **Leverage the Indian Diaspora as a Strategic Bridge**

   Diaspora communities in Singapore, the Gulf, East Africa, and East Asia can accelerate:
   ➤ investment flows

> ➤ talent exchange
> ➤ strategic connectivity

Conclusion

India stands at a decisive inflection point. The global centre of power has moved eastward, and Asia—not the West—will shape the norms, institutions, and technologies of the 21st century. India's foreign policy must therefore pivot confidently toward its neighbourhood and extended region.

This is not merely a diplomatic preference, but a **structural imperative**—essential for economic ambition, strategic autonomy, and long-term national security. A more Asia-oriented India will not just adapt to multipolarity, but help define it.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following regional groupings:
1. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)
2. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)
3. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
4. G7

Which of the above are Asia-centric platforms discussed in the article?
a) 1, 2 and 3 only
b) 1 and 4 only
c) 2, 3 and 4 only
d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Correct Answer: A

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's foreign policy must shift decisively toward Asia to leverage emerging economic, geopolitical, and technological opportunities. Critically examine."

Student Notes ✍

COP30: A Cautious Step Forward in Climate Finance but Gaps Remain

Source: The Hindu Editorial, November 2025

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper-3:
- Climate Change & International Agreements
- Climate Finance
- UNFCCC, COP Negotiations
- Environmental Governance

Essay:
- Climate Justice, Global North vs South, Sustainable Development

GS Paper-2:
- International Relations
- India's role in global climate diplomacy

Introduction

The COP30 summit in Belém, Brazil, marks the first real shift in climate finance talks since the Paris Agreement era. While it did not deliver the scale of finance that developing countries had demanded, it successfully broke years of deadlock between the Global North and South. Developing countries secured a two-year roadmap to mobilise **$1.3 trillion annually by 2035**, a critical component for their climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. However, the declaration still falls short of binding commitments, highlighting the persistent gap between ambition and action.

Key Issues

1. **Climate Finance Gap Remains Stark**
   - Developing nations demanded **$1.3 trillion per year by 2035**, but COP30 only provided a **work programme**, not binding commitments.
   - *Example:* India, Brazil, and African nations argued that without assured funds, adaptation projects like coastal defence or drought protection remain unfunded.

2. **Disputes Over Unilateral Trade Measures**
   - Measures like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) were termed **discriminatory** by developing countries.
   - *Example:* India stated that CBAM undermines WTO norms by taxing imports based on carbon intensity.

3. **Loss and Damage Fund Still Under-funded**
   - COP30 operationalised the **Loss and Damage Fund** agreed at COP28, but contributions remain voluntary.
   - *Example:* Small Island States highlighted that funds are insufficient for climate-induced displacement and rebuilding.

4. **Weakening of Global Consensus Due to U.S. Absence**
   - With the U.S. out of Paris Pact commitments temporarily, developing nations negotiated with weaker leverage.
   - *Example:* Lack of U.S. leadership slowed progress on mandatory finance contributions.

5. **Global North–South Trust Deficit Continues**
   - Developed countries resisted language demanding "mandatory financial contributions".
   - *Example:* The Belem Declaration only "recognised the need for more finance" without clear obligations.

Global Practices

EU	Long-term climate finance through Green Deal; strong focus on CBAM.
U.S.	Inflation Reduction Act prioritising domestic clean energy subsidies, limited global climate finance.
China	Largest renewable energy investor; supports South–South cooperation but avoids binding climate finance.
Small Island States	Promote "loss and damage insurance pools" as global best practice.

Indian Committees & Recommendations

India's Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS)	Emphasises climate finance as key for transitioning to low-carbon pathways.
NITI Aayog Expert Group on Climate Finance (2023)	Recommended mandatory contributions from developed economies. Suggested global carbon markets and concessional green credit lines for developing nations.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment	Highlighted need for predictable, adequate, and accessible finance for India's energy transition.

Way Forward

1. **Formalising Mandatory Climate Finance Commitments:** Developing countries must push for **legally binding** obligations from the Global North, ensuring finance flows match Paris Agreement goals.
2. **Reforming Global Financial Architecture:** Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) should provide **cheaper, long-term green loans**, aligned with adaptation needs of vulnerable nations.
3. **Protecting Developing Nations from Trade-Based Climate Penalties:** A global framework under WTO–UNFCCC synergy must regulate measures like CBAM to prevent disguised protectionism.
4. **Leveraging South–South Cooperation:** India, Brazil, South Africa, and ASEAN nations must jointly build climate-resilient technologies and green finance platforms.
5. **Strengthening Loss and Damage Mechanisms:** The fund must be expanded with **automatic financing triggers**, such as climate disaster early-warning indices.
6. **Transparency and Accountability in Climate Fund Use:** Countries must adopt strict monitoring and reporting standards to ensure funds reach vulnerable communities effectively.

Conclusion

COP30 marks a cautious but meaningful step toward resolving long-standing tensions in climate finance. While the Belem Declaration does not meet the trillion-dollar expectations of developing nations, it signals renewed political momentum. For climate justice to become reality, the next phase must convert voluntary statements into firm commitments. Only then can the world hope to meet the urgent challenges of mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage in a fair and equitable manner.

Prelims Practice Question (MCQ)

Q1. The Belem Declaration adopted at COP30 is significant because it:

a) Mandated compulsory annual finance from developed nations
b) Recognised the need to mobilise at least $1.3 trillion annually by 2035 for developing nations
c) Abolished unilateral carbon adjustment measures
d) Established a global carbon tax

Answer: B

PRAMUKH academy

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "The COP30 outcome marks progress in climate finance negotiations but falls short of developing countries' expectations." Discuss the major concerns and suggest a roadmap to strengthen global climate finance architecture. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Traditional Medicine and Global Health: Building a Harmonious Future

Source: *The Hindu* Editorial Analysis — November 2025

Author: Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2
- Health Sector
- Government Policies & Interventions
- International Institutions (WHO)
- Traditional Medicine Systems (AYUSH)

Essay
- Health & Well-Being
- Science, Tradition, and Innovation
- Global Cooperation for Public Health

GS Paper 3
- Biotechnology & Evidence-Based Medicine
- Health Innovation
- Sustainable Development

Introduction

The growing burden of lifestyle diseases, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation has renewed global interest in **holistic, sustainable, and integrated healthcare systems**. Traditional medicine—used by **90% of WHO member nations**—is re-emerging as an essential pillar of public health due to its accessibility, affordability, and deep cultural roots.

The article argues that India, as the birthplace of Ayurveda, Yoga, and Siddha, must lead this transformation through **evidence-based validation**, global partnerships, and innovation.

WHO GLOBAL CENTRE FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The first and only global outposted centre for traditional medicine will come up in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

- To position AYUSH systems across the globe
- To provide leadership on global health matters pertaining to traditional medicine
- To ensure quality, safety and efficacy, accessibility and rational use of traditional medicine
- To develop norms, standards, and guidelines in relevant technical areas
- To develop norms, standards, and guidelines in relevant technical areas

Key Issues

1. **Traditional Medicine Has Global Reach but Limited Evidence Framework**
   - WHO reports widespread use of traditional systems, especially in low-income nations.
   - Lack of standardised, evidence-based research weakens acceptance.
   - **Example:** Ayurveda is widely used but globally questioned due to insufficient large-scale clinical trials.

2. **Rising Lifestyle Diseases Demand Integrative Healthcare**
   - Diabetes, mental stress, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases cannot be addressed by modern medicine alone.
   - Holistic treatments focusing on diet, behaviour, yoga, and herbs offer preventive care.
   - **Example:** Yoga-based interventions significantly reduce hypertension and anxiety.

3. **Climate Change and Loss of Biodiversity Threaten Traditional Knowledge Systems**
   - Herbal raw materials are affected by shifting climatic patterns.
   - Loss of biodiversity reduces medicinal plant availability.
   - **Example:** Himalayan medicinal herbs like Kutki and Jatamansi face severe habitat loss.

4. **Knowledge Fragmentation & Digital Gaps**
   - Traditional texts remain scattered, untranslated, and difficult to standardise.

➢ **Example:** Ayurvedic classical literature lacks digitised, peer-reviewed scientific databases.

5. **Regulatory and Quality Concerns**
   ➢ Weak quality control, contamination issues, and inconsistent purity standards reduce global credibility.
   ➢ **Example:** WHO flagged concerns over heavy-metal contamination in unregulated herbal formulations.

Global Practices / International Developments

WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) – India (Jamnagar)	Acts as a global hub for evidence-based traditional medicine research. Focuses on AI, data analytics, biodiversity, sustainability, and equitable access.
WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy (2014–2023 & 2025–34)	Calls for integration of traditional medicine into national health systems. Emphasises regulation, safety, quality, and effectiveness.
Global Partnerships	Collaborative research across Africa, ASEAN, and Latin America. Incorporation of digital health tools for validation and dissemination.

ɪɴ Indian Committees & Recommendations

National AYUSH Mission (NAM)	Strengthens AYUSH infrastructure and services. Promotes integrative health practices.
Ministry of AYUSH Advisory Board	Emphasis on evidence generation. Collaboration with ICMR for clinical studies.
Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine (PCIM&H)	Standardisation of drugs and quality assurance.
NEP 2020 – Integrative Health Education	Calls for research-based, modernised study of AYUSH systems.
BIS Subcommittee on AYUSH	Developed ISO standards for yoga & traditional medicine practices.

Way Forward

1. **Build a Strong Evidence Base**
   ➢ Large-scale clinical trials for Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and Yoga.
   ➢ AI-based drug discovery from ancient texts.
   ➢ Research collaboration with IITs, AIIMS, and global universities.

2. **Ensure Quality, Safety and Standardisation**
   ➢ Strengthen pharmacopeia standards for herbal formulations.
   ➢ Blockchain-based supply-chain traceability for medicinal plants.

3. **Promote Integrative Healthcare Models**
   ➢ Combine AYUSH and allopathy for:
      ✓ palliative care
      ✓ mental health
      ✓ preventive medicine
      ✓ chronic disease management
   ➢ Establish AYUSH wings in all district hospitals.

4. **Conserve Medicinal Biodiversity**
   ➢ Community-led cultivation of medicinal plants.

> ➢ Expand Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCAs).
> ➢ Provide incentives for tribal knowledge preservation.

5. **Digitise Traditional Knowledge**
   > ➢ Develop digital libraries of Sanskrit and Tamil medical texts.
   > ➢ Use AI for comparative analysis of remedies and clinical outcomes.

6. **Strengthen Global Partnerships**
   > ➢ Leverage WHO-GCTM to lead global standards.
   > ➢ Promote AYUSH diplomacy as a soft power tool.

7. **Create Economic Opportunities**
   > ➢ Develop herbal value chains with MSMEs.
   > ➢ Promote AYUSH tourism, wellness centres, and nutraceutical exports.

Conclusion

Traditional medicine offers a pathway to a more sustainable, accessible, and culturally rooted health system. As the world faces growing lifestyle diseases and environmental stress, India has the opportunity to lead a **harmonious global health transformation**—one that unites tradition with technology, evidence with intuition, and local wisdom with global standards.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM):

1. It is located in India.
2. It promotes evidence-based integration of traditional medicine.
3. It is jointly supported by WHO and the Government of India.

Which of the statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Traditional medicine can complement modern healthcare but requires robust evidence, regulation, and innovation." Discuss with reference to India's global leadership role.

Student Notes ✍

Remembering Sachchidanand Sinha: India's Forgotten Original Political Thinker

Source: *The Indian express*– Deshkaal by Yogendra Yadav, November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance	GS Paper 2
GS Paper 1	• Political Ideologies
• Modern Indian Thinkers	• Indian Political Thought
• Indian Society & Social Reform Movements	• Role of Intellectuals in Democracy
Essay	**GS Paper 4**
• Decline of Intellectualism	• Moral Philosophy
• Role of Public Reason	• Integrity of Thought & Leadership
• Ideas shaping Democracy	

Introduction

Sachchidanand Sinha (1928–2025) represented a **rare breed of political thinkers whose originality, fearlessness, and refusal to conform stood apart from mainstream ideological debates**. Despite writing extensively in Hindi and English and challenging dominant Marxist, socialist, and existentialist ideas, he remained neglected by India's thought elite.

His death marks the end of an era when intellectual authority did not depend on foreign degrees or elite networks but on deep engagement with society, philosophy, and political practice.

Key Issues

1. **Decline of Independent Political Thought in India**
   ➢ Sinha belonged to a generation where intellectual authority emerged from lived experience, not institutional prestige.
   ➢ *Example:* Unlike today's elite academia, Sinha developed ideas from grassroots politics in Mankati village, not elite universities.

2. **Originality Over Orthodoxy**
   ➢ He challenged Marxists, socialists, Congress ideology, and Hindutva without aligning with any camp.
   ➢ *Example:* Books like *Socialism and Power*, *The Internal Colony*, and *National Crisis* questioned leftist dogmas and political centralisation.

3. **Neglect by India's Thought Establishment**
   ➢ Despite 8 volumes of his writings, he remained outside academic recognition.
   ➢ *Example:* He was rarely cited in mainstream political theory despite offering fresh insights on caste, nationalism, and democracy.

4. **Critique of Dominant Indian Debates**
   ➢ His thesis on **"internal colonialism"** criticised the dominance of metropolitan elites over rural India.
   ➢ *Example:* He viewed the 1950s development model as elitist and disconnected from ecological and rural priorities.

5. **Relevance for New India**
   ➢ At a time of ideological polarisation, Sinha's insistence on **freedom of thought**, **ethical politics**, and **nonmaterialistic values** is deeply significant.
   ➢ *Example:* His book *Sadgaav Jeevan* explores Gandhian simplicity as a political virtue.

Global Practices / Comparative Framework

To contextualise Sinha's contribution, compare with:

1. **Antonio Gramsci (Italy) Organic Intellectuals**
   ➤ Emphasised thinkers connected with the masses rather than elite academic structures.
2. **Paulo Freire (Brazil) – Pedagogy of the Oppressed**
   ➤ Advocated decentralised, experiencebased knowledge systems.
3. **African Decolonial Thinkers (Ngugi wa Thiong'o)**
   ➤ Critiqued intellectual domination by metropolitan centres—similar to Sinha's idea of "internal colonialism".

Indian Committees & Policy Relevance

Even though Sinha was outside institutional structures, his themes resonate with:

1. **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)**
   ➤ Promotes Indian knowledge systems and plurality of thought.
2. **ICSSR & Indic Political Thought Research Initiatives**
   ➤ Emphasise rediscovering nonWestern, grassroots thinkers.
3. **Parliamentary Committee on Cultural Education**
   ➤ Advocates revival of regional intellectual traditions.

Way Forward

1. **Rediscover NonMetropolitan Intellectuals**
   ➤ Indian universities must expand curricula to include thinkers like Sinha who defy ideological silos.
2. **Build Archives & Translations of Indian Political Thought**
   ➤ Digitise regional political writings and translate seminal works.
3. **Encourage Independent, NonPartisan Scholarship**
   ➤ Promote research that questions dominant narratives without academic or political pressure.
4. **Revive Public Intellectualism**
   ➤ Encourage debates, journals, and platforms that nurture original thinking beyond ideological camps.
5. **Integrate Ethics and Lived Experience into Political Education**
   ➤ Sinha's appeal to simplicity, ethical conduct, and rural insights should guide new leadership training.

Conclusion

Sachchidanand Sinha's intellectual legacy lies in his fearless questioning, ethical commitment, and refusal to conform to political or academic fashions. His work offers a reminder that true intellectual leadership emerges not from elite spaces but from deep engagement with society. As India grapples with ideological polarisation and weakening public reason, rediscovering thinkers like Sinha is crucial for rejuvenating democratic thought.

Prelims Practice Question (MCQ)

Q1. With reference to Sachchidanand Sinha, consider the following statements:

1. He wrote mainly within the Marxist ideological framework.
2. He developed the thesis of "internal colonialism", critiquing India's development model.
3. He remained largely outside traditional academic institutions.

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: B

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Sachchidanand Sinha's intellectual legacy highlights the crisis of independent political thinking in India. Discuss the relevance of his ideas for contemporary democracy."

Student Notes ✍

The Amplitude of Gubernatorial Discretion: Understanding the Limits of a Governor's Powers in India

Source: *The Hindu – Editorial Analysis (November 2025)*

UPSC Subject Relevance	
GS Paper 2	**GS Paper 2 (Polity + Governance)**
• Indian Constitution	• Federalism
• Separation of Powers	• Legislative Process
• Role of Governor	• Constitutional Offices
• Centre–State Relations	
• Judicial Review	
• Constitutional & Political Accountability	
Essay	
• Constitutional Morality	
• Institutional Ethics	
• Federal Balance in India	

Introduction

The recent Supreme Court opinion on the **Governor's powers under Article 200 has reignited a crucial debate on India's federal structure and the proper limits of gubernatorial discretion.** While Governors are expected to uphold constitutional morality, ensure legislative functioning, and act as neutral constitutional heads, several controversies across States have exposed ambiguities in the use — and misuse — of these powers. The editorial argues that unchecked discretion risks undermining democratic mandates, delaying governance, and disrupting Centre–State harmony.

GOVERNOR

POWERS

•EXECUTIVE
Can Appoint
1) Council Of Ministers
2) Advocate General
3) PSC Members
(Can Only Remove By President, (Article 317)
•No Power To Appoint HC Judge
•Can Nominate Person With Special Knowlege, Social Service etc to legislative council (Article 171(5))

•LEGISLATIVE
•Part Of State Legislature Having Right To Address and Send Messages, Summoning and Dissolving State Assembly
•**Article 200** Can Refer Any Bill to President For Approval

•JUDICIAL
•Power To Grant Pardons, Remission etc of punishments (Article 161)

QUALIFICATION (ARTICLE157)
•Citizen Of India
•Age:-35 Years
•Should Not Be Any Member Of The Union Or Any State

APPOINTMENT (ARTICLE 155)
•President Appoints
•**Term**=5 Years
•May Be Terminated By
-Dismissal Of President (Article 156-1)
•**Resignation**=(Article 156-2)

•EMERGENCY
•No Power
•Article 356 Power To Report to President About State'S Status

Key Issues

1. **Misuse of Article 200 to Delay Bills**
   - ➢ Governors in some States have delayed assent to Bills for months or years, effectively exercising a "pocket veto" not permitted under the Constitution.
   - ➢ **Example:** Several Bills in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Kerala were kept pending for long durations without reasons.

2. **Ambiguity in Governor's Discretion**
   - ➢ While Article 163 provides discretionary powers, the scope is not clearly defined, leading to friction between elected governments and Governors.

- ➢ **Example:**
- ➢ Governor recommending return of a Bill without clear constitutional grounds.
3. **Breakdown of Federal Accountability**
   - ➢ The Governor, an unelected authority, sometimes overrides or delays the mandate of an elected Assembly, which weakens federal democracy.
   - ➢ **Example:**
   - ➢ Conflicts over summoning the Assembly, appointment of Ministers, or withdrawal of Bills.
4. **Judicial Limitations and Confusion**
   - ➢ Supreme Court judgments have attempted clarity but inconsistencies remain.
   - ➢ **Example:**
   - ➢ The Court has said Governors cannot sit indefinitely on Bills, but has not specified a strict timeline.
5. **Political Use of Office**
   - ➢ Governors are sometimes seen as political agents of the Centre rather than neutral constitutional functionaries, lowering public trust.
   - ➢ **Example:**
   - ➢ Frequent confrontations in oppositionruled States.

Global Practices

1. **United Kingdom**
   - ➢ Ceremonial head; Royal Assent is a formality.
   - ➢ No power to delay legislation.
2. **Australia**
   - ➢ GovernorGeneral acts strictly on ministerial advice.
   - ➢ Constitutional conventions strongly restrict discretion.
3. **Canada**
   - ➢ Lt. Governors rarely exercise reserve powers; political neutrality is deeply institutionalised.
4. **South Africa**
   - ➢ Provincial Premiers and national executives operate with minimal ceremonial interference from heads of state.

Learning for India:
Clear conventions, strict timelines, and political neutrality ensure smooth functioning.

Indian Committees & Recommendations

1. **Sarkaria Committee (1988)**
   - ➢ Governor should be a neutral figure, not a retired politician.
   - ➢ Exercise discretion only in rare, constitutionally defined situations.
2. **Punchhi Commission (2010)**
   - ➢ Fixed timeline for assent to Bills.
   - ➢ Governor must not act as an agent of the Centre.
   - ➢ Clear rules on dismissal of state governments.
3. **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)**
   - ➢ Strengthen federalism by ensuring transparency in gubernatorial actions.
4. **Supreme Court Judgments**
   - ➢ Governors cannot indefinitely delay Bills.

➤ Must give reasons when returning a Bill.

Way Forward

1. **Codify Timelines for Assent**
   ➤ Legislate a mandatory limit (e.g., 3 months) for Governors to approve, reject, or return Bills.
2. **Define Discretion Precisely**
   ➤ Limit discretion only to constitutionally critical situations (e.g., hung assembly), not routine legislation.
3. **Ensure Transparent DecisionMaking**
   ➤ Require Governors to record written reasons when exercising discretion, enhancing accountability.
4. **Strengthen Constitutional Conventions**
   ➤ Develop allIndia conventions ensuring Governors respect political mandates and avoid partisan behaviour.
5. **Reform Appointment Process**
   Move toward:
   ➤ nonpolitical persons,
   ➤ fixed criteria of eminence and neutrality,
   ➤ wider consultation with states.

6. Enhance Judicial Oversight

Allow courts to determine whether gubernatorial delay amounts to "constitutional subversion."

Conclusion

The Governor's office is integral to India's cooperative federalism, but its legitimacy rests on constitutional morality, neutrality, and respect for democratic mandates. When discretion becomes delay, and delay becomes obstruction, the constitutional balance suffers. The need of the hour is codified reform, transparent conduct, and institutional restraint to ensure Governors strengthen—rather than strain—India's federal structure.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Under the Indian Constitution, which of the following statements regarding the Governor's assent to Bills is correct?
   a) The Governor may keep a Bill pending indefinitely.
   b) The Governor must give assent within 30 days.
   c) The Governor may return a Bill once (except Money Bills).
   d) The Governor may veto a Money Bill.
   Answer: C. The Governor may return a Bill once (except Money Bills).

Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Ambiguity in the Governor's discretionary powers has increasingly strained India's federal structure." Discuss with reference to recent judicial pronouncements and committee recommendations. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Trump–MbS Summit: Renewing the U.S.–Saudi Axis in a Changing Global Order

Source: The Hindu Editorial Analysis – November 2025

UPSC Relevance **GS-2** ● International Relations ● India–U.S. Relations ● India–Saudi/West Asia Policy ● Geopolitics of Oil & Energy **Essay** ● "Shifting Global Power Structures" ● "Energy Geopolitics in the 21st Century"	**GS-3** ● Energy Security ● Strategic Minerals, Investment Flows ● Technology & Defence Cooperation

Introduction

The recent summit between former U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) marks a major inflection point in global geopolitics. Reviving an 80-year-old security-for-oil partnership, the meeting announced investments exceeding **$1 trillion**, signalling a renewed American–Saudi axis. In a fluid world marked by great-power rivalry, sanctions, shifting energy markets, and emerging alignments, the summit reflects both continuity and transformation in how nations pursue security, energy, and strategic interests.

Key Issues

1. **Revival of the Old U.S.–Saudi Security Architecture**
   - The original 1945 Roosevelt–Ibn Saud pact was a "security for oil" partnership.
   - Trump–MbS seek to rejuvenate it with new investments and military cooperation.
   - **Example:** Saudi promises $270 billion in investments during Trump's visit.

2. **Recalibration of Middle Eastern Geopolitics**
   - U.S. sanctions on Iran + Saudi's dependency on Western security deepen the alignment.
   - Riyadh's growing ties with Israel and China complicate strategic equations.
   - **Example:** Saudi buying ballistic missiles from China in the past strained U.S. ties.

3. **Competition for Global Energy Leadership**
   - U.S. wants moderate oil prices; Saudi seeks stable revenues.
   - Russia–China factors complicate market dynamics.
   - **Example:** Russian oil sanctions during the Ukraine conflict affected global supply chains.

4. **Technology + Defence as New Pillars**
   - Shift from pure oil alliance to nuclear energy, AI, semiconductors, space tech.
   - **Example:** Saudi investment in U.S. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced chips.

5. **Implications for India**
   ➢ India is Saudi's third-largest oil importer and a top trade partner.
   ➢ China's entry via Belt and Road/Economic Corridors creates strategic competition.
   ➢ **Example:** Saudi's NEOM project opens doors for India's technology, infrastructure, and services sectors.

Global Practices

U.S.–Japan Model	Security guarantees tied with high-tech and investment flows. Shows how economic scale aligns with stable long-term partnerships.
China–Gulf Partnership	Infrastructure-for-energy model with no human-rights conditionalities. Beijing's large financial commitments gain Gulf strategic leverage.
EU–Middle East Climate Partnerships	Focus on green hydrogen, carbon capture, and climate finance. India can emulate these for long-term energy security.

Indian Committees & Strategic Recommendations Relevant to West Asia

India's West Asia Policy Review (MEA)	Emphasises strategic autonomy, not bloc alignment.¬ Prioritises diversification of energy sources.
NITI Aayog Energy Security Framework	Calls for long-term contracts for crude + LNG.¬ Focus on green hydrogen and renewable partnerships with GCC.
CII–Exim Bank West Asia Investment Study	Recommends greater Indian participation in logistics, IT, construction, tourism in Saudi Vision-2030.

Way Forward

1. **Deepen India–Saudi Strategic Energy Partnership**
   ➢ Secure long-tenure crude supply contracts.
   ➢ Partner in Saudi's green hydrogen, ammonia, and carbon-neutral projects.
   ➢ Encourage Indian PSUs to co-invest in Saudi refining complexes.
2. **Build an India–Saudi Technology Corridor**
   ➢ Joint ventures in semiconductor assembly, AI, cybersecurity, and digital payments.
   ➢ Attract Saudi sovereign wealth funds to India's tech manufacturing clusters.
3. **Strengthen Defence & Maritime Cooperation**
   ➢ Expand naval exercises in the Arabian Sea & Red Sea.
   ➢ Collaborate on missile defence, drones, and maritime domain awareness.
   ➢ Use Saudi–U.S.–India trilateral platforms for counter-terror and cyber security.
4. **Leverage Saudi Vision-2030 for Indian Workforce & Companies**
   ➢ Secure greater mobility for Indian skilled workers, engineers, and health professionals.
   ➢ Promote Indian companies in construction, tourism, fintech, and smart-city projects.
5. **Balance Great-Power Rivalry Smartly**
   ➢ Maintain strategic autonomy between U.S., Saudi Arabia, and the emerging China–Saudi nexus.
   ➢ Strengthen India's role as a neutral, stabilising actor in West Asia.
   ➢ Use multilateral platforms (IORA, G20, IMEC) to shape regional security architecture.

Conclusion

The Trump–MbS summit signals a reconfigured U.S.–Saudi partnership built on new energy, technology, defence, and investment pillars. As global power centres shift from the Atlantic to Asia, India must navigate

these dynamics with strategic foresight. By deepening economic ties, enhancing defence cooperation, and leveraging Saudi's Vision-2030, India can secure energy resilience, attract capital, and strengthen its geopolitical presence in West Asia.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. **Which of the following best explains the significance of the renewed U.S.–Saudi strategic partnership as highlighted in the editorial?**
   a) It is solely focused on oil supply to the United States
   b) It marks a shift toward multi-sector cooperation including defence, AI, and technology
   c) It ends Saudi Arabia's ties with China
   d) It weakens the geopolitics of the Middle East
   Answer: B

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. **"The evolving U.S.–Saudi partnership reflects deeper shifts in the global balance of power." Discuss its implications for India's energy security, regional diplomacy, and strategic interests. (250 words)**

Student Notes ✍

POSH Act at a Crossroads: Strengthening India's Legal Response to Workplace Sexual Harassment

Source: The Hindu – Editorial Analysis (November 2025)

UPSC Subject Relevance
GS Paper 2
● Governance
● Vulnerable Sections
● Role of Civil Society & Institutional Mechanisms
● Laws, Rights, and Justice Delivery
Essay
● Gender Justice
● Institutional Reforms
● Women Empowerment

GS Paper 4
- ● Ethics in public institutions
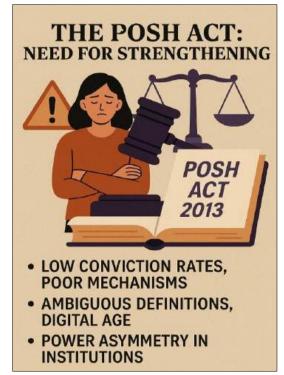- ● Workplace dignity & professional behaviour

Introduction

The Chandigarh case of a professor being dismissed after an ICC probe under the POSH Act (2013) is an encouraging precedent, but it simultaneously reveals the systemic weaknesses that limit the Act's ability to ensure justice. Over a decade after its enactment, the POSH Act continues to struggle with low conviction rates, poor institutional mechanisms, ambiguous definitions, and a digital age it was never designed for. The law needs strengthening to meet the realities of modern workplaces, especially educational institutions where power asymmetry is high and harassment is often subtle, psychological, or digital.

THE POSH ACT: NEED FOR STRENGTHENING

POSH ACT 2013

- ● LOW CONVICTION RATES, POOR MECHANISMS
- ● AMBIGUOUS DEFINITIONS, DIGITAL AGE
- ● POWER ASYMMETRY IN INSTITUTIONS

Key Issues

1. **Flawed and Incomplete Understanding of Consent**
   - ➢ The Act defines "consent" but not **"informed consent."**
   - ➢ Many campus relationships appear consensual but are shaped by emotional manipulation or power imbalance.
   - ➢ **Example:** A professor–student dynamic where the student agrees out of pressure or fear of academic consequences.

2. **Ambiguous Language and Undefined Harms**
   - ➢ Terms such as *"behavioural pattern," "hostile environment,"* and *"respondent"* are vague.
   - ➢ Emotional harassment or digital manipulation is not clearly recognised.
   - ➢ **Example:** A student feeling coerced emotionally but lacking "proof" cannot meet the legal threshold.

3. **Structural Weakness of ICCs**
   - ➢ ICC members often lack gender sensitisation, legal training, or psychological understanding.
   - ➢ Misconduct across campuses has no unified mechanism.

> ➤ **Example:** If harassment begins in a hostel but continues on another campus block, the ICC has no jurisdictional clarity.

4. **Retaliation, Delays, and Secondary Trauma**
   > ➤ Filing a complaint requires emotional strength; the process thereafter often retraumatises victims.
   > ➤ Lengthy inquiries, intimidation, fear of "malicious complaint" provisions discourage reporting.
   > ➤ **Example:** Women frequently withdraw cases due to exhaustion or fear of institutional backlash.

5. **Digital-Age Harassment Not Addressed**
   > ➤ Messages vanish, photos auto-delete, encrypted chats make evidence collection difficult.
   > ➤ ICCs are not trained to interpret or investigate digital abuse.
   > ➤ **Example:** Harassers contact victims through disappearing-message apps, leaving no trail.

Global Practices

U.K. – Employer Liability Model	Employers must proactively prevent harassment; failure leads to penalties.
Australia – Psychological Safety Framework	Recognises emotional harm and power imbalance as harassment.
U.S. – Title IX (University Campuses)	Mandatory reporting, trained officers, strict timelines, and protection from retaliation.
EU – Digital Evidence Guidelines	Provides legal protocols for handling encrypted/digital communication as evidence.

Indian Committees & Recommendations

Justice Verma Committee (2013)	Stronger workplace accountability Clearer definitions of sexual harassment Gender sensitisation Protection against retaliation
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women (2022–24)	Improve POSH implementation in universities Train ICC members Create multi-campus jurisdiction and digital evidence protocols
National Commission for Women (NCW)	Standardised POSH rules across institutions Central monitoring dashboard

Way Forward

1. **Redefine "Consent" and Recognise Psychological Harassment**
   > ➤ Move from "consent" to **"informed, voluntary, and uncoerced consent."**
   > ➤ Explicitly include emotional manipulation, grooming, and power-imbalance-based harassment.

2. **Create Professionally Trained, Independent, Multi-Campus ICCs**
   > ➤ Mandatory certification for ICC members in law, psychology, and digital forensics.
   > ➤ A single ICC with jurisdiction across all campuses of a university.

3. **Strengthen Digital Evidence Systems**
   > ➤ Allow screen recordings, metadata, cloud backups, and device-forensic reports.
   > ➤ Mandatory institutional support for retrieving digital communication.

4. **Remove Fear of Retaliation**
   > ➤ Abolish or narrow the "malicious complaint" clause.

➤ Provide immediate protection, mental-health support, and academic safeguards to complainants.

5. **Enforce Strict Timelines & Transparent Processes**
   ➤ 60-day inquiry limit with mandatory written updates.
   ➤ Independent appellate bodies for appeals and grievance redress.

6. **Build Preventive Ecosystems**
   ➤ Annual gender-sensitisation training
   ➤ Campus audits
   ➤ Anonymous reporting tools
   ➤ Safe corridors, CCTV, digital monitoring

Conclusion

The POSH Act was a landmark reform in 2013, but it has not kept pace with the complexities of modern workplaces and campuses. To protect dignity, ensure safety, and uphold justice, India needs a stronger, clearer, digital-ready, and survivor-centric POSH framework. Strengthening the Act is not merely legal reform — it is a social commitment to gender equality and a safe environment for all.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Under the POSH Act (2013), which of the following is NOT a function of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)?
a) Conduct inquiry into complaints of sexual harassment
b) Recommend action against perpetrators
c) Provide police-level cyber-forensics investigation
d) Prepare annual reports on harassment cases
Answer: C

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "The POSH Act (2013) was a landmark legislation, but its implementation reveals major structural and conceptual gaps." Discuss the reforms needed to make workplace sexual harassment redressal survivor-centric and effective. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

India at the Crossroads: Digital Sovereignty or a New Digital Raj

Source: The Hindu – Shashi Tharoor's "Tharoor Think" Column (November 2025)

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2
- Governance
- Digital Policy
- International Relations
- Data Protection & Sovereignty

Essay Topics
- Digital Colonialism
- Technology & National Sovereignty
- India's Digital Future

GS Paper 3
- Science & Technology
- Cyber Security
- Digital Economy
- Trade & Investment Policy

GS Paper 4
- Ethical Data Use
- Public Trust in Digital Systems

Introduction

As global power shifts from military might to data dominance, digital sovereignty has become the new currency of geopolitics. Shashi Tharoor argues that India now stands at a defining crossroads: either assert strong digital self-rule or risk succumbing to a new "digital raj" where foreign tech giants dictate policy, data flows, and even economic opportunity. In an age where artificial intelligence, data storage, and cloud control shape national power, India must choose between dependency and strategic autonomy.

Key Issues

1. **Rise of a New Global Digital Order Dominated by U.S.**
   - The world's communication, financial, cloud, and AI systems are dominated by U.S.-based corporations.
   - India's dependence on these firms compromises autonomy.
   - **Example:**
   - Control of global financial messaging (SWIFT) and social media platforms enables geopolitical leverage—witnessed during sanctions on Iran and Russia.

2. **Threat of Digital Colonialism & Unequal Bargains**
   - Western digital powers demand free access to India's markets but resist data localisation and taxation.
   - India is pressured to relax data rules in trade agreements.
   - **Example:**
   - Past concessions under WTO commitments limit India's ability to regulate data exports or impose digital taxes.

3. **Technology Dependence Creates National Vulnerability**
   - India's digital economy relies heavily on foreign cloud storage, AI chips, semiconductors, and software.
   - This creates structural dependence.
   - **Example:**
   - Over **80% of India's data** is stored on foreign-owned cloud infrastructure.

4. **India's Weak Digital Industrial Base**
   - Limited domestic manufacturing of semiconductors, AI hardware, and cloud servers.
   - Without industrial capability, policy autonomy becomes hollow.
   - **Example:**
   - India imports nearly all advanced microchips required for AI and 5G infrastructure.

5. **Need for a Clear, Consistent Digital Policy Framework**
   ➢ India's digital rules shift frequently, unsettling investors and weakening negotiation power.
   ➢ **Example:**
   ➢ Frequent amendments to intermediary guidelines, e-commerce rules, and data governance policies create uncertainty.

Global Practices

European Union – Data Sovereignty Model (GDPR)	Strong data protection laws Data localisation for sensitive sectors Heavy fines on foreign companies Strategic autonomy in digital markets
China – Digital Self-Reliance & Indigenous Tech	National firewall Domestic alternatives to Western platforms World's largest semiconductor investments Complete control over cross-border data flows
Malaysia – Digital Trade Protection	Rejected unfavourable digital clauses in Indo-Pacific trade agreements Protects local tech firms through restrictive e-commerce rules
United States – Strategic Dominance	Controls cloud services, social media, advanced chips, and financial networks Uses digital influence as geopolitical leverage

Indian Committees & Recommendations Relevant to Digital Sovereignty

Srikrishna Committee (2018) – Data Protection	Personal Data Protection framework Restrictions on cross-border transfer Data fiduciary obligations
Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT	Recommended data localisation for critical sectors Proposed regulation of Big Tech dominance Emphasised safeguarding national digital autonomy
NITI Aayog AI Strategy	Build indigenous cloud and AI chip ecosystem Promote domestic digital infrastructure
MeitY Expert Group on National Cloud	Create India's sovereign cloud infrastructure Reduce dependency on foreign servers

Way Forward

1. **Build India's Digital Industrial Base**
   ➢ Expand semiconductor manufacturing, AI hardware, and 5G components.
   ➢ Offer incentives for Indian cloud service providers and data centres.
   ➢ Encourage joint ventures with friendly countries (Japan, Taiwan).
2. **Enforce Meaningful Data Sovereignty**
   ➢ Mandate localisation for sensitive financial, health, and government data.
   ➢ Strict cross-border data flow rules with privacy and security safeguards.
   ➢ Build a sovereign national digital stack for cloud, identity, and payments.
3. **Create a Coherent National Digital Policy Framework**
   ➢ Harmonise digital trade, data governance, AI rules, and e-commerce policy.
   ➢ Avoid frequent regulatory shifts.

➤ Publish a national digital strategy updated every 3 years.

4. **Reduce Dependence on Foreign Cloud & AI Providers**
   ➤ Accelerate India's sovereign cloud initiative.
   ➤ Provide tax incentives for domestic cloud storage.
   ➤ Build public digital infrastructure for AI.

5. **Use Trade Negotiations as Leverage**
   ➤ Refuse digital trade clauses that weaken Indian regulatory sovereignty.
   ➤ Demand fair taxation rights for Big Tech.
   ➤ Promote "Data for Development" as an international principle.

Conclusion

India stands at a pivotal moment. In a world where data is power, true sovereignty requires more than regulating digital platforms — it demands building domestic capabilities, crafting coherent policies, and asserting India's right to control its digital destiny. Without this, India risks sliding into a new age of digital dependency, where the "digital raj" replaces traditional colonialism in a subtler but equally consequential form.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which of the following best describes "digital sovereignty" as discussed in the editorial?
   a) Top-down control of the internet by the government
   b) A country's ability to regulate, store, and secure its data and digital infrastructure independently
   c) Exclusive use of foreign cloud services
   d) Free cross-border access to user data

Answer: B

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India must achieve digital sovereignty to protect its economic future and democratic autonomy." Examine in light of global digital power shifts and India's policy choices. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Reversing India's Academic Brain Drain: Policy and Cultural Reforms Needed to Attract Indian-Origin Faculty

Source: The Hindu – Editorial Analysis (Somak Raychaudhury)

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2
- Education Policy
- Governance & Institutional Reforms
- Diaspora Engagement
- Federal Structure & Higher Education

Essay Topics
- Talent Flight and Nation-Building
- India's Knowledge Economy
- Higher Education & Innovation

GS Paper 3
- Innovation Ecosystem
- Research & Development
- Science & Technology Institutions

GS Paper 4
- Academic Ethics
- Professional Culture
- Organisational Integrity

Introduction

India stands at an academic turning point. With large-scale political pressure on U.S. universities and shifting global dynamics, India sees a new opportunity to attract its vast diaspora of scientists, scholars, and researchers. The government's proposal to introduce a "set-up grant" for returning faculty is an important start, but money alone will not reverse decades of brain drain. As the article argues, India must fundamentally reform its academic culture, institutional systems, and long-term career pathways to create a professional home that Indian-origin scholars can genuinely return to.

Key Issues

1. **Severe Salary and Funding Disparity**
   - Indian faculty earn about **$40,000/year**, while U.S. professors earn **$130,000–$200,000/year**.
   - Even with set-up grants, India cannot match global financial benchmarks.
   - **Example:**
   - A high-end lab in the U.S. can receive $1–2 million annually, while Indian researchers struggle for basic grants.

2. **Over-Bureaucratisation and Institutional Inertia**
   - Hiring is slow, rigid, and procedural; procurement systems delay research.
   - Lack of autonomy over lab purchases, grants, and hiring discourages returning scholars.
   - **Example:**
   - Researchers often wait months for basic equipment procurement due to archaic financial rules.

3. **Absence of Clear Career Pathways & Tenure Systems**
   - Short-term, project-based appointments do not provide professional stability.
   - Returning scholars seek tenure-like security to plan long-term research.
   - **Example:**
   - Young faculty joining Indian universities face contract positions with unclear promotion rules.

4. **Weak Research Ecosystems & Limited Institutional Support**
   - Many Indian universities lack interdisciplinary culture, mentoring ecosystems, industry linkages, and academic freedom.
   - **Example:**

- ➢ Only a handful of institutions (IITs, IISERs, IISc) offer globally competitive infrastructure; vast majority struggle.
5. **Cultural Challenges & Social Reintegration**
   - ➢ Returning faculty face difficulties finding suitable schooling, employment for spouses, or childcare support.
   - ➢ Lack of institutional mechanisms for family transition reduces attractiveness.
   - ➢ **Example:**
   - ➢ U.S. and European universities offer relocation support, housing assistance, and spousal employment programs.

Global Practices

China – Thousand Talents Program	High salaries + world-class labs + fast-track recruitment Strong research funding ecosystem Massive investment in returnee faculty
South Korea – Brain Return Policy	State-funded labs, tenure-track positions, family relocation support Guaranteed autonomy in research
Taiwan – International Fellowship System	Encourages diaspora reintegration Strong international collaborations + flexible appointments
Europe – ERC Funding Culture	Stable multi-year grants Institutional autonomy for researchers Reduced bureaucratic control

Indian Committees & Recommendations

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Emphasises research universities Academic leadership & autonomy Internationalisation of higher education
National Research Foundation (NRF) Blueprint	Simplified funding Long-term grants for high-impact research Collaboration with global institutions
Yash Pal Committee on Higher Education	University autonomy Research-oriented institutions Removing regulatory overload
Kasturirangan Committee	Promotes interdisciplinary research and flexible governance

Way Forward

1. **Build a National "Red Carpet System" for Returning Faculty**
   - ➢ Fast-track hiring
   - ➢ Single-window clearance for labs, housing, visas, and procurement
   - ➢ Dedicated relocation support for families, spouses, and schooling
2. **Create Tenure-Track, Long-Term Career Pathways**
   - ➢ Move from contract-based appointments to **Western-style tenure systems**
   - ➢ Clear, merit-based promotion metrics
   - ➢ Five-year rolling grants for all recruited scholars
3. **Strengthen Institutional Autonomy & Reduce Bureaucracy**

➢ Decentralise procurement to department-level
➢ Simplify financial rules for international research
➢ Allow universities autonomy to negotiate salary top-ups and lab funds

4. **Build a Supportive Research Culture**
➢ Encourage interdisciplinary labs and team-based research
➢ Invest in mentorship programs and post-doctoral ecosystems
➢ Promote sabbaticals, visiting scholar systems, and collaborative exchanges

5. **Align Compensation with Global Norms**
➢ Combine moderate salaries with:
  ○ robust research grants
  ○ housing allowances
  ○ startup funds
  ○ international conference support
➢ Use endowments, industry partnerships, and NRF funding to sustain world-class labs.

6. **Focus Beyond IITs—Transform State Universities**
➢ Many diaspora faculty prefer mission-building roles.
➢ Strengthen research capacity in state universities through funding + autonomy.

Conclusion

Reversing the brain drain requires more than financial incentives; it needs a cultural, structural, and institutional transformation. If India wants its diaspora researchers to return, it must build an ecosystem of academic freedom, long-term career security, efficient administration, and world-class research infrastructure. A well-designed return program can not only bring exceptional Indian-origin academics back home but revitalise India's entire higher education system and scientific future.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. **Which of the following is a key challenge in attracting Indian-origin faculty back to India, as highlighted in the editorial?**

a) Lack of student enrollment
b) Slow, rigid institutional procedures and inadequate research support
c) Excessive number of research grants
d) Over-regulation of foreign universities in India

Answer: B

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. **"Reversing India's academic brain drain requires structural reform and cultural transformation." Discuss the challenges and the policy measures needed to attract Indian-origin faculty back to Indian universities. (250 words)**

Student Notes ✍

India's New Labour Codes: Building a Modern and Future-Ready Labour Ecosystem

Source: The Hindu Editorial (Harsha Vardhan Agarwal)

UPSC Subject Relevance	
GS Paper 2 ● Governance & Labour Policies ● Social Justice: Rights of Workers ● Role of Government in Welfare **Essay Paper** ● Labour Reforms ● Indian Demography & Workforce ● Inclusive Growth	**GS Paper 3** ● Economic Reforms ● Industrial Growth & Ease of Doing Business ● Labour Market Dynamics & Demographic Dividend

Introduction

India's labour reforms reached a historic milestone on November 21, 2025, when the Government enforced all four Labour Codes—Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, and Occupational Safety & Health. These reforms represent a generational shift toward building a fair, modern, productive and future-ready labour ecosystem, especially suited for a young workforce and a fast-changing economy. The Codes seek to simplify fragmented labour laws, strengthen protections, encourage formalisation, and align India's labour market with global competitiveness required for Viksit Bharat.

Key Issues

1. **India's Workforce is Vast but Mostly Informal**
   ➢ Nearly 90% of workers are in informal employment.
   ➢ Lack of written contracts, paid leave, ESIC/EPF access, and minimal workplace safety.
   ➢ Example: Gig economy workers face irregular incomes and lack basic protections.

2. **Complex, Outdated Labour Laws**
   ➢ Before reforms, India had over 40 central labour laws and 100+ state laws, causing compliance burdens.
   ➢ Example: Factories Act, Payment of Wages Act, Bonus Act—all overlapping.

3. **Low Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP)**
   ➢ FLFP is 32.8%, much lower than global average.
   ➢ Example: Lack of maternity benefits and safe workplaces restrict women from joining workforce.

4. **Weak Social Security Coverage**
   ➢ ESIC, EPF, gratuity, minimum wages do not reach unorganised workers.
   ➢ Example: Street vendors, construction workers, gig workers lack guaranteed safety nets.

5. **Slow Dispute Resolution & Rigid Labour Markets**
   ➢ Industrial disputes take years to resolve, discouraging investment.
   ➢ Example: MSMEs often avoid expansion due to fear of complex labour compliance.

Global Practices

European Union	Strong OSH standards, universal social protection, predictable working hours.
Singapore	Digital labour regulation, online registration, fast dispute resolution.

China	Strong formalisation of workforce; major investments in skill development & labour mobility.
OECD countries	Flexible labour markets balanced with worker benefits & unemployment insurance. India's Labour Codes move India closer to global norms while keeping local conditions in mind.

Indian Committees & Recommendations

Second National Commission on Labour (2002)	Simplify, consolidate multiple laws into broad codes.
Expert Committee on Social Security for Gig Workers (NITI Aayog)	Extend social security and health benefits to platform workers.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour	Reduce compliance burden, ensure worker safety, strengthen social protection.

Way Forward

1. **Accelerate Formalisation Through Digital Platforms**
   - Universal digital registration of workers (e-Shram 2.0).
   - Mandatory digital wage payments.
2. **Strengthen Social Security for All**
   - Expand ESIC & EPF to gig workers, home-based workers, domestic workers.
   - Introduce portable benefit accounts tied to Aadhaar.
3. **Promote Female Workforce Participation**
   - Ensure safe transport, crèche facilities, flexible working hours.
   - Incentives for companies hiring women in night shifts with safety protocols.
4. **Build Strong Occupational Safety Systems**
   - Technology-enabled inspections (AI-based).
   - Real-time monitoring of industrial safety standards.
5. **Support MSMEs to Comply Easily**
   - Provide simplified monthly online returns.
   - Reduce litigation through mediation and fast-track tribunals.
6. **Future-Ready Skills & Workforce**
   - Align labour policies with remote work, platform jobs, and AI-enabled workplaces.
   - National Skill Councils to focus on digital, green, and repair-based jobs.
7. **Improve Implementation Capacity**
   - Train inspectors, digitise processes, harmonise state rules with central Codes.

Conclusion

The four Labour Codes represent India's most significant labour reform in decades—simplifying the legal framework, improving worker protections, and positioning India for global competitiveness. As India aspires for Viksit Bharat, a modern labour ecosystem is essential for productivity, inclusion, and equitable growth. Effective implementation, social security expansion, and future-ready labour strategies will define the success of these reforms and shape India's workforce for the next generation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question
Q1. With reference to India's Labour Codes, consider the following statements:
   1. The Code on Wages introduces a national floor wage and universal minimum wage.

2. The Code on Social Security extends ESIC coverage to unorganised sector workers.

3. The Industrial Relations Code provides for fixed-term employment.

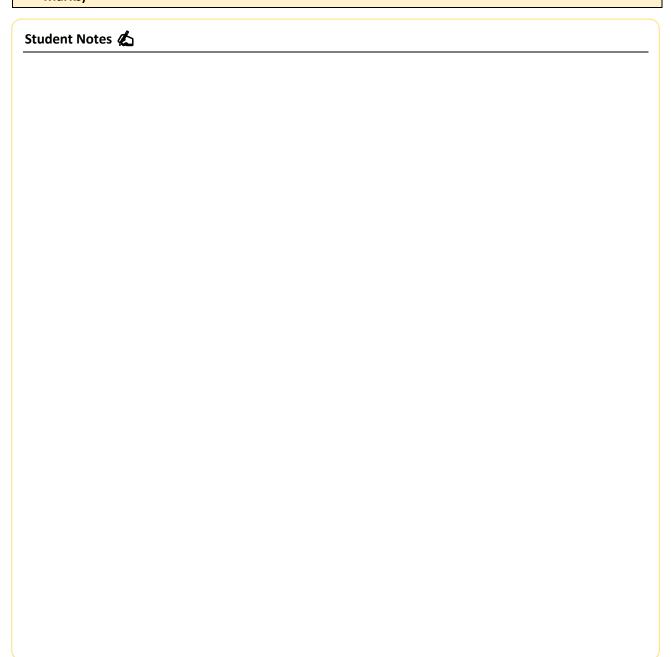**Which of the statements is/are correct?**

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 1 and 3 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D (1, 2 and 3)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. **"India's Four Labour Codes aim to balance worker welfare with economic competitiveness. Critically examine how these reforms can shape a modern labour ecosystem suitable for Viksit Bharat." (250 Marks)**

Student Notes ✍

Air Pollution Crisis: Supreme Court Flags Limits of Judicial Power, Calls for Expert-led Solutions

Source: The Hindu – November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance	
GS Paper 2	**GS Paper 3**
● Judicial Review & Judicial Activism	● Environmental Pollution
● Governance Issues	● Air Quality Management
● Centre–State Coordination	● Disaster-like Urban Challenges
GS Paper 4	
● Ethical Governance – Role of Institutions & Responsibility	

Introduction

The Supreme Court has reiterated that it does not possess a "magic wand" to eliminate Delhi's air pollution, stressing that judicial intervention alone cannot solve a complex, multi-source environmental crisis. While hearing a petition on Delhi-NCR's toxic air, the CJI clarified that the Court will now hear the matter continuously, instead of annually before Diwali, and urged domain experts and scientific institutions to formulate actionable, long-term solutions. The Court's remarks underline the structural governance gaps and the urgent need for coordinated, science-driven policy action.

Key Issues

1. **Multi-Source Nature of Pollution**
   Air pollution cannot be attributed to a single factor.
   Example:
   ➢ Stubble burning in Punjab & Haryana
   ➢ Vehicular emissions
   ➢ Dust from construction
   ➢ Industrial pollution
   ➢ Winter inversions trapping pollutants
   The Court warned against oversimplifying the crisis.

2. **2. Limitations of Judicial Mechanisms**
   The Supreme Court noted that it can issue directions, but implementation lies with governments and agencies.
   Example: Despite repeated orders under GRAP, air quality remains hazardous each winter.

3. **Weak Operationalisation of Existing Plans**
   Policies exist but are poorly enforced.
   Example:
   ➢ GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan)
   ➢ Air Quality Management Commission guidelines
   ➢ Municipal by-laws on construction dust
   Lack of ground-level execution results in recurring smog.

4. **Blame-Shifting Between States**
   Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh often shift responsibility instead of coordinated action.
   Example: Stubble burning becomes a political dispute rather than an administrative issue.

5. **Chronic Health Emergency**

Air pollution is a public health emergency, responsible for respiratory diseases, cardiac stress, school closures, and economic losses.

Delhi's AQI often crosses 500+ levels, forcing judicial intervention every winter.

Global Practices

Beijing (China)	"Airpocalypse Action Plan" Shut down polluting industries Restricted private vehicles Massive greening campaigns Result: PM2.5 reduced by ~35% in 5 years.
London (UK)	Ultra-Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) Congestion charges Strict diesel restrictions
Paris (France)	Odd-even measures Ban on older vehicles Massive shift to public transport & cycles
California (USA)	Strict industrial emission norms Environment Management Districts for real-time enforcement

Indian Committees & Recommendations

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) 2019	20–30% PM reduction target Need for city-specific action plans
CAG Report 2021	Pollution Control Boards understaffed (<40% vacancies) Poor prosecution rate
Parliamentary Standing Committee (2022–24)	Called for stronger enforcement & punitive measures More equipment for real-time monitoring
High-Level CAQM (Commission for Air Quality Management)	NCR-wide coordinated action Recommendations for stubble disposal technologies

Way Forward

1. **Science-Led Integrated Strategy**
   Develop a unified National Clean Air Grid with real-time scientific inputs from IITs, CSIR labs, IMD, and health agencies.

2. **Agricultural Reform for Stubble Management**
   - Promote crop diversification
   - Subsidise Happy Seeders, bio-decomposers
   - MSP-linked incentives for non-paddy crops

3. **Urban Emission Control**
   - Electrify public transport at scale
   - Enforce construction dust norms strictly
   - Expand walkability and cycling infrastructure

4. **Strengthen Institutions**
   - Fully staff PCBs and CAQM with specialists

➤ Empower them with financial & penalty powers

5. **Inter-State Cooperative Mechanism**
Create a NCR Air Quality Authority with binding powers across Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, UP, Rajasthan.

6. **Citizen Participation**
   ➤ Community air monitoring
   ➤ RWA-level compliance audits
   ➤ School-based air quality campaigns

7. **Long-Term Structural Reforms**
   ➤ Decongest cities
   ➤ Promote renewable energy
   ➤ Implement National Emission Cap policies
   ➤ Strict industrial zoning

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's reminder that it has "no magic wand" highlights the limits of judicial activism in solving a structural, multi-sectoral environmental crisis. Air pollution demands coordinated, science-backed governance, strong institutions, and public participation. Sustainable solutions will arise not from court orders alone, but from comprehensive, long-term political commitment and expert-led execution.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding air pollution governance in India:

1. GRAP is an emergency response mechanism applicable only to the Delhi-NCR region.
2. CAQM is a statutory body created through an Act of Parliament.
3. NCAP aims to reduce PM2.5 and PM10 levels by 20–30% by 2024.

Which of the statements are correct?

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

Answer: D

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "Judicial intervention alone cannot resolve India's air pollution crisis. Discuss the limitations of judicial review in environmental governance and suggest a multi-layered governance strategy." (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

Impartiality of the Governor: Constitutional Spirit, Judicial Review & Contemporary Challenges

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Subject Relevance

GS Paper 2
- Governor's powers, role, and discretionary authority
- Centre–State relations & cooperative federalism
- Constitutional morality & political accountability
- Supreme Court rulings on federal disputes

Essay
- Constitutional ethics
- Federal balance, democratic norms, institutional conduct

GS Paper 1
- Constitution: historical evolution & debates

Introduction

The office of the Governor imagined by the framers as a neutral constitutional sentinel **has progressively drifted into the centre of political contestation**. Ambedkar termed the Governor a "**constitutional monarch"** expected to act primarily on ministerial advice, not as an agent of the Union. Yet contemporary practice **shows widening gaps between constitutional vision and operational reality.** Increasing judicial interventions, intensifying Centre–State tensions, and the strategic use of gubernatorial discretion have revived fundamental questions about democratic federalism, institutional propriety, and constitutional morality. The debate is no longer academic; it directly affects legislative functioning, government stability, and the credibility of India's constitutional architecture.

Governor

Eligibility Criteria
- Must be a citizen of India
- At least 35 years of age
- Must not be a member of (either) house of Parliament/State Legislature
- Must not hold any office of profit

'Dual Capacity'
- Constitutional head of the state and Representative of the Union government

Appointment and Tenure (Part VI)
- Appointed by President (Article 153)
- One person can be appointed as Governor for 2+ States (7th Const. Amendment in 1956)
- Holds the office at the Pleasure of the President (maximum 5 years)

Ending Tenure before 5 Years
- Dismissal by President (on advice of the Council of Ministers headed by PM)
  - Dismissal of governors without a valid reason is not permitted
- On grounds of acts upheld by courts as unconstitutional and malafide
- Resignation by the governor

Powers (Part VI)
- Article 161: Pardoning powers
- Article 164: Power to appoint the CM and other Ministers
- Article 176: Special Address by Governor
- Article 200: Power to (withhold) assent/reserve a bill (Legislative Assembly)
- Article 213: Power to promulgate Ordinances

Responsibilities
- Appoints – CM, other Ministers, Advocate General of State, Members of State PSC, judges of HC and districts
- Act as ex-officio chancellor of state Universities

Key Issues

1. **Expansion & Misuse of Discretionary Powers**
   - Discretion in matters like inviting a party to form government or reserving Bills for the President is often exercised without transparent criteria.
   - Example: Recurring disputes in Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala over long delays in giving assent to Bills.
2. **Governor as an "Agent of the Centre"**
   - Several States allege political interference, especially where ruling parties differ from the Centre.
   - Example: The role of Governors in Maharashtra (2019 & 2022 crisis), West Bengal, Telangana.
3. **Constitutional Ambiguity**
   - Article 163's undefined zones of discretion create interpretational friction.
   - Lack of procedural clarity enables unilateral gubernatorial actions.
4. **Withholding Assent & Legislative Paralysis**
   - The absence of timelines allows Governors to sit indefinitely on Bills.
   - Example: Tamil Nadu saw over 10 Bills pending for more than a year.
5. **Undermining Elected Governments**

➢ Actions like interfering in university appointments or delaying legislative processes dilute democratic mandates.
➢ Example: Repeated stand-offs in Kerala between the Governor and State government.

Global Comparative Insight

Canada & Australia	Governor General acts only ceremonially; political neutrality is sacrosanct.
United Kingdom	Crown's representative follows strict conventions—zero political involvement.
South Africa	Provinces operate without politically appointed heads; greater local autonomy.
Learning	India's Governor is unusually powerful compared to global parliamentary democracies; globally, the norm is symbolic, apolitical heads.

Indian Committees & Key Recommendations

1. **Sarkaria Commission**
   ➢ Governor must be a person of eminence outside active politics.
   ➢ Chief Minister should be consulted before appointment.
2. **Punchhi Commission**
   ➢ Codify discretionary powers.
   ➢ Establish time-limits for assent to Bills.
   ➢ Ensure security of tenure & clear removal norms.
3. **Supreme Court Judgements**
   ➢ **S.R. Bommai (1994)**
     ✓ Governor's report is reviewable; misuse of Article 356 cannot bypass judicial scrutiny.
   ➢ **Nabam Rebia (2016)**
     ✓ Governor cannot interfere in legislative functioning except in proven constitutional breakdown.
   ➢ **Recent 2024 SC Rulings**
     ✓ Discretion is limited and exceptional.
     ✓ Governor must ordinarily act on aid & advice.
     ✓ Delays in assent or forwarding Bills violate constitutional principles.

Way Forward

1. **Codification of Discretionary Powers**
   ➢ Precisely demarcate discretionary areas in a constitutional amendment or legislation.
   ➢ Prevent subjective and politically influenced interpretations.
2. **Time-Bound Framework for Assent to Bills**
   ➢ Mandatory deadlines for:
     ✓ Assent
     ✓ Returning Bills
     ✓ Forwarding to President
   ➢ Ensures continuity of governance and protects legislative autonomy.
3. **Transparent & Bipartisan Appointment Process**
   ➢ Consult Chief Minister, Leader of Opposition, and a panel of eminent citizens.
   ➢ Ensure professional stature, integrity, and non-partisanship.
4. **Strengthening Constitutional Conventions**

- ➢ Adopt UK-style democratic conventions:
  - ✓ Minimal interference
  - ✓ Maximum neutrality
- ➢ Encourage a culture of restraint and constitutional morality.

5. **Judicial Oversight & Procedural Accountability**
  - ➢ Time delays and arbitrary conduct should be judicially reviewable.
  - ➢ Ensure compliance with evolving SC jurisprudence.

6. **Capacity Building for Governors**
  - ➢ Formal orientation on constitutional ethics, federal principles, and impartial functioning.
  - ➢ Institutional support mechanisms for better decision-making.

Conclusion

The tensions surrounding the Governor's role reflect deeper fissures in India's federal compact. The problem is not with the constitutional text but with the erosion of conventions and the politicisation of the office. Revitalising the Governor's position requires structural reforms—clearer laws, stronger conventions, and a renewed commitment to constitutional morality. Only then can the Governor truly function as the impartial constitutional guardian envisioned by the Constituent Assembly, reinforcing India's cooperative federalism rather than constraining it.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the powers of the Governor:

1. The Governor must act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in all matters without exception.
2. The Constitution explicitly lists all the discretionary powers of the Governor.
3. Governors may reserve certain Bills passed by the State Legislature for the consideration of the President.
4. The President appoints the Governor.

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: B (3 and 4)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "The Governor was envisaged as an impartial constitutional head, yet the functioning of the office today often raises concerns about federalism and democratic accountability." Critically examine. (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

PRAMUKH academy

India's Disaster Response Framework: Centralisation, Fiscal Strain & The Federalism Challenge

Source: The Hindu – November 2025

UPSC Subject Relevance	GS Paper 3
GS Paper 2	• Disaster Management (DM Act, NDRF, SDRF)
• Federalism: Centre–State Relations	• Climate change induced disasters
• Disaster governance & institutional mechanisms	**GS Paper 1**
• Finance Commission – vertical & horizontal devolution	• Geographical vulnerabilities and climate-extreme events
Essay Paper	
• Cooperative federalism	
• Disaster governance	

Introduction

India's disaster-response financing framework is **under stress as climate-related disasters intensify. The recent delay and mismatch in fund transfers to Kerala after the Wayanad landslides highlight a growing centralisation in disaster finance, undermining the principles of cooperative federalism.** Despite a structured framework under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, States increasingly face uncertainty, procedural delays and rigid fund-release mechanisms, raising concerns about India's ability to mount timely and equitable disaster responses.

Key Issues

1. **Increasing Centralisation of Disaster Finance**
   - While the SDRF is jointly funded (75:25), practical control rests with the Union.
   - Kerala sought ₹12,200 crore for Wayanad losses but received approval for only ₹260 crore.
   - Example: Similar mismatches occurred in Tamil Nadu (2018 cyclone) and Karnataka (2019 floods).

2. **Outdated Relief Norms**
   - Compensation ceilings like ₹4 lakh for death and ₹12,000 for house damage are outdated and inadequate.
   - States are forced into budgetary strain, widening Centre–State disputes.

3. **Ambiguity in Defining 'Severe' Disasters**
   - "Severe calamity" is not clearly defined, leaving NDRF eligibility to Central discretion.
   - Example: Wayanad landslides were delayed in classification, reducing NDRF support.
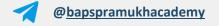
4. **Procedural Delays in Fund Release**
   - Multi-layered approvals (district → State → Centre → High-Level Committee) cause delays when timely aid is crucial.
   - Example: States often receive funds at fiscal year-end, making balances irrelevant during peak disaster months.

5. **Faulty Allocation Formula Under Finance Commission**
   - Allocation based on population & geography ignores hazard vulnerability.
   - Poverty-driven vulnerability remains unaccounted for.
   - Example: States with higher disaster exposure receive allocations misaligned with actual needs.

Global Practices

United States – FEMA	Uses transparent, data-driven triggers (rainfall intensity, fatalities, per capita damages). Funds released rapidly without political delay.
Mexico – FONDEN (before reforms)	Automated fund release when rainfall/wind thresholds were breached.
Philippines	Trigger-based payouts linked to hazard indicators.
Australia	State eligibility tied to damage-to-revenue ratios, reducing arbitrariness.
Learning:	Countries rely on objective disaster triggers, not political discretion → allowing swift relief.

Indian Committees & Recommendations Relevant

15th Finance Commission	Suggested State-specific vulnerability indices. Recommended improving transparency and easing procedural rigidity.
NDMA Guidelines (various years)	Called for decentralised preparedness & community-level resilience.
National Disaster Management Plan (2020)	Stresses risk-based rather than expenditure-based allocations.
ARC Report on Crisis Management	Advocates clear triggers, reduced bureaucratic layers, and faster fund mobilisation.

Way Forward

1. **Move to a Risk-Based, Not Population-Based Allocation Formula**
   - Use district-wise vulnerability indices (landslides, floods, cyclone-prone belts).
   - Integrate meteorological triggers (rainfall, windspeed thresholds) for financial releases.
2. **Strengthen Cooperative Federalism in Disaster Governance**
   - States should have greater operational control and quicker access to SDRF/NDRF funds.
   - Centre's role should shift to coordination & capacity-building, not excessive control.
3. **Modernise Relief Norms**
   - Update compensation rates to reflect inflation, livelihood losses, and long-term recovery needs.
4. **Streamline Fund Release Mechanisms**
   - Replace multi-layered approvals with single-window digital clearance.
   - Allow advance release to States during forecasted extreme events.
5. **Reform Finance Commission Criteria**
   - Include multi-dimensional vulnerability index, not merely population/geography.
   - Incentivise States that invest in disaster-resilient infrastructure.
6. **Introduce Trigger-Based Automatic Relief Systems**
   - Adopt global best practices: rainfall triggers, landslide susceptibility, fatalities per lakh population.
7. **Treat Disaster Response as a Shared Constitutional Obligation**
   - Strengthen the "aid and assistance" principle under DM Act.
   - Build a rule-based, predictable system instead of negotiation-driven transfers.

Conclusion

India stands at a critical juncture where rising climate extremes demand a responsive, predictable and genuinely federal disaster financing system. The mismatch in Kerala's post-Wayanad relief highlights growing

centralisation and procedural rigidity. Reforms through the 16th Finance Commission, adoption of global best practices, and a shift to vulnerability-based allocations are essential to restore trust in cooperative federalism and ensure timely disaster relief for citizens.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's disaster-financing framework:

1. The SDRF is funded exclusively by the Union Government.
2. The NDRF is used only when a disaster is classified as "severe" by the Union Government.
3. Finance Commission recommendations determine SDRF allocations to States.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q1. "India's existing disaster-response financing framework is increasingly centralised and misaligned with climate realities. Critically examine the challenges and suggest a federal, risk-based architecture for future disaster governance." (250 words)

Student Notes ✍

PRELIMS FOCUSED CURRENT AFFAIRS

Senkaku Islands

Why in News?

China Coast Guard vessels sailed through the waters surrounding the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands, escalating tensions between Beijing and Tokyo. The move came amid an ongoing diplomatic dispute triggered by Japan's recent remarks about a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan. Both countries continue to assert competing territorial claims over the islands, intensifying regional friction.

Senkaku Islands

Recent developments

China's Action

1. A China Coast Guard ship formation entered waters around the Senkaku Islands for a "rights enforcement patrol."
2. China described the patrol as a "lawful mission" to defend national sovereignty.

Trigger of Diplomatic Tension

1. Tensions rose after Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi told Parliament that a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan could lead to a military response from Japan.
2. China reacted angrily and asked Japan to retract the remarks.

Taiwan Issue

1. China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out force to control the island.
2. Taiwan rejects China's sovereignty claims.

Japan–China Dispute over Islands

1. Japan administers the islands and calls them *Senkaku*.
2. China calls the same islands *Diaoyu*.
3. The islands have long been a point of confrontation between the two countries.

Related Security Development

1. Taiwan's Defence Ministry detected 30 Chinese military aircraft around the island on the same day.

Static information

What are the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands?

1. A group of **uninhabited islands in the East China Sea**.
2. Administered by **Japan**, but **claimed by China and Taiwan**.
3. Rich in **fishing grounds**, close to **shipping lanes**, and believed to contain **oil and natural gas reserves**.
4. Strategic location makes them a **geopolitical hotspot** in East Asia.

Background of the Dispute

1. Japan incorporated the islands in **1895** after the First Sino-Japanese War.
2. After World War II, the U.S. administered the islands until **1972**, then returned them to Japan.
3. China claims historical ownership dating back to the Ming dynasty.

Importance Under International Law

1. The dispute is connected to the **UNCLOS Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** claims.
2. Control over the islands grants rights over surrounding **200-nautical-mile EEZ**.

POCSO Act

Why in news?

The Supreme Court recently heard a case questioning whether women can be prosecuted under Section 3 of the POCSO Act, which defines *penetrative sexual assault*. The petitioner argued

that the provision is gender-specific and applies only to male perpetrators. The editorial explains that the POCSO Act is, by design, gender-neutral and applies equally to perpetrators and victims of any gender.

Key Facts

What triggered the debate?

1. A woman accused of "penetrative sexual assault" against a minor boy challenged the applicability of Section 3 of the POCSO Act.
2. She claimed the Act assumes only male offenders.

Court's and text-based interpretation

1. The POCSO Act's language, when read with Section 13 of the General Clauses Act (1897), makes gender references gender-neutral.
2. Words importing masculine gender include females unless specified otherwise.
3. Section 3 includes penetrative acts that can be committed by female perpetrators too (digital or object penetration).

Legislative intent

1. Ministry of Women & Child Development has officially stated in Parliament that **POCSO is a gender-neutral Act**.
2. "Statement of Objects and Reasons" of the 2019 Amendment Bill confirms gender neutrality.
3. The law allows prosecution of women if they commit acts of sexual assault against children.

Misinterpretation risk

1. Some may argue gender neutrality applies only to victims (boys), not perpetrators (women), but official clarifications reject this.
2. In comparison, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Section on "rape" is gender-specific; POCSO is not.

Purpose of gender neutrality

1. Sexual abuse varies across gender combinations and often includes non-penile forms of penetration.
2. Research and survivor accounts show women can also commit sexual offences against children.
3. A gender-specific reading would exclude real cases and deny justice.

Conclusion of the article

1. POCSO is intended to be gender-neutral for both victims and perpetrators.
2. The law must remain faithful to this design to ensure full protection of children.

Static Information
About the POCSO Act, 2012

1. Enacted to protect children (below 18 years) from sexual abuse and exploitation.
2. Provides **gender-neutral** protection for all children.
3. Defines offences such as:
   a. Penetrative sexual assault
   b. Sexual assault
   c. Sexual harassment
   d. Use of a child for pornographic purposes

Key Features

1. Child-friendly procedures for reporting, investigation, and trial.
2. Special Courts designated for speedy trials.
3. Mandatory reporting of child sexual offences.
4. Burden of proof partially shifted to the accused in certain situations.

Why gender neutrality?

1. Recognises that:
   a. Any child can be a victim of sexual abuse (boys, girls, and transgender children).

b. Perpetrators can also be of any gender.
2. Makes the law more inclusive and responsive to real forms of abuse.

Supreme Court Stand (Important for Mains)

1. In *Sakshi vs Union of India (2004)*, the Supreme Court highlighted that child sexual abuse includes diverse forms of penetration, not just penile-vaginal intercourse.
2. Supports a broad, gender-neutral understanding of sexual offences.

Comparison with Other Laws

1. **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (formerly IPC Section 375)**: Rape is gender-specific (woman as victim, man as perpetrator).
2. **POCSO**: Explicitly gender-neutral for both victims and accused.

Quality Control Orders (QCOs)

Why in news?

India is overhauling its quality control framework after widespread criticism of the way **Quality Control Orders (QCOs)** were implemented. While QCOs were meant to curb substandard imports and strengthen domestic industry, they ended up increasing costs for MSMEs, causing market concentration, and reducing export competitiveness. The article argues that **FDI and trade diversification**, rather than excessive QCOs, can better improve India's export performance.

Key Facts

Why QCOs became problematic

1. QCOs restricted the import, manufacturing, and sale of products without a BIS licence.

2. Mandatory QCOs expanded sharply from **70 products** to **nearly 790 products** (2016–2025).
3. MSMEs were hit hard due to:
   a. lack of testing facilities,
   b. rising input costs,
   c. production delays,
   d. difficulty in staying competitive.

Internal NITI Aayog report findings

1. Majority of QCOs covered **raw materials & intermediate goods**, not finished goods.
2. This increased costs and hurt globally integrated sectors.
3. Export-oriented sectors like **footwear & electronics** (employing 4.5M workers) were negatively affected.

Weak implementation & market concentration

1. Large firms influenced QCO policy more effectively, lobbying for protection.
2. Market concentration worsened as MSMEs could not comply with expensive standards.
3. Lack of government support, poor labs, and delays in certification worsened compliance burdens.

Government's response

1. Commerce Ministry pushed QCOs to reduce trade deficits and curb Chinese imports.
2. However, without global alignment of standards, domestic firms lost market access.
3. The absence of coordination between ministries and weak institutional readiness undermined QCO effectiveness.

Key insights from RIS (Research and Information System)

1. QCOs can be useful only if accompanied by:
   a. better testing infrastructure,
   b. global-standard compliance,
   c. stakeholder participation across the value chain.
2. Over-reliance on QCOs harms producers and exporters instead of helping them.

Why FDI & trade diversification can work better

1. **FDI brings:**
   a. better technology,
   b. global value chain integration,

c. skills and capital,

d. improved productivity.

2. Trade diversification reduces overdependence on China and supports market expansion.

Global evidence

1. WTO (2015) study: trade liberalisation improves quality upgrading and speeds convergence of developing economies.

2. Overuse of QCOs reduces raw material availability and increases production costs.

Static Information

What are QCOs?

1. **Quality Control Orders** are notifications issued by BIS or ministries mandating specific standards for manufacturing, importing, or selling goods in India.

2. Ensures safety, quality, & consumer protection.

3. Mandatory QCO → product must carry **ISI or Standard Mark**.

Purpose of QCOs

1. Prevent cheap, substandard imports.

2. Protect consumers.

3. Encourage domestic manufacturing standards.

4. Reduce safety risks (electronics, medical devices, steel, etc.).

Issues with QCOs

1. Lack of BIS-approved testing labs.

2. High compliance cost → disproportionately affects MSMEs.

3. Delays in certification.

4. Difficulty integrating with global value chains due to differing standards.

5. Risk of becoming **non-tariff barriers (NTBs)**.

India's Export Competitiveness – Key Concepts

1. **Trade Diversification:** Expanding export markets & product baskets to reduce vulnerability.

2. **FDI:** Brings technology, quality control know-how, global buyers, and integrated supply chains.
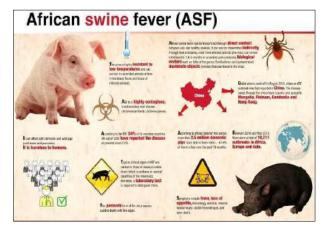
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3. **GVCs (Global Value Chains):** Countries specialise in specific stages of production; India is striving to move up the value chain.

MSMEs – Why they matter

1. Contribute **30% of GDP** and **49% of exports**.

2. Provide employment to **over 11 crore** people.

3. Are most vulnerable to compliance-heavy regulations like QCOs.

African Swine Fever (ASF)

Why in News?

The Assam government has **banned inter-district movement of pigs and the sale of pork in seven districts** after a rapid rise in **African Swine Fever (ASF)** cases, with over **14,000 pigs culled** and almost **297 epicentres** reported across the state in 2025.

Key Facts

Rising ASF cases in Assam

1. Over **14,000 pigs** culled in 2025 due to African Swine Fever.

2. ASF cases have been **"alarmingly rising with no bound"** since January 2025.

3. Assam recorded **297 ASF epicentres** across the state.

4. In **October 2025 alone**, **84 epicentres** were newly reported.

Government action

1. Assam government banned:
   a. **Inter-district movement** of live pigs.
   b. **Sale of pork** in **7 districts**.

Affected districts

1. Dhemaji	2. Kamrup
3. Lakhimpur	4. Sivasagar
5. Darrang	6. Jorhat
7. Dibrugarh	

Disease spread

1. ASF has spread to almost **all districts** in Assam, though the above seven are the worst-affected.

Static Information

What is African Swine Fever (ASF)?

1. ASF is a **highly contagious viral disease** affecting **domestic and wild pigs**.
2. Caused by the **African Swine Fever Virus (ASFV)**, a **large DNA virus** of the *Asfarviridae* family.
3. **Not a threat to humans** (no zoonotic transmission).
4. Causes **up to 100% mortality** in pigs.

Transmission

Spread through:

1. Direct contact with infected pigs
2. Contaminated feed, water, equipment
3. Ticks (soft ticks of genus *Ornithodoros*)
4. Human movement via contaminated clothes/tools

ASF virus is **very hardy** and can survive in:

1. pork products
2. frozen meat
3. carcasses
4. contaminated surfaces

Global Situation

1. ASF is present in **Africa, Europe, Asia**, including outbreaks in China, Vietnam, Philippines, and India.
2. No effective **vaccine** exists as of now.

ASF in India

1. First detected in India in **May 2020** (Assam & Arunachal Pradesh).
2. Assam has been the worst-affected state with recurring outbreaks.
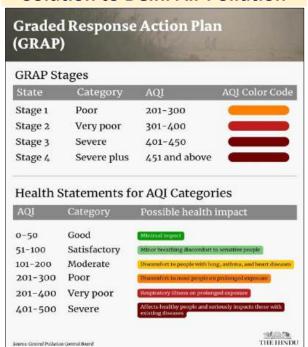3. Over **60,000 pigs** were culled during 2020–21 outbreak.

Economic Impact

1. Assam is India's largest pork-consuming state; pork is a staple among many tribal communities.
2. ASF outbreaks cause:
   a. heavy economic losses to pig farmers
   b. supply disruptions
   c. price spikes
   d. drop in rural incomes

India's piggery sector supports **10 million+ farmers**, largely small and marginal.

Source:

1. The Hindu
2. Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Government of India
3. ICAR reports (2020–2024)
4. FAO, WOAH disease card on ASF.

SC: Perennial GRAP Not a Solution to Delhi Air Pollution

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

GRAP Stages

State	Category	AQI	AQI Color Code
Stage 1	Poor	201–300	
Stage 2	Very poor	301–400	
Stage 3	Severe	401–450	
Stage 4	Severe plus	451 and above	

Health Statements for AQI Categories

AQI	Category	Possible health impact
0–50	Good	Minimal impact
51–100	Satisfactory	Minor breathing discomfort to sensitive people
101–200	Moderate	Discomfort to people with lung, asthma, and heart diseases
201–300	Poor	Discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure
201–400	Very poor	Respiratory illness on prolonged exposure
401–500	Severe	Affects healthy people and seriously impacts those with existing diseases

Source: Central Pollution Control Board

THE HINDU

News

The Supreme Court held that a year-long GRAP cannot solve Delhi's recurring air pollution and directed the Centre to frame a long-term strategy that protects livelihoods and involves all stakeholders.

Key Facts

1. SC rejected the idea of **perennial GRAP** for Delhi-NCR.
2. Court emphasized need for a **long-term pollution strategy** safeguarding daily wage workers.
3. GRAP's continuous harsh measures could cripple economic activities.
4. Pollution factors: **stubble burning**, **vehicular emissions**, **construction dust**, **industrial sources**.
5. ASG noted that **knee-jerk reactions** won't work.
6. SC: Perennial GRAP would halt movement ("No cars allowed").
7. Centre allocated **₹2,000 crore** to Punjab & Haryana for **in-situ stubble management.**
8. AQI threshold in India is **very high** compared to global standards.
9. Court asked the Centre to return with a comprehensive plan.

Static Information

Source: CAQM official website, Environment Ministry documents

1. GRAP was introduced in **2017** under powers granted by the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
2. It was framed by the **Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority – EPCA**, now replaced by **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)**.
3. GRAP is an **emergency response plan**, activated only when AQI crosses defined thresholds.
4. It contains **four categories** of actions: Moderate, Poor, Very Poor, Severe.
5. Measures include regulating **construction**, limiting **vehicles**, closing **brick kilns**, and restricting **industries**.
6. It is **not a long-term policy tool**, but a short-term crisis response mechanism.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):

1. GRAP was introduced under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. GRAP is primarily an emergency response plan triggered by AQI levels.
3. GRAP prescribes long-term structural reforms for urban pollution control.

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

Correct Answer: A

SC Warns Maharashtra Govt on 50% Quota Limit

News

The Supreme Court warned Maharashtra against exceeding the 50% reservation limit in local bodies and said elections will proceed only if OBC quota stays within the constitutionally permitted cap.

Key Facts

1. SC told Maharashtra not to "question the powers of the court."
2. Elections in December will proceed only if **OBC quota stays within 50% limit**.
3. The limit is based on **Constitution Bench ruling** in *K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India*.
4. Court stressed: **Vertical reservation in local bodies cannot exceed 50%**.
5. Maharashtra sought continuation of election process despite disputes on OBC reservation.
6. State panel (J.K. Banthia Commission) recommended **27% OBC quota**, pushing total reservation to **around 70%**.
7. SC said if nomination has begun and State wants a stay, **"we will stay the elections."**
8. Local body elections in Maharashtra have been halted since **2022** due to litigation on OBC quota.

9. SC earlier (May 2025) allowed elections with **pre-Banthia report OBC quota**.
10. Court reminded the State that the **Banthia report's validity is still sub judice**.

Static Information
Source: Ministry of Law & Justice, Supreme Court judgments archive

1. The **50% ceiling on reservations** was established in the *Indra Sawhney (1992)* judgment.
2. This limit applies to **vertical reservations** (SC/ST/OBC) unless exceptional circumstances are proven.
3. In *K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India (2010)*, SC held that **reservation in local bodies** must ensure fair representation but cannot violate the 50% limit.
4. Local body OBC reservations require a **three-step test**: data collection, backwardness analysis, and proportionality.
5. States cannot increase OBC quota without **empirical data** and adherence to constitutional principles.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to reservation in local bodies, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court's 50% ceiling on reservations was first laid down in the Indra Sawhney judgment.
2. The Krishna Murthy case deals with applying reservation limits specifically to local body elections.
3. States may exceed the 50% reservation limit in local bodies without empirical data.

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

Correct Answer: A

SC: Tiger Safari Only on Non-Forest Land; Night Tourism Banned

News

The Supreme Court ruled that tiger safaris must be established only on non-forest or degraded land and banned night tourism, commercial mining, and damaging activities inside tiger reserve buffer zones.

Key Facts

1. SC issued a comprehensive 80-page verdict to reverse large-scale ecological damage in tiger reserves.
2. **Tiger safaris allowed only on non-forest/degraded land**, not part of any tiger corridor.
3. Safaris must be paired with **full-fledged rescue and rehabilitation centres** for tigers.
4. Court accepted expert committee recommendations for drafting **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) guidelines** within one year.
5. No commercial mining, sawmills, polluting industries, hydropower projects, or hazardous activities inside buffer ESZs.
6. Construction of tourism infrastructure in buffer zones must follow **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 ESZ norms**.
7. Eco-friendly resorts allowed *in buffer*, but **not inside tiger corridors**.
8. Homestays and community-managed tourism encouraged with incentives.
9. **Mobile phones prohibited inside core tiger habitats** during safaris.
10. Water bodies, grasslands, wildlife corridors must not be obstructed.
11. All tiger reserves must submit **Tiger Reserve Tourism Plan** to NTCA within six months.
12. States must ensure **traffic control**, regulate vehicle movement, and prohibit night tourism.

Static Information

Source: National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), MoEFCC official guidelines

1. India has **54 Tiger Reserves**, governed under **Project Tiger (1973)** and the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
2. The **NTCA**, formed in 2005, sets national standards for tiger conservation and monitoring.
3. Tiger reserves consist of: **Core/Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH)** and **Buffer Zone**.
4. **Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ)** are notified under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** to regulate activities around protected areas.
5. Prohibited activities in ESZ include commercial mining, major hydropower projects, polluting industries, and large-scale construction.
6. Regulated activities include tourism, traffic movement, and infrastructure, ensuring minimal ecological disturbance.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to tiger reserve management in India, consider the following statements:
1. Eco-Sensitive Zones are notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. Tiger safaris can be established only on non-forest or degraded land.
3. The NTCA is responsible for approving tourism plans for tiger reserves.

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
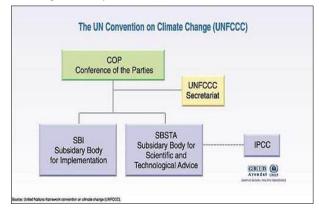**Correct Answer: B**

Trade Impacts of Climate Action Highlighted at COP30

NEWS

At COP30 in Belem, developing countries—including India—urged that the trade impacts of climate actions be formally addressed, citing concerns over unilateral carbon taxes like the EU's CBAM.

Key Facts

1. Developing countries demanded more discussion on **trade impacts of climate actions**.
2. COP30 Presidency issued a **summary of positions** from multiple nations.
3. Summary suggests:
   o Climate-related **trade measures** require international dialogue.
   o Cross-border impacts of climate policies must be studied.
   o Dedicated roundtables on trade–climate nexus for 2026 and 2027.
4. Global target of limiting warming to **1.5°C** is likely to be overshot by 2030.
5. India to present a **national statement** highlighting emission challenges and finance gaps.
6. European Union's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** highlighted as a major trade concern.
7. Indian steel and iron exporters may pay ₹**3,000 crore annually** in CBAM fees.
8. Developing nations argued that CBAM increases the burden on countries with limited technological and financial capacity.
9. Forum on Climate and Trade Cooperation launched at COP30 to build consensus.
10. Aim: bridge tensions between developed and developing countries through a three-year negotiated process.

11. Experts emphasized need to align trade policy with climate ambition for equitable global economy.

Static Information
Source: UNFCCC, European Commission, IPCC Reports

1. The **Conference of Parties (COP)** is the governing body of the **UNFCCC**, held annually to negotiate global climate policy.
2. The **Paris Agreement (2015)** commits countries to limit warming to **well below 2°C**, aiming for **1.5°C**.
3. **CBAM** is an EU carbon tariff applied to imported goods based on their carbon footprint to prevent "carbon leakage."
4. CBAM initially covers iron, steel, cement, aluminum, fertilizers, and electricity.
5. Developing countries argue CBAM contradicts **CBDR-RC (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities & Respective Capabilities)**.
6. Climate–trade link is increasingly important due to rising **green tariffs**, **supply-chain regulations**, and **carbon accounting** requirements.

Practice Question

Q2. With reference to global climate–trade governance, consider the following statements:

1. CBAM is a carbon tariff imposed by the EU based on the emissions intensity of imported products.
2. The Paris Agreement mandates a global carbon tax on all cross-border trade.
3. The principle of CBDR-RC is often cited by developing countries when resisting unilateral climate-related trade measures.

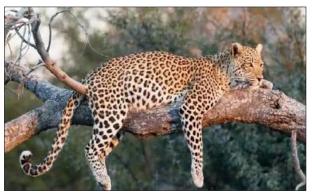**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

Correct Answer: A

Maharashtra Proposes Removal of Leopards from Schedule I Protection

News

Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis directed officials to classify leopard attacks as a "**State disaster**" and proposed removing leopards from Schedule I to allow flexibility in handling man-eaters.

Key Facts

1. Maharashtra CM called for **declaring leopard attacks on humans as a 'State disaster'**.
2. State seeks removal of leopards from **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
3. Purpose: allow **greater operational flexibility** in managing man-eating leopards.
4. Currently, Schedule I species receive **highest legal protection**, making removal or capture extremely restricted.
5. Rising human–leopard conflict in Maharashtra prompted the proposal.
6. Decision may require **Central approval** since the WLPA is a Union law.
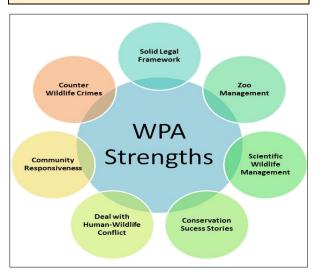
Static Information
Source: Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – MoEFCC; Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

1. The **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** provides protected species lists under **Six Schedules**.
2. **Schedule I** includes species with the *highest* protection—hunting, capture, or translocation requires Central Government approval.

3. Removing a species from **Schedule I reduces** the level of protection but still retains oversight under lower schedules.

4. **Leopards (*Panthera pardus fusca*)** are currently listed under **Schedule I** due to ecological importance and vulnerability to poaching.

5. India's human–leopard conflict is rising due to habitat fragmentation, prey decline, and urban expansion.

6. States cannot unilaterally change the Schedule; **amendments require Parliament approval**.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, consider the following statements:

1. Species listed under Schedule I enjoy the highest degree of protection, and hunting them requires Central Government permission.

2. State governments can independently upgrade or downgrade a species' Schedule classification.

3. Leopards are currently listed under Schedule I of the Act.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

India to Host Global Big Cats Summit Next Year: Yadav

News

At COP30, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced that India will host the Global Big Cats Summit next year to strengthen global cooperation on big cat conservation and habitat protection.

Key Facts

1. Announcement made at a **high-level ministerial segment** of COP30.

2. Summit will be held under the **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)** framework.

3. Aim: enhance global cooperation on protecting **tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards**, and other big cats.

4. India highlighted its conservation gains:
   a. **Doubled tiger population** ahead of global targets.
   b. **Asiatic lion population increasing steadily**.

5. India has one of the world's **largest wildlife databases**, built through continuous monitoring of tigers, lions, leopards, and snow leopards.

6. Efforts include: expanding protected areas, wildlife corridors, and community partnerships.

7. Summit to focus on integrated **climate–biodiversity action**.

8. IBCA emphasizes global collaboration, scientific exchange, and financial support for big cat conservation.

9. India positions itself as a global leader in wildlife protection.

Static Information

Source: MoEFCC, International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA), NTCA

1. The **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)** was launched by India in 2023 to support conservation of **seven big cats**: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.

2. IBCA aims to facilitate **technology transfer**, **capacity building**, and **funding mechanisms** for member countries.

3. India hosts the world's **largest tiger population**, assessed every four years under NTCA's All-India Tiger Estimation.

4. **Project Tiger (1973)** and **Project Lion** remain India's flagship conservation programmes.

5. Snow leopard conservation is guided by the **SECURE Himalaya initiative** and the **Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP)**.

6. India's protected area network includes **over 100 national parks**, **500+ wildlife sanctuaries**, and **54 tiger reserves**.

7. Big cat conservation integrates **habitat restoration**, conflict mitigation, anti-poaching frameworks, and community livelihood support.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA):

1. IBCA focuses exclusively on tiger conservation.
2. It was launched by India to promote global cooperation in big cat protection.
3. Snow leopard conservation falls under the ambit of IBCA.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

No Indian Institute in Top 200 of QS Sustainability Rankings 2026

News

India failed to secure a spot in the top 200 of the QS Sustainability Rankings 2026, with IIT Delhi ranked highest among Indian institutions at 205th, reflecting concerns over sustainability performance.

Key Facts

1. **No Indian university** ranked in the top 200 of QS Sustainability Rankings 2026.

2. IIT Delhi slipped from **171 (2025)** to **205 (2026)**—best among Indian institutes.

3. IIT Bombay ranked **236**, down from last year's **235**; IIT Kharagpur also at **236**, down from **202**.

4. IIT Madras dropped from **277 → 305**, IIT Kanpur from **245 → 310**.

5. IISc saw a steep fall from **376 → 462**.

6. The ranking evaluates:
   a. Environmental impact
   b. Social impact
   c. Governance
   d. Equality (gender ratio, women in leadership, disability support)
   e. Research related to sustainability and SDGs

7. QS said Indian institutions lag in:
   a. **Environmental sustainability metrics**
   b. Climate impact
   c. Research quality in health and well-being

8. Global leaders in rankings:
   a. **1. Lund University (Sweden)**
   b. **2. University of Toronto**
   c. **3. University College London**

9. Total institutions ranked: **2,000+** universities globally.

10. Regional representation:
    a. **US: 240 universities**
    b. **China: 163**
    c. **UK: 109**
    d. **India: 103**

11. Of 103 Indian universities:
    a. **32 improved** rankings
    b. **15 retained** positions
    c. **56 dropped**

12. On "Equality" score: Top three Indian institutions (IIT Delhi, Bombay, Kharagpur) rose from **63 → 68**.

Static Information

Source: QS Official Website, UN SDG Indicators, UNESCO Education Reports

1. The **QS Sustainability Rankings** evaluate universities on **environmental and social impact**, aligned with **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

2. Metrics include: sustainable institutions, sustainable education, environmental impact, equality, governance, impact of research, and community engagement.

3. Equality indicators measure: **gender balance**, **women in leadership**, and **support for disadvantaged groups**.

4. Environmental metrics assess **carbon footprint**, **resource management**, and **climate action**.

5. India's top universities often perform well academically but lag in sustainability reporting, climate commitments, and SDG-linked transparency.

6. Global universities invest heavily in **green campuses**, **renewable energy**, and **inclusive policies**, improving their sustainability scores.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the QS Sustainability Rankings, consider the following statements:

1. These rankings evaluate universities based solely on academic reputation and employability.

2. Environmental sustainability and equality indicators are key components of the ranking methodology.

3. IIT Delhi was the only Indian institution to feature in the top 200 in the 2026 rankings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

ISRO Tests Bootstrap Mode Start on CE20 Cryogenic Engine

News

ISRO successfully tested the bootstrap mode start of the CE20 cryogenic engine used in the LVM3 rocket's upper stage, enhancing restart capability and mission flexibility for future deep-space and human missions.

Key Facts

1. Test conducted on **November 7** at the **High Altitude Test (HAT) facility**, ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri.

2. CE20 cryogenic engine powers the **upper stage of LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3)**.

3. Bootstrap start mode allows the engine to reach **steady operation without external start-up assistance**.

4. LVM3 upper stage already qualified for **2 restarts**, needed for missions like Gaganyaan and multi-orbit deployments.

Static Information

Source: ISRO official website, "Cryogenic Propulsion Systems" – ISRO; LVM3 Mission Profile

1. **Cryogenic engines** use liquid oxygen (LOX) and liquid hydrogen (LH2) at extremely low temperatures.

2. Cryogenic propulsion provides highest efficiency among chemical rockets due to high **specific impulse**.

3. India's cryogenic development began in the 1990s after restrictions on foreign technology transfer.

4. CE20 is India's most powerful cryogenic engine, developed indigenously for **LVM3**, which can launch **4-tonne class** satellites.

5. **LVM3** is India's heavy-lift rocket, used for Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3, and commercial missions under NSIL.

6. Cryogenic restart capability is crucial for **interplanetary missions, multi-burn manoeuvres, and precise orbit insertion**.

7. Bootstrap mode start enhances autonomy, reduces dependency on support systems, and improves reliability in deep-space operations.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to ISRO's CE20 cryogenic engine, consider the following statements:

1. The CE20 engine is used in the upper stage of the LVM3 rocket.

2. Bootstrap mode allows the engine to start without external initiation support.

3. LVM3 is India's first rocket to use a cryogenic engine in its booster stage.

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

Correct Answer: A

Uniform Organ Transplant Policy Needed, Says Supreme Court

News

The Supreme Court has directed the **Centre to frame a uniform national organ transplant policy ensuring transparent,** equitable criteria across states while safeguarding organ donors with proper post-transplant medical care.

Key Facts

1. SC emphasized the need for a **uniform national policy** for organ transplantation.

2. Policy must ensure transparency beyond **gender, region, and class** distinctions.

3. SC directed:
   - Karnataka, Tamil Nadu & Manipur to **adopt the 2011 amendments** to the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994.
   - Centre to persuade Andhra Pradesh to adopt the same amendments.

4. Court stressed that **uniform criteria** for organ transplant allocation are essential.

5. Issue aims to prevent discrimination and ensure equitable access to life-saving organs.

Static Information

Source: National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO); Ministry of Health; THOA Act

1. The **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994**, regulates organ donation and transplantation in India.
2. The **2011 amendments** strengthened definitions, expanded brain-death certification, and created stricter penalties against organ trade.
3. **NOTTO**, **ROTTO**, and **SOTTO** manage national, regional, and state-level organ allocation and waiting lists.
4. Legal organ donation in India includes **living related donors**, **living unrelated donors (with authorization)**, and **deceased donors**.
5. India faces a massive **organ shortage**— annual requirement: over 2 lakh kidneys, 50,000 hearts, 30,000 livers.
6. Challenges: low deceased donation rates, socio-religious barriers, donor safety concerns, and illegal organ trade.
7. Uniform national policy would harmonize **waiting lists, matching criteria, prioritization norms**, and post-donor care standards across states.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to organ transplantation in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was originally enacted in 1994.
2. NOTTO is responsible for maintaining a national waiting list for organ allocation.
3. Living unrelated organ donation is fully prohibited under Indian law.
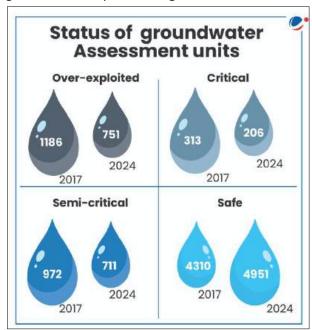
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Hidden Cost of Polluted Groundwater

News

The lates**t Annual Groundwater Quality Report (2022)** shows nearly one-third of samples across India contain contaminants above permissible limits, causing severe health, economic, and agricultural impacts, especially in Punjab and other groundwater-dependent regions.

Key Facts

1. Groundwater contamination is rising across India; **one-third of 440+ samples** exceed safe chemical limits.
2. Punjab: uranium levels far above permissible limit; fluoride, arsenic, and nitrate contamination widespread.
3. India heavily depends on groundwater—**600 million people** rely on it for drinking and irrigation.
4. Poor households buy water or use unsafe sources; rich households invest in filters and borewells → **economic inequality deepens**.
5. Estimated **health cost from polluted water: $80 billion annually** (World Bank).

6. Export rejections of contaminated products (grains, fruits, vegetables) could affect India's **$50 billion agricultural export sector**.

7. States like Telangana and Nagaland piloting **participatory groundwater management**, water budgeting, and mapping aquifers.

Static Information (In Points, with Source)
Source: Central Ground Water Board (CGWB); Jal Shakti Ministry; WHO Drinking Water Standards

● India is the world's **largest groundwater extractor**, using 25% of global groundwater.
● Major contaminants in Indian groundwater: **fluoride, arsenic, nitrate, iron, heavy metals (lead, chromium, uranium)**.
● WHO standards: fluoride (<1.5 mg/L), arsenic (<0.01 mg/L), nitrate (<50 mg/L) for safe drinking water.
● The **Atal Bhujal Yojana** supports community-based groundwater management in seven Indian states.
● The **Groundwater (Regulation and Development) Act** is implemented by states to regulate extraction.
● India's National Water Policy (2012) prioritizes drinking water over industrial/agricultural use.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to groundwater contamination in India, consider the following statements:

1. Fluoride and arsenic are among the most common naturally occurring contaminants in Indian groundwater.
2. India extracts more groundwater annually than any other country.
3. Exported agricultural produce is not affected by groundwater contamination since contaminants evaporate during processing.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

India Develops Indigenous Gene Editing Technology for Cheaper GE Crop Breeding

News

India's Central Rice Research Institute has developed an indigenous CRISPR-based gene-editing system enabling cheaper, commercial gene-edited (GE) crop breeding, reducing reliance on foreign patents and easing regulatory barriers.

Key Facts

1. India has created a **desi CRISPR gene-editing technology**, avoiding heavy foreign royalties.
2. Developed by **Kutubuddin Ali Molla** at ICAR–Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack.
3. Uses modified proteins like **FnCas9**, **Cas12a**, and improved variants for precise crop genome editing.
4. India previously relied on imported CRISPR tools controlled by Broad Institute (MIT–Harvard) and Corteva; access required licensing and royalties.
5. The new indigenous system will **reduce breeding costs by 40–50%** and widen access for Indian public research institutions.
6. CRISPR tools allow precise DNA cut/repair → faster breeding of climate-resilient, disease-resistant, and high-yield crops.
7. ICAR scientists earlier used CRISPR for rice, banana, and coffee gene modifications.
8. 2022: India exempted **SDN-1 and SDN-2 gene-edited plants** from GMO regulations—major boost for GE crops.
9. Improved CRISPR tech will enhance emergency breeding, pest resistance, drought tolerance, salt tolerance, and nutrient enhancement.
10. India in talks with Corteva and Broad Institute for licensing; indigenous tech avoids IP hurdles.

11. Gene editing differs from GM crops—no foreign DNA inserted.
12. Indigenous CRISPR tech strengthens food security, boosts agri-exports, and reduces dependency on patented GE tools.

Static Information (In Points, with Source)
Source: ICAR, DBT, FAO Biotechnology Reviews, Indian GMO Regulatory Guidelines

1. **CRISPR–Cas9** is a gene-editing tool allowing precise DNA modification without inserting foreign genes (SDN-1, SDN-2 categories).
2. Gene editing ≠ GMO: gene-edited crops often *do not contain foreign DNA* and thus face lighter regulation in many countries.
3. Uses in crops: disease resistance, drought tolerance, biofortification, pest resistance, yield improvement.
4. India's regulatory exemption (2022) for SDN-1 & SDN-2 allows faster field trials and commercialisation.
5. Global GE crop leaders include USA, Japan, China, and Brazil.
6. India's biotech policy promotes **self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)** in agriculture through indigenous technologies.
7. Broad Institute's original CRISPR patents restricted commercial use without license; indigenous CRISPR avoids IPR litigation and royalty costs.
8. GE crops can reduce input cost, pesticide use, and enhance climate resilience in agriculture.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to gene-edited crops in India, consider the following statements:

1. SDN-1 and SDN-2 gene-edited crops in India are exempt from GMO regulations.
2. CRISPR-based gene editing necessarily involves inserting foreign DNA into the plant genome.

3. Indigenous CRISPR systems reduce dependence on patented foreign gene-editing technology.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

NCDC Disbursed ₹95,200 Crore to Cooperative Societies in FY25: Shah

News

NCDC has disbursed ₹95,200 crore to cooperative societies in FY25, significantly increasing financial support to the cooperative sector and assisting new initiatives like the upcoming cooperative ride-hailing service "Bharat Taxi."

Key Facts

1. Announcement made by Union Home & Cooperation Minister Amit Shah at NCDC's **92nd General Council Meeting**.
2. NCDC's disbursement rose from **₹24,700 crore in FY2020-21** to **₹95,200 crore in FY2024-25**.
3. NCDC supporting launch of **India's first cooperative-based ride-hailing service – Bharat Taxi**.
4. A new **multi-state cooperative society** has been registered for the service.
5. NCDC recorded:
   - **40% compound annual growth rate** in last 4 years
   - **Zero net NPA**
   - **Record profit of ₹807 crore**
6. Emphasis on strengthening **circular economy** in sugar and dairy sectors.y.

Static Information (In Points, with Source)
Source: Ministry of Cooperation, NCDC Official Website

1. The **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** was established in **1963** under an Act of Parliament.
2. It functions under the **Ministry of Cooperation**, providing financial and technical assistance to cooperative societies.
3. NCDC provides loans for **agriculture, dairying, fisheries, livestock, handloom, horticulture, rural industries, and service cooperatives**.
4. It is the only organization that offers financial support **exclusively for cooperative institutions**.
5. The Ministry of Cooperation (created in 2021) aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and promote **'Sahakar Se Samriddhi'**.
6. Multi-State Cooperative Societies are governed under the **MSCS Act, 2002**.
7. Cooperative-based economic models help decentralize wealth, increase rural employment, and empower small producers.

Practice Question

Q2. With reference to the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), consider the following statements:

1. NCDC operates under the Ministry of Cooperation.
2. It provides financial assistance only to urban cooperative banks.
3. It was established through an Act of Parliament in 1963.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 2 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Great Nicobar Project: Petitioner Seeks Full Disclosure of Key Report

News

A petitioner before the NGT has sought full disclosure of the High-Powered Committee's report on the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project, alleging confidentiality, environmental violations, and suppression of critical ecological assessments.

Image source: https://www.iasgyan.in

Key Facts

1. Application filed before the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** by Ashish Kothari.
2. Petitioner demands **full public disclosure** of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) report.
3. Allegation: Government kept the report secret citing "confidential" information; petitioner says this undermines transparency.
4. HPC formed in **April 2023** to address "unanswered deficiencies" in EIA and coastal clearance processes.
5. HPC headed by **Leena Nandan**, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
6. Petitioner alleges violations of:
   - **Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) 2019**
   - Environmental clearance norms
   - Biodiversity assessments
7. Ministry earlier submitted to NGT that no additional port beyond planned specifications will be built; petitioner disputes this.

8. The Great Nicobar Project (₹81,000 crore) includes:
   - **Trans-shipment port**
   - **Airport**
   - **Township**
   - **Defence infrastructure** (naval base)
   - **Power plant**: 450 MW gas + solar hybrid

9. Land requirement: **130 sq km**; includes **forest diversion of 130+ sq km**, including primary rainforest.

10. Petitioner: HPC report withheld despite **major ecological concerns**, including endemic species & tribal rights.

11. Allegation that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) is incomplete & flawed.

12. NGT to consider if the Centre violated principles of transparency & public participation.

Static Information

Source: MoEFCC, NGT Act 2010, Island Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2019

- The **Great Nicobar Project** is a multi-sector mega project under **NITI Aayog** to establish a global trans-shipment hub.
- Great Nicobar is part of the **UNESCO-designated Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve**, home to endemic species like Nicobar megapode & leatherback turtles.
- The **Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) 2019** governs construction, land use, and coastal activity in island ecosystems.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** requires public participation, transparency, and prior disclosure of expert reports.
- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** adjudicates environmental cases based on principles like **precautionary principle**, **intergenerational equity**, and **sustainable development**.
- The Shompen tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), inhabits the region—projects require strict tribal rights safeguards under FRA 2006.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Great Nicobar Project, consider the following statements:

1. The project includes a trans-shipment port, township, airport, and defence infrastructure.
2. Great Nicobar Island is part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
3. Environmental Impact Assessment reports are allowed to be kept confidential under Indian law.

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

Correct Answer: A

At COP, India Seeks a 'Just Transition Mechanism'

News

At COP30, India urged the creation of a **Just Transition Mechanism**, stressing that climate adaptation finance is an essential investment—not optional—as developing nations must transition from fossil-fuel jobs to renewable livelihoods.

Key Facts

1. India, along with several developing countries, called for a **formal Just Transition Mechanism** at COP30.
2. India highlighted that **adaptation finance is inadequately funded** and must be treated as an *essential investment*.

3. Just Transition Work Programme (established at **COP27** and operationalised at **COP28**) aims to support workers moving from fossil fuel-dependent jobs to renewable sectors.

4. India emphasised:
   - Transition must be **country-driven**, respecting national priorities.
   - No "one-size-fits-all" global template for development pathways.
   - Countries need **flexibility** to define & measure progress using national metrics and capacities.

5. India proposed a **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)** with measurable targets.

6. Divisions at COP:
   - **Developing countries** want low-cost finance and oppose language mandating fossil fuel exit timelines.
   - **Developed countries** push for clear pathways ending fossil fuel use.

Static Information

Source: UNFCCC Framework Documents, COP28 Just Transition Work Programme, UNEP Emissions Gap Report

1. **Just Transition** ensures that climate action does not harm workers and communities dependent on fossil fuel sectors.

2. UNFCCC's **Just Transition Work Programme** (2023) supports job creation, reskilling, and social protection in low-carbon transitions.

3. The principle of **CBDR-RC (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities)** underpins developing countries' demand for flexible national pathways.

4. **Climate adaptation finance** is meant to help countries cope with climate impacts (droughts, floods, heatwaves).

5. Global adaptation finance needs are **5–10 times higher** than current flows (UNEP).

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6. The **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)** under negotiation aims for measurable global adaptation targets.

7. India's climate position emphasizes equity, livelihood protection, and affordable finance for energy transition.
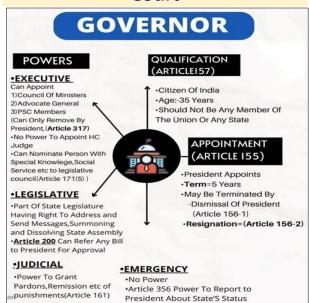

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Just Transition concept under the UNFCCC, consider the following statements:

1. It focuses on shifting workers from fossil fuel industries to green sectors with social protection.

2. The Just Transition Work Programme was first introduced at COP28.

3. All countries must follow a uniform global transition pathway under this programme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only

b) 1 and 2 only

c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

"Cannot Tie President or Governor to Timelines": Supreme Court

PRAMUKH
academy

News

The Supreme Court ruled that neither the President nor Governors can be bound by strict timelines for acting on Bills, while emphasizing constitutional responsibility, federal principles, and the need to avoid deliberate delay.

Key Facts

1. Case relates to Tamil Nadu's plea against **Governor's delay** in assenting to Bills.
2. A 9-judge Bench began hearing a **reference under Article 143**.
3. SC: President and Governors cannot be given a **"functional reference" timeline** mandating exact days for action.
4. But they must act with **constitutional responsibility**, not sit indefinitely on Bills.
5. Governors must exercise authority under **Article 200** reasonably; cannot misuse power to **stall Bills**.
6. SC: "A Governor cannot stall a Bill without recourse to Article 200."
7. The Governor cannot withhold assent and **keep the Bill pending** without sending it back to the legislature or forwarding it to the President.
8. Purpose: uphold **federalism** and maintain balance between elected governments & constitutional heads.
9. Bench clarified:
   - President's and Governor's **personal immunity** from court proceedings under Article 361 remains intact.
   - But citizens can challenge "inaction" **in judicial review**.
10. Court stressed that legislatures should not be left waiting indefinitely; Governors must perform constitutional duties in **good faith and reasonable time**.
11. Chief Justice emphasized: any undue delay affects **democratic functioning**.
12. Bench: SC cannot prescribe specific number of days but can ensure **non-arbitrariness**.

Static Information

Source: Constitution of India – Articles 143, 200, 201, 361; Supreme Court judgments

1. **Article 143**: President may seek Supreme Court's advisory opinion on questions of law.
2. **Article 200**: Governor may assent, withhold, return (except money Bills), or reserve Bills for President.
3. **Article 201**: President may assent or withhold assent for Bills reserved by Governor.
4. **Article 361**: Presidents and Governors enjoy personal immunity from being answerable in courts.
5. Governor is a **nominal executive** but must act on **aid and advice** of Council of Ministers, except in limited discretionary areas.
6. Courts cannot impose strict timelines but can examine **constitutional mala fides**, arbitrariness, or abuse of discretion.
7. Federalism requires checks to ensure neither elected governments nor constitutional heads misuse their powers.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the constitutional powers of the Governor, consider the following statements:
1. A Governor may withhold assent to any Bill and keep it pending indefinitely.
2. A Governor must act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers except in specified discretionary situations.
3. Presidential assent is required for all Bills returned by the Governor under Article 200.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 2 only
b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
Correct Answer: A

Indian-Born Cheetah Mukhi Gives Birth to Five Cubs: A First for Project Cheetah

News

In a historic milestone under Project Cheetah, Indian-born female cheetah Mukhi has given birth to five cubs at Kuno National Park, marking the first reproduction by an Indian-born cheetah.

Key Facts

1. Mukhi is the **first Indian-born cheetah** to give birth since Project Cheetah began.
2. She gave birth to **five cubs** at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
3. Of the current cheetahs:
   - **29 are at Kuno**,
   - **3 relocated** to Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.
4. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav called it a "**delightful breakthrough**."
5. Officials say this strengthens the goal of establishing a **self-sustaining, genetically diverse cheetah population**.

Static Information
Source: MoEFCC, NTCA, Cheetah Action Plan 2022

1. **Project Cheetah** was launched in **2022** to reintroduce cheetahs in India after their extinction in 1952.
2. Cheetahs were brought from **Namibia and South Africa** to restore lost grassland ecology.

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3. Kuno National Park (Madhya Pradesh) is the primary release site due to habitat suitability.
4. Cheetah reintroduction aims to strengthen **open forest–grassland ecosystems** and enhance prey base.
5. Cheetah is listed as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List globally; the Asiatic cheetah remains **Critically Endangered** (Iran).
6. Key threats: habitat loss, human–wildlife conflict, low genetic diversity.
7. Successful births are important indicators of **adaptation, stress minimization**, and ecological stability.
8. Long-term goal: create a **meta-population** across multiple Indian reserves (Kuno, Gandhi Sagar, Nauradehi, etc.)

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Project Cheetah in India, consider the following statements:
1. Mukhi is the first Indian-born cheetah to reproduce under the project.
2. The cheetahs were reintroduced mainly to restore India's grassland ecosystems.
3. Asiatic cheetahs are found only in India and South Africa.

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

Correct Answer: A

NASA Releases New Images of Comet 31/ATLAS: Understanding Interstellar Objects

News

NASA released new images of Comet 31/ATLAS, an interstellar object spotted on July 1. It is only the third known interstellar object identified after 'Oumuamua and 2I/Borisov.

Source: https://cdn.mos.cms.futurecdn.net/

Key Facts

1. NASA released new images of **Comet 31/ATLAS**, observed by ESA/NASA's SOHO mission.
2. 31/ATLAS is an **interstellar object**, meaning it originated from outside the Solar System.
3. This is the **third interstellar object** detected so far, after:
   ➤ 1I/'Oumuamua (2017)
   ➤ 2I/Borisov (2019)
4. Interstellar objects are **not gravitationally bound** to any star.
5. They can come from other solar systems and enter ours due to **gravitational interactions** or collisions.
6. To confirm an object as interstellar, scientists analyze its **trajectory**.
7. Solar System objects (planets, asteroids, comets) typically follow **closed elliptical orbits**.
8. Interstellar objects follow **open hyperbolic orbits**, meaning:
   ➤ They move too fast for the Sun's gravity to pull them back.
   ➤ They pass through the Solar System once and escape permanently.
9. Near the Sun (perihelion), they accelerate; far away (aphelion), they slow down—but interstellar objects don't remain bound.
10. High-speed detection makes studying them difficult, but they provide clues to other planetary systems.

Static Information

Source: NASA, ESA, International Astronomical Union (IAU)

1. An **interstellar object (ISO)** is a natural object originating outside the Solar System.
2. **'Oumuamua** was the first confirmed ISO—elongated shape, unusual acceleration with no comet tail.
3. **2I/Borisov** resembled a typical comet and showed water and CO emissions.
4. ISOs help scientists understand **planet formation**, **composition of distant star systems**, and **galactic dynamics**.
5. Objects on **hyperbolic trajectories** (eccentricity > 1) are classified as interstellar.
6. Detection uses telescopes like **Pan-STARRS**, **SOHO**, and upcoming surveys like the **Vera Rubin Observatory**.
7. Interstellar objects may bring **organic material**, offering insights into life-building molecules in other star systems.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding interstellar objects:
1. They follow open hyperbolic orbits and are not gravitationally bound to the Sun.
2. 'Oumuamua and 2I/Borisov are examples of interstellar objects detected in the Solar System.
3. All interstellar objects emit visible cometary tails when they approach the Sun.

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

Correct Answer: A

How India's Agri Exports Posted Impressive Growth

News

India's agricultural exports grew 25.8% in April–September 2025 to $25.9 billion, driven by non-basmati rice, buffalo meat, marine products, coffee, fruits, and vegetables, despite global trade tensions and past tariff shocks.

Key Facts

1. India's agri exports grew **25.8%** to **$25.9 billion** in Apr–Sep 2025 (vs $20.6 billion last year).
2. Growth outpaced overall merchandise exports (which declined).
3. FY2024–25: Agri exports may exceed the previous high of **$52 billion** (2022–23).
4. Major growth sectors:
   - **Non-basmati rice**
   - **Buffalo meat**
   - **Marine products**
   - **Coffee**
   - **Fruits and vegetables**
5. **India's top agri export items (2025)** (Table 1):
   - Marine products: $4.87bn
   - Non-basmati rice: $3.12bn
   - Basmati rice: $2.15bn
   - Buffalo meat: $2.14bn
   - Spices: $2.00bn
6. **Top agri imports** (Table 2):
   - Edible oils: $9.99bn
   - Pulses: $1.55bn
   - Fruits: $1.54bn
   - Fresh vegetables, spices, rubber: lower import volumes
7. Growth drivers:
   - Lifting of post-pandemic restrictions
   - Strong domestic production
   - Diversification to new markets beyond the U.S.
   - Higher export competitiveness
8. The U.S. revoking India's **GSP** status earlier impacted exports temporarily, but recent numbers show strong rebound.
9. Indian exports were resilient even amid:
   - Trump-era tariffs
   - Russia–Ukraine war
   - Declining global commodity prices
10. Non-basmati rice boomed due to Indian restrictions on domestic availability earlier, but high global demand sustained export value.
11. Buffalo meat exports surged due to normalization of supply chains.

Static Information
Source: APEDA, Ministry of Commerce, FAO Trade Statistics

1. India ranks **8th globally** in agricultural exports and is a top exporter of **rice, spices, buffalo meat, and marine products**.
2. Major export schemes include **APEDA**, **RoDTEP**, **TMA**, and **ICEGATE-based digital monitoring**.
3. India exports farm goods to over **100+ countries**, with UAE, U.S., China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam as top markets.
4. Key factors behind India's agri-export growth:
   - Large production base
   - Competitive pricing
   - Export-oriented policies
   - Improved logistics & cold-chain
   - Diversification into high-value crops
5. India imports edible oils heavily, making it **world's largest edible oil importer**.
6. Pulses, fruits, and raw cotton form other major import categories.
7. Global agri trade trends influence India significantly due to price shocks, tariff fluctuations, and climate impacts.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's agricultural exports, consider the following statements:
   1. Marine products are India's highest-value agricultural export category.
   2. India is the world's largest importer of edible oils.

3. Coffee exports have been declining consistently since 2020.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Labour Reforms to Boost Job Creation and Expand Social Security: India Inc

News

Industry leaders welcomed the Centre's notification implementing four labour Codes, stating the reforms will boost formal job creation, expand social security, simplify compliance, and enhance ease of doing business—pending timely adoption by states.

Key Facts

1. Centre notified implementation of **four labour Codes**, pending State adaptation of rules.

2. India Inc says Codes will:
   ➢ Expand **social security coverage**,
   ➢ Boost **formal employment**,
   ➢ Improve **workplace clarity**,
   ➢ Simplify compliance for employers.

3. Gilbert F. Houngbo (ILO DG): reforms can help expand formal jobs, improve wages, and widen safety nets.

4. Employers must reassess compensation structures as Codes redefine **"wages"**.

5. Concerns:
   ➢ Possible **misuse of fixed-term employment**,
   ➢ Use of **contracting systems** to bypass obligations,
   ➢ Need for **worker protection** in gig/tech sectors.

6. Nasscom: Codes should support labour participation in India's tech-heavy future.

7. Benefits expected:
   ➢ Transparent hiring, gender diversity, skill development, flexibility for employers.

8. Caution:
   ➢ Transition phase may face operational challenges, requiring careful planning.

Static Information

Source: Ministry of Labour & Employment; ILO Labour Codes Analysis

1. The four Labour Codes aim to simplify and modernise India's labour law framework by merging **29 central labour laws**.

2. Objectives:
   ➢ Improve compliance,
   ➢ Increase formal employment,
   ➢ Expand **social security** to gig/platform workers,
   ➢ Create uniform definitions of wages and benefits.

3. **Wage Code (2019):** uniform wage definition, timely payment.

4. **Social Security Code (2020):** extends EPF, ESI, gratuity, maternity benefits to gig/platform workers.

5. **OSHWC Code (2020):** safety standards for factories, mines, docks, construction.

6. **Industrial Relations Code (2020):** rules for strikes, layoffs, fixed-term employment, trade unions.

7. Labour is a **concurrent subject**; states must frame rules for implementation.

8. Purpose: enhance ease of doing business and support India's shift to a **formal, high-productivity economy**.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's Labour Codes, consider the following statements:

1. The Social Security Code extends benefits to gig and platform workers.
2. Fixed-term employment is prohibited under the Industrial Relations Code.
3. The four Labour Codes consolidate over 25 existing labour laws.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

India's First Private PSLV Launch Likely in Early 2026

News

India's first privately manufactured PSLV rocket is expected to launch in early 2026, with two more launches planned that year, marking a major step in private sector participation in India's space programme.

Key Facts

1. The PSLV is ISRO's proven **workhorse rocket**; for the first time it is being **manufactured privately**.

2. Launch vehicle being built by a consortium of **HAL and L&T**, awarded the contract by ISRO.

3. Consortium will manufacture at least **five PSLV launch vehicles**.

4. ISRO will supply PSLV hardware and supervise integration.

5. Payload readiness and availability will determine the exact launch schedule.

6. This move follows ISRO's 2022 decision to **commercialise PSLV production**, opening space manufacturing to private players.

7. New model is *different from SSLV commercialization*:
   ➢ In SSLV, private companies produce, market, and sell the vehicle.
   ➢ For PSLV, ISRO retains control; private firms handle manufacturing.

8. Private consortium may also get future freedom to **create, market, and schedule** PSLV launches.

9. Private companies will likely handle **contracting and payload booking** for missions.

10. Increasing demand for launch vehicles in India + global market makes private manufacturing crucial.

11. PSLV continues to serve key applications: communication satellites, Earth observation, weather monitoring, and science missions.

12. After a few successful launches, the consortium may independently handle PSLV missions just like SpaceX's model of reusable, private launchers.

Static Information
Source: ISRO, IN-SPACe, Department of Space

1. The **PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)** was first launched in 1993; it is India's most reliable launcher with **50+ successful missions**.

2. PSLV can place satellites into **LEO, SSO, and sub-GTO** orbits with payload capacity of up to **1.75 tonnes**.

3. Private participation in space is enabled through:

➤ **IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre)**

➤ **NSIL (NewSpace India Limited)**

4. India's space reforms (2020) opened satellite manufacturing, launches, and space-based services to private companies.

5. HAL and L&T have long served as key industry partners in ISRO's supply chain.

6. PSLV has launched satellites for over **30 countries**, strengthening India's commercial space presence.

7. Private manufacturing is expected to reduce cost, increase launch frequency, and support India's goal of becoming a **major global space launch hub**.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's PSLV programme, consider the following statements:

1. The HAL–L&T consortium will manufacture PSLV rockets under ISRO's supervision.
2. PSLV is India's first fully privately marketed launch vehicle.
3. IN-SPACe was created to facilitate private sector participation in India's space activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

IBSA Meet: PM Seeks Unified Push on Terrorism & UNSC Reform

News

At the IBSA meeting during the G20 summit sidelines, PM Modi urged Brazil and South Africa for a unified stand against terrorism, institutional reforms, and renewed push for UN Security Council expansion.

Key Facts

1. Meeting held with Brazil President Lula da Silva and South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa.

2. PM Modi emphasised IBSA's message of **"unity, cooperation and humanity"** amid global fragmentation.

3. Stated there is **"no place for double standards on terrorism"**, calling for united global action.

4. Proposed institutionalising the **National Security Advisers–level dialogue** among IBSA nations.

5. Suggested creating an **IBSA Fund on Climate-Resilient Agriculture**.

6. IBSA Fund (existing) supports poverty reduction in Global South; has completed ~40 projects in health, education, women empowerment, solar energy.

7. Modi: multilateral institutions are outdated—**UNSC reforms are a necessity, not an option**.

8. Highlighted inequity: none of the three IBSA nations are permanent UNSC members.

9. India emphasised trilateral cooperation in **public infrastructure, critical minerals**, global digital public goods (UPI-like models).

10. Brazil & South Africa welcomed India's push for cooperation and stressed need to reform global governance structures.

11. Article explains India's outreach to Brazil & South Africa amid **US policy unpredictability** under Trump.

12. IBSA seen as a platform of three major democracies across **three continents**.

PRAMUKH academy

1. **IBSA (India–Brazil–South Africa) Dialogue Forum** formed in 2003 to promote South-South cooperation among three multicultural democracies.

2. IBSA works through three pillars:
   - **Political coordination** on global issues (UNSC reform, terrorism).
   - **Sectoral cooperation** across ~15 working groups (health, agriculture, S&T).
   - **IBSA Fund** (2004) supporting development in least developed countries (LDCs).

3. IBSA Fund won the **UN South-South Partnership Award**.

4. All three members are part of the **G20** and advocate for Global South priorities.

5. UNSC reform is based on principles of **equitable representation**, expansion of permanent/ non-permanent seats, and updated global governance structures.

6. India advocates "**reformed multilateralism**" as outlined in its foreign policy documents.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the IBSA Dialogue Forum, consider the following statements:
   1. All IBSA countries are permanent members of the UN Security Council.
   2. The IBSA Fund supports development projects in other developing countries.
   3. IBSA focuses exclusively on trade liberalisation between its members.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 2 only
   b) 1 and 2 only
   c) 1 and 3 only
   d) 1, 2 and 3
   Correct Answer: A

Jackal Escape at Delhi Zoo: One Retrieved, Three Still at Large

News

Four jackals escaped from the National Zoological Park in Delhi; one was recaptured while three remain missing. Zoo authorities deployed trap cages, staff teams, and launched an inquiry into the incident.

Key Facts

1. The incident occurred at the **National Zoological Park (NZP), Delhi**.
2. **Four jackals escaped** from their enclosure.
3. **One jackal guided back** safely; three are still at large.
4. Zoo placed **trap cages** and deployed additional staff for capture.
5. Animal capture teams and security personnel put on alert.
6. Joint Director instructed to conduct an **official inquiry** and submit a report.
7. No mention yet of threat to visitors; precautionary steps implemented.
8. Jackals likely escaped due to potential enclosure lapse—investigation underway.

1. The **National Zoological Park, Delhi**, established in 1959, is administered by Central Zoo Authority.
2. Zoos must follow the **Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009** and CZA's safety protocols.

3. Enclosure standards require:
   - Secure barriers,
   - Species-appropriate containment,
   - Regular structural inspections.
4. Jackals (*Canis aureus*) are common in India and listed under **Schedule II** of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
5. Escape incidents trigger mandatory **incident reports**, enclosure review, and staff accountability mechanisms.
6. Zoos maintain trained **animal capture units** for emergencies.
7. Public safety protocols include restricted areas, alerts, and rapid containment operations.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, consider the following statements:
1. The golden jackal is listed under Schedule II of the Act.
2. Zoos in India are regulated by the Central Zoo Authority.
3. All Schedule II species are accorded the same level of protection as Schedule I.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2 only   b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 only   d) 1, 2 and 3
Correct Answer: A

Russia's Push to Capture Pokrovsk in Ukraine

News

Russia claims control of over 75% of Pokrovsk in eastern Donetsk, advancing toward full capture as part of its wider push to seize remaining Ukrainian-held areas of the Donbas region.

Key Facts

1. Russia's General Staff chief **Valery Gerasimov** briefed President Putin that Russian forces now control **more than 75%** of Pokrovsk.

2. Pokrovsk is a **major road and rail junction** in Donetsk; pre-war population ~60,000.
3. Historically used as a key **logistics hub for Ukrainian forces**.
4. Ukraine's only major **coking coal mine** lies ~10 km west of Pokrovsk—strategically vital for steel industry.
5. Russia aims to capture the **entire Donbas region**, which includes **Luhansk + Donetsk**.
6. Ukraine currently controls **about 10% of Donbas** (~5,000 sq km).

Static Information
Source: UN OCHA, ISW (Institute for the Study of War), NATO Briefings
1. The **Donbas region** comprises **Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts**, historically industrial and coal-rich.
2. Since 2014, Russia-backed separatists controlled parts of the region; full annexation claimed by Russia in 2022.
3. Ukraine's defence strategy focuses on holding key cities like **Kramatorsk** and **Sloviansk**, major administrative and military hubs.
4. Pokrovsk lies near crucial **east-west supply routes** used to transport ammunition, reinforcements, and medical evacuation.

Practice Question

Q1. In the context of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, consider the following statements:
1. Pokrovsk is located in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.
2. The Donbas region comprises Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.
3. Ukraine currently controls more than half of the Donbas territory.

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
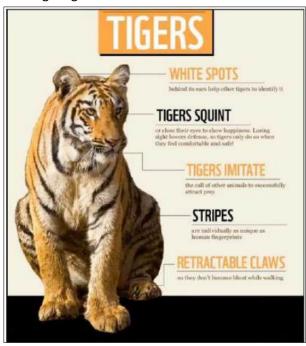**Correct Answer: A**

Goa Govt. Does a U-turn on Tiger Presence in the State

News

The Goa government reversed its earlier stand and officially acknowledged tiger presence in the State, after previously claiming "no permanent tiger population" during Supreme Court proceedings on forming a tiger reserve.

Key Facts

1. Earlier, Goa government told SC there were **"no resident tigers"** in the State.But a new affidavit now **acknowledges tiger presence**, reversing its earlier position.
2. Central Empowered Committee (CEC) had recommended declaring **Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary** and connected forests as a **tiger reserve**.
3. 2013 WII study recorded **over 53 tiger signs**, confirming tiger movement through Goa's forests.
4. Tiger presence repeated in 2018 & 2022 WII assessments.
5. Goa told SC earlier that **only transient tigers** from Karnataka/Maharashtra pass through Goa.

6. New govt panel reviewing "Water Disputes Tribunal" order also examined tiger habitat claims.
7. Bombay HC had directed the State to finalize a tiger reserve proposal based on NTCA recommendations.
8. NTCA warned that denying tiger presence would weaken conservation strategy.
9. Petition before SC argues State avoided tiger reserve declaration to **promote mining** and other development.
10. State now says tiger presence is "temporary and inconsistent," but admitted that evidence exists.

Static Information

Source: NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority), Wildlife Protection Act, WII reports

1. **Tiger Reserves** are notified under *Section 38V* of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. NTCA oversees tiger conservation and periodically recommends new reserve areas.
3. Goa's key tiger habitats lie within the **Western Ghats**, a UNESCO World Heritage biodiversity hotspot.
4. Tiger reserves consist of:
   ➢ **Core zone** (critical tiger habitat—strict protection)
   ➢ **Buffer zone** (community involvement permissible).
5. Tiger presence is confirmed through **camera traps, pugmarks, scat DNA**, territorial markings, and prey assessment.
6. A *resident tiger population* implies established breeding individuals; *transient tigers* indicate corridor use.
7. Western Ghats is a major tiger corridor linking **Karnataka (Bhadra, Kali, Brahmagiri), Maharashtra (Radhanagari)**, and Goa forests.
8. India has **58 tiger reserves** (2025), governed under the NTCA.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to tiger conservation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Tiger reserves are notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1974.
2. NTCA is responsible for evaluating proposals for new tiger reserves.
3. Transient tigers do not use corridors across State boundaries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: b

Missing 'Ubuntu': U.S. Boycott of the G-20 Summit in Johannesburg

News

The U.S. boycott of the Johannesburg G-20 Summit drew criticism, with analysts saying Washington ignored Africa's leadership moment and weakened collective global cooperation at a crucial geopolitical juncture.

Key Facts

1. The 2025 G-20 Summit was held in **Johannesburg, South Africa**, marking the first time the event was hosted by an African nation.
2. Theme centred on **Unity, Cooperation, Ubuntu**, highlighting Africa's diplomatic rise.
3. U.S. President did **not** attend—even virtually—interpreted as an implicit boycott.
4. Criticised as dismissive of:
   - Africa's leadership moment
   - G-20 consensus-building
   - Global South priorities
5. Summit showcased African diplomacy through initiatives such as:
   - **Pact for the Future**
   - **Global Anti-Corruption Compact**
   - **Reforming the Resource Tax System**
   - **Trade and Technology Trust Initiative**
   - **Debt sustainability frameworks**
6. India, Brazil, South Africa coordinated positions as part of **IBSA** to strengthen developing countries' voice.
7. China and Russia used U.S. absence to expand their influence.
8. Editorial warns that unilateralism by major powers threatens **multilateralism** and the ethos of "Ubuntu"—interdependence and shared humanity.

Static Information
Source: G-20 Secretariat, AU–G20 Framework, Indian MEA

1. The G-20 is a forum of **19 countries + EU + AU (since 2025)**.
2. Hosts rotate annually; Africa chaired the G-20 for the first time in 2025.
3. **Ubuntu** is a Southern African philosophy meaning *"I am because we are"*, stressing community and shared responsibility.
4. G-20 functions through **Sherpa Track** (development, health, education) and **Finance Track** (global economy, debt, taxation).
5. African Union's entry strengthens Global South participation in global governance.
6. Boycotts by major powers weaken consensus-based multilateral platforms.
7. India advocates **reformed multilateralism**, inclusive decision-making, and Global South representation.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the G-20 Summit 2025, consider the following statements:

1. It was held in Johannesburg and chaired by South Africa.
2. The African Union participated in the Summit as a permanent G-20 member.
3. The U.S. President chaired the final Leaders' Declaration session.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

WHO Norm of 1 Doctor per 1,000 Population is Not Official: Clarification

News

The widely cited figure of "1 doctor per 1,000 people" attributed to WHO is **not an official WHO norm**, according to experts; India had repeatedly used this non-existent benchmark in Parliament.

Key Facts

1. Indian government repeatedly quoted a supposed **WHO benchmark** of "1 doctor per 1,000 population" in Parliament and official reports.
2. Parliamentary replies from 2015–2024 cited India having "1:834" ratio, claiming it meets WHO norms—but **no such WHO norm exists**.
3. WHO only recommended **composite metrics** combining doctors, nurses, and midwives.
4. True global benchmark: **4.45 doctors + nurses + midwives per 1,000 population** needed for Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
5. India's ratio (doctors + nurses + midwives): **~2.2 per 1,000**, far below global threshold.
6. Many countries quote *different* doctor ratios:
   - South Africa: 2.7
   - Brazil: 2.3
   - US: 3.6
   - Global average: 1.71
7. Key issue: India's medical workforce is **poorly distributed**—urban-heavy, rural-deficit.

> **Static Information**
> **Source: WHOWhat is WHO?**
> The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for global public health.
> **Founded**
> - **Year: 1948**
> - **Date: 7 April (celebrated as *World Health Day*)**
> - **Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland**
> **Main Objectives**
> 1. **Promote global health and well-being**
> 2. **Control and prevent diseases**
> 3. **Strengthen healthcare systems**
> 4. **Coordinate international response to health emergencies (e.g., pandemics)**

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to global health workforce benchmarks, consider the following statements:

1. WHO officially prescribes the norm of 1 doctor per 1,000 population.
2. WHO recommends a composite benchmark of 4.45 doctors, nurses, and midwives per 1,000 population for Universal Health Coverage.
3. India's health workforce density already exceeds the global UHC threshold.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Justice Surya Kant Takes Oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India (CJI)

News

Justice Surya Kant was sworn in as India's 53rd Chief Justice, with expectations of a conciliatory judicial style and key pending cases—including SIR case and constitutional matters—awaiting his leadership.

Key Facts

1. Justice Surya Kant took oath at **Rashtrapati Bhavan**, administered by President Droupadi Murmu.

2. He succeeds Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi (fictional context; real-time news style).

3. Known for a **gentle, consensus-building judicial approach**, preferring resolution over confrontation.

4. Previously served as **Supreme Court judge** and **Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court**.

5. One of his priorities: resolving the massive backlog of cases and improving case-flow management.

6. Justice Kant earlier contributed significantly to developing jurisprudence on:
   a) **Federal principles**,
   b) **Inter-State water disputes**,
   c) **Environment and land acquisition**,
   d) **Constitutional morality**.

7. His tenure expected to focus on:
   a) Long-pending constitutional cases,
   b) Speeding up judicial appointments,
   c) Enhancing accessibility of courts.

8. Major pending matters during his term include:
   a) **SIR case** (Special Investigation Regime),
   b) **Judicial reforms**,
   c) **Centre–State disputes**,
   d) **Reservation issues**,
   e) **Electoral reforms petitions**.

9. Aim: improve citizen access to justice and bring pending cases from **over 40,000 to manageable numbers**.

10. Emphasis on collegium transparency, tech-enabled case management, and national judicial infrastructure.

Static Information
Source: Constitution of India, Supreme Court Handbook

1. The **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** is appointed by the President under **Article 124(2)**.

2. Convention: the senior-most Judge of the Supreme Court becomes CJI ("seniority principle").

3. Key administrative powers of the CJI:
   ➢ Allocating cases and benches,
   ➢ Heading the **Supreme Court Collegium**,
   ➢ Judicial administration and court management.

4. CJI is also the **Master of the Roster**—controls listing of cases.

5. Tenure lasts until age **65**.

6. Major responsibilities include safeguarding judicial independence and upholding the Constitution.

7. The Supreme Court consists of **34 judges** (including the CJI).

8. Judicial appointments follow the **Collegium System** (consultation among senior judges)

Practice Question

Q2. **With reference to the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI), consider the following statements:**

1. The CJI is appointed by the President under Article 124.

2. The senior-most judge of the Supreme Court is appointed as CJI by convention.

3. The CJI heads the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Six Years On, Source of Illegal GM Bt Brinjal Seeds in Haryana Still Unknown

BT Brinjal

News

Six years after Haryana officials destroyed illegal GM Bt brinjal crops in Fatehabad, the government still cannot identify how the banned seeds entered the market, raising concerns about biosafety and regulatory lapses.

Key Facts

1. In **2019**, a farmer in Nathwan village, Fatehabad, unknowingly planted **illegal GM Bt brinjal** purchased from a roadside vendor.
2. Bt brinjal cultivation is **banned in India**; only field trials are allowed under strict regulation.
3. Authorities uprooted and buried the crop on **May 17, 2019** to prevent contamination.
4. Multiple RTIs (2019–2025) reveal the government still **cannot trace the origin** of the GM seeds.
5. Haryana's Biotechnology Coordination Committee investigated but **found no evidence** about the seed source.

6. Horticulture Department admitted receiving complaints but **denied information** on how seeds entered the market.
7. Environmental activists accuse the government of a **"casual approach"** to a serious biosafety breach.
8. Concerns raised:
   ➢ Illegal GM seeds may contaminate the food chain.
   ➢ Gene flow could occur through cross-pollination in open fields.
   ➢ Farmers lack awareness and are vulnerable to spurious seed sellers.
9. Farmer said he purchased the saplings from a **roadside vendor**, but no record exists in official files.
10. Activists say the failure to trace the source after **six years** shows weak seed surveillance and biosafety enforcement.
11. Demands include:
    ➢ Prioritising GM contamination monitoring,
    ➢ Ensuring accountability of officials,
    ➢ Strengthening seed supply chain regulation.

Static Information
Source: Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), Ministry of Environment; Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

1. GM crop regulation in India is overseen by the **GEAC** under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. Commercial cultivation of **Bt brinjal is banned** in India since 2010; only Bangladesh has approved it.
3. Introduction of GMOs in open fields risks:
   ➢ **Transgene escape** via cross-pollination,
   ➢ Contamination of non-GM crops,
   ➢ Unintended ecological impacts.
4. Sale or distribution of unapproved GM seeds is a violation of the **Seed Act, 1966**, and the EPA, 1986.

5. India uses a **case-by-case biosafety evaluation**, including environmental risk assessment before any GM crop release.
6. GM food import or presence in food items is restricted unless cleared under **FSSAI GMO safety rules**.
7. Seed certification and supply chain monitoring falls under state agriculture and horticulture departments.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to GM crop regulation in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the apex body for approving commercial release of GM crops.
2. Bt brinjal is legally cultivated in India but only under restricted field trials.
3. Sale of unapproved GM seeds violates provisions of the Seeds Act, 1966.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

India's Q2 FY26 GDP Growth Expected Above RBI's 7% Forecast

News

Economists expect India's Q2 FY26 GDP growth to surpass the RBI's 7% forecast, supported by low inflation, GST-driven consumption, and corporate performance, though headline data may include distortions from inflation and tax changes.

Key Facts

1. Q2 FY26 GDP is likely to exceed **7%**, outperforming the RBI's forecast.
2. Growth drivers include:
   - **Low inflation**,
   - **GST cuts from late August**,
   - **Improved rural recovery**,
   - **Better crop output**,
   - **Urban demand revival**.
3. Q1 FY26 GDP was **7.8%**, setting a strong base for Q2.
4. Economists predict Q2 growth could be **around 8% in real terms**; Budget requires FY26 to average **7.6%** real GVA for fiscal assumptions.
5. Nominal GDP growth may be **lower** due to:
   - Low wholesale inflation,
   - Lower indirect tax collection.
6. Some "noise" in GDP data due to:
   - Lower deflator from subdued inflation,
   - One-time tax cuts affecting GST revenues,
   - Base effects.
7. Corporate sector performed strongly:
   - Listed firms saw **9% y-o-y** net profit rise,
   - Retail inflation averaged **1.7%** in Q2 (much lower than last year).
8. Consumption strengthened:
   - FMCG and auto sales rose,
   - Urban households showed high discretionary spending.
9. Government capital expenditure rose **34.9% y-o-y**, supporting fixed investments.
10. Private investment revival remains uneven due to global uncertainty.
11. Rating agencies expect FY26 growth to be highest since FY23.

Static Information

Source: CSO (MoSPI), RBI Handbook of Statistics, Economic Survey

1. GDP (Gross Domestic Product) measures the **total value of goods and services** produced within a country in a year.
2. GVA (Gross Value Added) at basic prices = **GDP – Net taxes on products**.
3. Growth drivers in national accounts include:
   - **Private consumption**,
   - **Investment (GFCF)**,
   - **Government spending**,
   - **Net exports**.

4. GDP deflator = ratio of nominal to real GDP; lower inflation → lower deflator → "noise" in nominal growth calculations.
5. The RBI provides quarterly GDP projections in **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** statements.
6. GST changes influence consumption patterns and indirect tax revenues, affecting GDP estimation.
7. Corporate sector performance heavily influences GDP via manufacturing and finance subsectors.
8. Government capex is crucial for crowding-in private investment under the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)**.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's national income accounting, consider the following statements:

1. A lower GDP deflator can reduce the reported nominal GDP growth rate.
2. Real GVA excludes the effect of net product taxes.
3. Government capital expenditure is counted under private fixed investment in GDP.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

How Ash Clouds from Ethiopia's Volcano Travelled All the Way to India

News

Ash from Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano travelled across the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula to enter India's skies, disrupting flights. The plume, carried by strong upper-air currents, is expected to dissipate soon.

Key Facts

1. The volcanic ash cloud emerged from the **Hayli Gubbi volcano** in northeastern Ethiopia—its first eruption in **~10,000 years**.
2. No lava flow occurred; the eruption produced **fine ash**, **rock fragments**, and **gases** (SO_2, CO_2).
3. Ash rose to **15–40 km** high—within the typical cruising altitude of long-distance aircraft.
4. Airline routes were disrupted as aircraft must avoid volcanic plumes due to engine damage risk.
5. The ash plume travelled via **strong high-altitude atmospheric currents**, moving eastwards:
   ➢ From Ethiopia → Red Sea → Yemen → Oman → Gujarat → Rajasthan → Delhi → Uttar Pradesh.
6. Expected to drift further into **China** within a day.
7. The ash movement occurs because heated volcanic gases rise and join **stratospheric wind streams**.
8. The plume did **not** pose direct health hazards to humans on the ground due to extreme altitude.
9. Fine particles will disperse in a few days; gases will be washed out by rain, with minimal long-term impact.

10. Dense monitoring networks track global volcanic plumes for aviation safety.

Static Information

Source: USGS Volcano Hazards; WMO Atmospheric Transport Models; ICAO Annex 3

1. Volcanic plumes often rise into the **stratosphere**, where winds can carry them thousands of kilometres.
2. The **Afar Triple Junction** is where African, Somali, and Arabian plates meet—one of Earth's most volcanically active zones.
3. Volcanic ash is composed of sharp, abrasive silica particles harmful to aircraft engines.
4. ICAO operates **Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAACs)** for global monitoring; India is covered by the **Toulouse and Tokyo VAACs**.
5. Aircraft encountering ash risk:
   ➢ turbine engine stall,
   ➢ cockpit visibility loss,
   ➢ sensor malfunction,
   ➢ abrasion of fuselage and windows.

6. SO_2 emissions from volcanoes can convert to sulphate aerosols, affecting climate temporarily.
7. Most volcanic ash plumes dissipate within **days to weeks**, depending on particle size and weather.

Practice Question

Q2. With reference to volcanic ash plumes, consider the following statements:
1. They can travel thousands of kilometres when they reach stratospheric wind bands.
2. Volcanic ash poses a greater risk to aircraft than to humans on the ground during high-altitude eruptions.
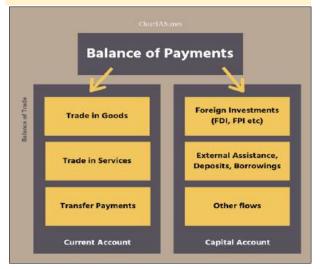3. SO_2 from volcanic eruptions always leads to long-term climate cooling.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
Correct Answer: A

RBI to Release Balance of Payments Data Monthly: Deputy Governor

News

The RBI will begin publishing India's Balance of Payments (BoP) data on a **monthly basis** from Q1 FY26, reducing delays and enhancing transparency in external sector monitoring, Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta announced.

Key Facts

1. RBI currently releases BoP data **quarterly** with a time lag of about **60 days** (reduced from 90 days).
2. From Q1 FY26, RBI plans to release **monthly BoP statistics**, though initially at a more aggregate level.
3. Tentative lag for monthly data: **~40 days** after reference month.
4. Aim: improve **timeliness**, **data frequency**, and **external sector assessment**.
5. BoP includes:
   ➢ **Current Account Balance (CAB)**,
   ➢ **Trade in goods & services**,
   ➢ **Secondary income (remittances)**,
   ➢ **Primary income (investment earnings/outflows)**.

6. India's **current account deficit widened** to **$2.3 billion in Apr–Jun 2025**, due to a larger goods trade deficit.

7. Deputy Governor highlighted:
   ➤ Forecasting errors are **common** where shocks are unpredictable.
   ➤ MPC's inflation forecasts are **unbiased**, with no systematic under/over-estimation.

8. Data reforms also include:
   ➤ Improvements in GDP, CPI, and IIP datasets
   ➤ Collaboration with MoSPI.

9. Higher frequency BoP data will help policymakers, analysts, and markets respond more accurately to **external shocks**.

Static Information

Source: RBI Handbook of Statistics; IMF Balance of Payments Manual (BPM6)

1. **Balance of Payments (BoP)** is a comprehensive statement of all economic transactions between residents of a country and the rest of the world.

2. BoP has two major components:
   ➤ **Current Account** (trade in goods, services, income, transfers)
   ➤ **Capital + Financial Account** (FDI, FPI, loans, banking flows).

3. A **current account deficit** means a country imports more goods/services than it exports.

4. India adopts IMF's **BPM6** standards for compiling BoP statistics.

5. RBI releases BoP data; MoSPI handles national accounts (GDP, IIP).

6. High-frequency external sector data improves policymaking for exchange rates, forex reserves, and trade policy.

7. BoP influences **rupee stability**, **forex reserve management**, and **monetary policy stance**.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's Balance of Payments (BoP):

1. India prepares BoP data using IMF's BPM6 methodology.

2. The Current Account includes FDI and FPI inflows.

3. RBI is responsible for publishing India's BoP statistics.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Cabinet Approves Railway Multitracking Projects for Gujarat & Maharashtra; Pune Metro Expansion Cleared

News

The Union Cabinet approved two major rail multitracking projects—Dwarka-Kanalus doubling in Gujarat and Badlapur-Karjat third and fourth lines in Maharashtra—and cleared a ₹9,857 crore expansion of Pune Metro.

Key Facts

Rail Multitracking Projects (Total cost: ₹2,781 crore)

1. **Dwarka–Kanalus Line Doubling (141 km), Gujarat**
   ➤ Will improve connectivity to **Dwarkadhish Temple**, a major pilgrimage site.
   ➤ Facilitates transport of **coal, salt, container cargo, cement**, and edible salt.
   ➤ Expected freight traffic: **11 million tonnes per annum**.

➢ Includes **7 major bridges**, **143 minor bridges**.

➢ Expenditure: **₹1,457 crore**.

➢ Okha → coastal town in Dwarka; Kanalus → Jamnagar district.

2. **Badlapur–Karjat (32 km), Maharashtra**

➢ Part of the **Mumbai suburban network**, linking Kalyan–Lonavala line.

➢ Will ease commuting in the high-density **Thane–Raigad–Mumbai** region.

➢ Falls under the wider **1,238 km Mumbai–Chennai corridor**.

Pune Metro Expansion (100 km) — Cost ₹9,857 crore

1. Approved Lines:

➢ **Line 4**: Kharadi–Hadapsar–Swargate–Khadakwasla

➢ **Line 4A**: Nal Stop–Warje–Manik Baug

2. Part of **Phase 2** of the Pune Metro Project.

3. Line length: **31.636 km**, **28 elevated stations**.

4. Will connect IT hubs, commercial zones, education clusters, and residential areas across East, South & West Pune.

5. Funding: Union Government + Maharashtra Govt + Multilateral agencies.

6. Completion timeline: **5 years**.

Static Information

Source: Ministry of Railways; Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA); Metro Rail Policy 2017

1. India's multitracking projects enhance **line capacity**, enabling more trains and reducing congestion on high-density routes.

2. Doubling/tripling/quadrupling of lines improves **punctuality**, **freight throughput**, and **safety**.

3. Metro Rail Policy 2017 mandates:

➢ Last-mile connectivity planning,

➢ Mandatory DPR preparation,

➢ Financial viability checks (EIRR, FIRR),

➢ Multi-agency funding (State + Centre + PPP/MFDB).

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4. Urban metros reduce traffic congestion and carbon footprint; India has **over 800 km** of operational metro lines.

5. Railway infrastructure is funded through budgetary support, GBS, institutional finance, and railway capex—the highest globally after China.

Practice Question

Q1. **With reference to India's rail and metro development, consider the following statements:**

1. Line doubling projects help increase line capacity and reduce congestion.

2. Pune Metro Phase 2 includes both elevated and underground corridors.

3. Metro Rail Policy 2017 requires integration of metro plans with land-use planning.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 2 only

c) 1 and 2 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Teachings and Martyrdom: Relevance Today

News

On the 350th anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, reflections highlight his defence of religious freedom, human rights, and courage in resisting forced conversions under Mughal persecution, underscoring his enduring moral and spiritual legacy.

Key Facts

1. Guru Tegh Bahadur was the **9th Sikh Guru**, martyred on **11 November 1675** in Chandni Chowk, Delhi.
2. His martyrdom is unique—he **voluntarily offered his life** to protect Kashmiri Pandits from forced conversion.
3. Travelled **300+ km** from Anandpur Sahib to Delhi after being approached for protection.
4. Refused to display miracles or bow to unjust demands; executed by Aurangzeb's regime.
5. **Gurdwara Sis Ganj** marks the spot of his beheading; **Gurdwara Rakab Ganj** marks the cremation site.
6. His martyrdom became a cornerstone of **religious freedom, human rights**, and the right to practice one's belief.
7. Body was secretly taken by **Bhai Lakhi Das** for cremation; the head was taken to Anandpur Sahib by **Bhai Jaita**, cremated by Guru Gobind Singh.
8. This was the **second Sikh Guru martyred**—the first being Guru Arjan Dev in 1606.
9. Guru Tegh Bahadur's family suffered immense sacrifice:
   ➢ Wife **Mata Gujri** witnessed martyrdom of her husband in 1675 and—
   ➢ Later witnessed the martyrdom of her **four grandsons (Sahibzadas)** in 1704–05.
10. Guru Tegh Bahadur was known for his principled, fearless travels across eastern India: Assam, Bengal, and Dhaka.
11. A skilled negotiator, he helped resolve disputes among warring rajas.
12. Contributed **116 hymns and 15 ragas** to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
13. Founded the holy city **Anandpur Sahib**, birthplace of the Khalsa (later formalised by Guru Gobind Singh).
14. His legacy includes teachings on **fearlessness, tolerance, justice, empathy, and equality**.

Static Information
Source: **SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee), NCERT Medieval History, Sikh Rehat Maryada**

1. Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675) was the youngest son of **Guru Hargobind Sahib**.
2. He became Guru in 1665 and emphasized **meditation (simran), moral strength, and service (sewa)**.
3. His martyrdom is regarded as one of the earliest and strongest defence acts of **religious liberty** globally.
4. Contributions to Sikh scripture form an integral part of **Sri Guru Granth Sahib**, focusing on detachment, peace, and righteousness.
5. Sikh tradition honours his sacrifice as the foundation of **Khalsa identity**, completed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
6. Major gurdwaras associated:
   ➢ **Sis Ganj Sahib** (Delhi)
   ➢ **Rakab Ganj Sahib** (Delhi)
   ➢ **Anandpur Sahib** (Punjab)
7. His teachings inspire movements related to **human rights, communal harmony, and resisting oppression**.

Practice Question

Q2. With Reference To Guru Tegh Bahadur, Consider The Following Statements:

1. He contributed hymns to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
2. He founded the city of Anandpur Sahib.
3. He was executed for resisting forced conversions of Kashmiri Pandits.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

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

Correct Answer: C

India–Indonesia Progress on Brahmos Deal at Defence Ministers' Dialogue

News in Brief

At the 3rd India–Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi, both sides recorded significant progress on the proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal, reaffirmed maritime cooperation, Indo-Pacific alignment, cyber-resilience, and joint operational readiness.

Key Points

1. **BrahMos Deal Progress**
   - Talks showed a "progressive approach" from both nations.
   - Officials said the agreement could be finalised soon.
   - BrahMos is jointly developed by DRDO (India) and NPOM (Russia).

2. **Defence Ministers Involved**
   - India: Rajnath Singh
   - Indonesia: Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin
   - Dialogue held in New Delhi.

3. **Strategic Context**
   - Momentum built after Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's Republic Day 2024 visit.
   - Strengthened ties following talks with PM Narendra Modi.

4. **Indo-Pacific Convergence**
   Both sides emphasized:

   - A free, open, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.
   - Adherence to international law and sovereignty.
   - Strong alignment between ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

5. **Defence Cooperation Highlights**
   - Participation of 352 Indonesian armed forces personnel in India's Republic Day parade highlighted deep defence ties.
   - Agreement to intensify cooperation via IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) — chaired currently by India.

6. **Joint Security & Maritime Cooperation**
   Both sides agreed to strengthen:
   - Maritime domain awareness
   - Cyber-resilience
   - Joint operational readiness
   - Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee → for tech transfer & joint R&D.

Static Information

About BrahMos Missile

1. World's fastest supersonic cruise missile (Mach 2.8–3.0).
2. Range: Earlier 290 km → now extended to 450–500 km; future versions may reach 800+ km.
3. Can be launched from land, air, ship, and submarine platforms.
4. Export potential is a major pillar of India's defence indigenisation strategy.

India–Indonesia Defence Cooperation

1. Governed by the 2018 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
2. Naval cooperation central due to shared interest in:
   - Andaman Sea – Aceh region proximity.
   - Securing Malacca Strait, world's busiest chokepoint.
3. Indonesia is a key ASEAN partner for the Indo-Pacific.

ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP)

1. Emphasizes rule-based order, maritime cooperation, and connectivity.
2. India's IPOI mirrors similar pillars → natural alignment.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

1. India currently chairs IORA.
2. Focus is on maritime safety, disaster relief, trade, and blue economy.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India–Indonesia defence cooperation, consider the following statements:

1. Indonesia is an active member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
2. Indonesia and India have officially signed a BrahMos missile export agreement.
3. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific aligns with India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

(Statement 2 is incorrect: the BrahMos agreement is under progress, not signed.)

Finmin, RBI Working On Portal To Help With Unclaimed Assets

News

The Finance Ministry and RBI are jointly developing a unified digital portal to help savers and investors locate and claim unclaimed assets such as bank deposits, pension funds, shares, and dividends. The portal will be launched soon.

Key Facts

1. Ministry of Finance + RBI collaborating on a single unified portal.

2. Purpose: Help people claim unclaimed assets across:
   - bank deposits
   - pension funds
   - shares & dividends

3. Announcement made by M. Nagaraju, Financial Services Secretary.

4. Made during a mega camp of 'Aapki Poonji Aapka Adhikar' organised by PNB.

5. Portal aims to bring multiple asset classes under one roof.

Static Information

Unclaimed Deposits – RBI Definition

1. Bank deposits not operated for 10 years are classified as "unclaimed".
   - Source: RBI Master Circular on Depositor Education & Awareness Fund (DEAF).

DEAF Scheme (Depositor Education and Awareness Fund)

1. Introduced in 2014.
2. Unclaimed amounts are transferred by banks to the DEAF fund maintained by RBI.
3. Claimants can claim anytime through the bank.
   - Source: RBI Notification, 2014.

Unclaimed Shares & Dividends – SEBI Rules

1. Under the Companies Act, unpaid dividends for 7 years are transferred to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF).
2. Shares corresponding to such dividends are also transferred.
   - Source: IEPF Authority, MCA.

Need for Unified Portal

1. India has unclaimed deposits worth ₹42,000+ crore (as of 2023).
2. Unclaimed shares & dividends exceed ₹5,000 crore.
3. Lack of a single platform creates challenges for families after death of account-holders.
4. Source: MoF response to Parliament.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. With reference to the unified portal being developed by the Ministry of Finance and RBI, consider the following statements:

1. The portal aims to allow citizens to claim unclaimed bank deposits only.
2. It will integrate unclaimed amounts from pension funds, shares, and dividends.
3. It is linked with the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: D

Govt. Announces Scheme To Promote Research In Textiles

News

The Centre has approved the Tex-RAMPS Scheme with an outlay of ₹305 crore for 2025–26 to 2030–31 to strengthen research, innovation, data systems, and competitiveness in India's textile sector.

Key Facts from Article

1. Govt launches Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up (Tex-RAMPS) Scheme.
2. Outlay: ₹305 crore.
3. Duration: 2025–26 to 2030–31.
4. Scheme aims to:
    ➢ Strengthen research, innovation, data systems, and evidence-based policymaking.
    ➢ Promote capacity-building, supply-chain mapping, and employment assessments.
    ➢ Create robust data systems for policymaking.
    ➢ Support incubators, hackathons, academia–industry collaboration.
    ➢ Nurture high-value textile start-ups and entrepreneurship.

5. Expected to make India a global leader in sustainable and innovative textiles.
6. Industry body (CITI) says scheme will boost the innovation ecosystem and global competitiveness.

Static Information

India's Textile Sector – Key Facts

1. India is the 2nd-largest producer of textiles & clothing in the world.
2. Contributes ~2.3% to India's GDP and ~11% to export earnings.
    ➢ Source: Ministry of Textiles Annual Report.

Major Government Schemes in Textiles

1. PMP (Production Linked Incentive) scheme for MMF & technical textiles.
2. MITRA Parks Scheme – 7 mega textile parks.
3. SAMARTH – skill development for textiles.
    ➢ Source: Ministry of Textiles.

Why Research is Crucial in Textiles

1. Needed to compete with global leaders like China, Vietnam, Bangladesh.
2. Helps meet sustainability standards demanded by EU & USA markets.
3. Drives innovation in technical textiles, a high-growth area.
    ➢ Source: National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM).

Technical Textiles – Importance

1. Technical textiles include geotextiles, meditech, agrotech, buildtech etc.
2. India aims for $40 billion market by 2030.
4. Source: NITI Aayog Discussion Paper.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements about the Tex-RAMPS Scheme:

1. It aims to strengthen research, innovation, and data systems in the textile sector.
2. The scheme will be implemented from 2025–26 to 2030–31.

3. It includes support for textile start-ups, incubators, and academia–industry collaborations.

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: D

India posts 8.2% Q2 GDP growth, tops six quarters

News

India's GDP grew 8.2% in Q2 FY26, the highest in six quarters, driven by strong manufacturing and services growth. Growth for the first half of FY26 stands at 8%, though economists note weak nominal GDP growth.

Key Facts

1. Q2 FY26 GDP growth: 8.2% (July–September).
2. Highest in six quarters; last higher growth was in Q4 FY24 (8.6%).
3. Q1 FY26 growth: 7.8%.
4. First half FY26 growth: 8%.
5. Driven by manufacturing & services sector performance.
6. Data released by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
7. Economists say real GDP strong, but nominal GDP weak, signalling subdued underlying economic momentum.
8. PM praises the growth as evidence of policy direction and economic momentum.

Static Information

GDP vs GVA

1. GDP = GVA + Taxes – Subsidies.
2. GDP measures total value of goods & services within a country.
3. Source: MoSPI National Accounts Manual

Real vs Nominal GDP

1. Nominal GDP: Measured at current prices, includes inflation.

2. Real GDP: Adjusted for inflation using GDP deflator; shows true growth.
    ➤ Source: RBI Handbook of Statistics

India's GDP Data Release Cycle

1. Quarterly GDP estimates released by MoSPI.
2. Annual estimates released with First Advance, Second Advance, and final revision cycle.
    ➤ Source: MoSPI Press Notes

Fiscal Deficit Target (FY26)

1. Union Budget set FY26 fiscal deficit target at 4.4% of GDP.
    ➤ Source: Union Budget 2024–25

IMF's 'C' Grade Explanation

1. IMF grading (A to D) reflects data accuracy.
2. 'C' grade = shortcomings that hamper surveillance.
    ➤ Source: IMF Article IV Assessment

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's Q2 FY26 GDP growth, consider the following statements:

1. The 8.2% growth in Q2 FY26 is the highest in the last six quarters.
2. MoSPI is responsible for releasing quarterly GDP data.
3. Nominal GDP growth in Q2 FY26 exceeded real GDP growth due to high inflation.

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 and 2 only

Answer: D

(Statement 3 is incorrect—nominal GDP growth was lower than real GDP, indicating low inflation.)

India launches 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' to provide relief supplies to Sri Lanka

News

India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu to deliver essential relief materials to cyclone-hit Sri Lanka, with INS Vikrant and INS Udaygiri transporting

supplies. India reaffirmed support under its Neighbourhood First and MAHASAGAR vision.

Key Facts

1. Operation launched: Operation Sagar Bandhu.
2. Objective: Provide humanitarian relief to Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah.

3. Relief transported by:
   - INS Vikrant (India's first indigenous aircraft carrier)
   - INS Udaygiri (advanced stealth frigate)
4. First tranche of relief materials already delivered; more underway.
5. India conveyed condolences and support to affected families.
6. Part of Neighbourhood First Policy and Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
7. INS Vikrant was formally requested by Sri Lanka for assistance.
8. Indian naval ships are in Sri Lanka for an International Fleet Review (IFR).

Static Information

What is Operation SAGAR?

India's recurring humanitarian mission in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

1. Started in 2020 during COVID-19.

2. SAGAR = Security and Growth for All in the Region.
3. Previous missions: Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, Sri Lanka, Seychelles.

INS Vikrant –

1. India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier.
2. Built under Project 71.
3. Commissioned: 2 September 2022.
4. Displacement: ~43,000 tonnes.
5. Built by Cochin Shipyard Limited.
6. Operates MiG-29K fighters and MH-60R helicopters.

INS Udaygiri

1. Part of Project 17A stealth frigates.
2. Launched: 2022.
3. Stealth features, advanced sensors & weapons.
4. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd.

India's Vision MAHASAGAR

1. Announced in Mauritius (March 2024).
2. Focuses on:
   - engagement with Global South
   - security, connectivity & growth in the Indian Ocean Region
   - deepening maritime partnerships.

Neighbourhood First Policy

- Priority to immediate neighbours (SAARC + IOR).
- Themes: humanitarian aid, connectivity, disaster response, trade, security.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following pairs:

Operation / Mission	Objective
1. Operation Sagar Bandhu	Humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka after cyclone damage
2. Operation SAGAR	India's IOR humanitarian outreach mission
3. Project 17A	Indigenous aircraft carrier programme

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

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

Correct Answer: D

(Project 17A is frigate programme; aircraft carrier is Project 71.)

Putin to visit India for annual summit next week

News

Russian President Vladimir **Putin will visit India on December 4–5 for the 23rd India–Russia annual summit with PM Narendra Modi.** The visit aims to review bilateral relations, trade issues, and cooperation across strategic sectors.

Key Facts from Article

1. Putin to visit India for 23rd India–Russia annual summit.
2. Visit dates: December 4–5.
3. Will review:
   - bilateral relations,
   - strategic partnership,
   - regional & global issues.
4. India–Russia Annual Summit mechanism has been active since 2000.
5. PM Modi last met Putin in December 2021 in Delhi.
6. High-priority issues expected:
   - Russia–Ukraine conflict (India urging "not the time for war").

   - Trade deficit — India seeking reduced imbalance caused by large crude oil imports.
   - Increasing India's procurement of Russian crude oil.
   - Civil nuclear energy cooperation.
   - Expansion of science & technology partnership.
   - Cultural & humanitarian ties.
7. Russia's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine since 2022 has impacted trade and diplomatic dynamics.
8. Kremlin calls the visit "significant" and aims to review the "special and privileged strategic partnership".

Static Information

India–Russia Relations

1. Upgraded to "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership" in 2010.

Annual Summit Mechanism

2. Institutionalised in 2000 under PM Vajpayee and President Putin.
3. Highest mechanism for bilateral dialogue between India & Russia.
   - Source: MEA Brief on India–Russia Relations

Key Areas of Cooperation

4. Defence (BrahMos, S-400, AK-203 rifles, INS Vikramaditya).
5. Nuclear Energy (Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant).
6. Space (Gaganyaan collaboration).
7. Hydrocarbons (Rosneft–Indian PSUs partnerships).

Trade Figures

1. India–Russia bilateral trade touched $50+ billion in FY23, but heavily skewed toward Russia (due to oil imports).

Russia–Ukraine Conflict Impact

1. India maintains an independent stance, calling for dialogue & diplomacy, abstaining at UNSC votes.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India–Russia relations, consider the following statements:

1. The India–Russia Annual Summit mechanism was established in 2010.
2. India and Russia share a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership".
3. Civil nuclear cooperation between India and Russia includes collaboration at the Kudankulam project.

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) 2 and 3 only

Correct Answer: D

(Statement 1 is incorrect: the annual summit mechanism began in 2000, not 2010.)

Student Notes ✍

જ્યાં IAS, IPS, જેવી પદવી ખાસ કરી સામા બર્ષમાં રાષ્ટ્રસેવક બને અને સમાજ તથા દેશની સેવા કરે.

All Individuals, by pursuing titles such as IAS and IPS, truly become 'Rashtra Sevaks' and serve society and the nation.

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