

THE EDGE

CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026

DECODING CURRENT EVENTS FOR UPSC SUCCESS



ALSO USEFUL FOR ALL COMPETITIVE EXAMS

WWW.VISHNUIAS.COM
9000400939 | 9000350939
GANDHI NAGAR, HYDERABAD

Join our
Telegram Channel



INDEX

SL.NO	SUBJECT	PAGE NO
1	CONSTITUTION, POLITY & GOVERNANCE	02 - 32
2	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	33 - 60
3	ECONOMY	61 - 94
4	SOCIAL ISSUES & SOCIAL JUSTICE	95 - 110
5	GEOGRAPHY, DISASTER MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENT	111 - 139
6	DEFENSE & INTERNAL SECURITY	140 - 150
7	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	151 - 171
8	HISTORY & CULTURE	172 - 179
9	TELANGANA CURRENT AFFAIRS	180 - 196
10	ANDHRA PRADESH CURRENT AFFIARS	197 - 209
11	PRACTICE MCQs	210 - 212

UPSC CSE 2026/27 GENERAL STUDIES PRELIMS CUM MAINS

VISHNU
IAS
MODERN GURUKUL FOR CIVIL SERVICES
TGPSG G 1 | UPSC - CSE | APPSC G 1

**SUPER
50
BATCH**



BATCH STARTS FROM **20TH** **APRIL 2026** **Mode**
Offline | Online



Optionals Available
Anthropology | PSIR | Sociology



Our Phone
9000400939

Our Website
www.vishnuias.com

Gandhi Nagar,
Hyderabad

CONSTITUTION, POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1. Capital Punishment in India: Judicial Restraint vs. Trial Court Enthusiasm

Context:

The NALSAR Death Penalty Report (2025) underscores a growing rift within India's criminal justice system: trial courts are swiftly administering capital punishment, yet higher courts are persistently reversing these decisions. Disturbingly, the Supreme Court has not affirmed any death sentence over the past three years, pointing to significant procedural deficiencies and investigative shortcomings.

I. Recent issues:

The "Confirmation Gap":

Over the past decade, trial courts have issued 1,310 death sentences, yet High Courts have only confirmed 8.31% of these.

Notably, the Supreme Court confirmed no death sentences from 2023 to 2025, highlighting a trend of systemic dilution and extreme caution within the higher judiciary.

Surge in Acquittals:

Appellate courts are not merely commuting sentences to life imprisonment; they are also fully acquitting individuals previously convicted.

High Courts such as Patna (78.31%) and Karnataka (50.46%) exhibit substantial acquittal rates, suggesting considerable errors during the trial stage and a heightened risk of wrongful convictions.

Record-High Death Row Population:

As of December 2025, the number of prisoners on death row has reached 574, marking a 43.5% increase since 2016.

This situation has led to what is termed the "death row phenomenon," where inmates experience prolonged psychological distress while awaiting delayed appellate justice.

Procedural Violations at the Trial Stage:

In spite of the Supreme Court's directive in *Manoj vs. State of MP* (2022) mandating psychological evaluations and rigorous mitigation hearings prior to imposing the death penalty, nearly 95% of death sentences issued by trial courts in 2025 disregarded these essential safeguards.

Structural and Investigative Flaws:

The elevated rate of appellate reversals reveals significant deficiencies at the foundational level.

Trial judges frequently impose the death penalty under public pressure for egregious crimes, often depending on inadequate forensic infrastructure, coerced confessions, and insufficient legal representation for socio-economically disadvantaged defendants.

II. Arguments FOR the Death Penalty (Retentionist View):

Deterrence Effect: Advocates contend that the apprehension of the most severe punishment serves as a significant deterrent to particularly atrocious offenses, including aggravated child sexual abuse or acts of terrorism.

Retributive Justice: In the case of crimes that "profoundly disturb the collective conscience of society," retributive justice posits that the perpetrator merits a punishment that is commensurate with the extreme severity of their actions.

National Security: The maintenance of the death penalty is frequently regarded as essential for addressing treason, mutiny, or terrorist acts that jeopardize the sovereignty and integrity of the State.

III. Arguments AGAINST the Death Penalty (Abolitionist & Appellate View):

Irrevocability and Wrongful Convictions:

The significant number of appellate acquittals indicates that the trial system is susceptible to mistakes, coerced confessions, and falsified evidence.

Once an innocent individual has been executed, they cannot be resurrected.

Socio-Economic Bias:

Research consistently reveals that more than 74% of individuals on death row come from economically disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

These individuals often lack access to adequate legal representation during their trials.

Lack of Empirical Evidence:

International research and data from the NCRB indicate that there is no definitive evidence suggesting that the death penalty is more effective in deterring crime than life imprisonment.

Reformative Justice over Retribution:

Contemporary legal principles prioritize the potential for rehabilitating offenders. If rehabilitation is deemed feasible, the Supreme Court asserts that the imposition of the death penalty is unwarranted.

INDIA'S DEATH PENALTY LAWS

- Constitutional Basis (Article 21)**
No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to the "Procedure Established by Law".
Validates the death penalty if the process is fair, just, and reasonable.
- 'Rarest of Rare' Doctrine**
Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980).
Death penalty only in cases where life imprisonment is "unquestionably foreclosed."
- Pardoning Power of the President (Article 72)**
President has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, or commute a death sentence exclusively.
- Judicial Review and Appeals**
Death sentence must be confirmed by the High Court.
Right to appeal to the Supreme Court (Article 136), Review Petitions (Article 137), and Curative Petitions.

IV. Way Forward:

Institutionalize Mitigation Investigations: Trial courts are required to rigorously follow the guidelines set forth by Manoj (2022). It is essential to create specialized units for mitigation investigations that will evaluate the socio-economic, psychological, and behavioral backgrounds of convicts prior to sentencing.

Strengthen Legal Aid and Forensics: In order to avert wrongful convictions, it is imperative for the state to enhance its forensic infrastructure and guarantee that

marginalized accused individuals receive high-quality, state-funded legal representation from the outset of the trial.

Promote Alternative Sentencing: It is crucial for both the courts and the legislature to officially acknowledge "Life Imprisonment without Remission" as the primary alternative to the death penalty, thereby ensuring public safety while avoiding irreversible executions.

Legislative Review: Parliament ought to take into account the suggestions made in the Law Commission's 262nd Report (2015), which recommended the gradual abolition of the death penalty for all offenses, with the exception of those related to terrorism.

2. Constitutional Boundaries and the Privileges Committee

Context:

The Privileges Committee of the Delhi Assembly has summoned senior officials from Punjab in connection with an FIR lodged by the Punjab Police concerning an allegedly "doctored" video involving Delhi Opposition Leader Atishi. Speaker Vijender Gupta described the police's actions as a violation of privilege, given that the video pertains to official Assembly proceedings.

I. Key Highlights of the Controversy:

The Trigger Incident:

In January 2026, a political controversy arose concerning a video that allegedly depicted AAP leader Atishi making disparaging comments about Sikh Gurus during a session of the Delhi Assembly.

This video was extensively disseminated by opposing politicians, including Delhi Cabinet Minister Kapil Mishra.

Conflicting Forensic Reports:

The Punjab Police filed a First Information Report (FIR) under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), referencing a forensic analysis from Mohali that asserted the video had been "doctored" with malicious captions added.

In contrast, the Speaker of the Delhi Assembly published a different forensic report claiming that the footage was entirely genuine and corresponded precisely with the official records of the House, frame by frame.

The Privilege Breach:

Speaker Vijender Gupta contended that the official recordings of the Assembly are the sole property of the House.

He argued that the Punjab Police's unilateral action in registering an FIR without consulting the Delhi Secretariat represented an infringement on the Constitution and a significant violation of legislative privilege.

Summons to Bureaucrats:

The Privileges Committee of the Delhi Assembly summoned the Additional Chief Secretary (Home), the Director General of Police (DGP) of Punjab, and the Police Commissioner of Jalandhar.

The officials appeared before the committee in late February 2026; however, the committee found their responses to be "unsatisfactory" due to their failure to provide the original complaint and forensic documents.

The Privileges Committee



Constitutional Basis

Legislative privileges are special rights, immunities, and exemptions enjoyed by legislatures to secure their independence and effectiveness.

Enshrined in:
Parliament)

Article 105
Article 194

& Article 194 (State Legislatures)

Composition

In a State Legislative Assembly, the Privileges Committee consists of **15 members** nominated by the Speaker.



Nature & Role

Functions as a semi-judicial body.
Examines questions of **breach of privilege** referred by the Speaker.



Powers

- Investigates the facts of the case
- Determines if a breach has occurred
- Submits a report with recommendations



Recommends Disciplinary or Corrective Action

II. Broader Constitutional and Political Dimensions:

Federal Friction & Inter-State Policing: This occurrence underscores the increasing tension among police forces from states led by opposing political parties, as they file FIRs regarding incidents that occur beyond their direct jurisdiction, thereby emphasizing the tenets of cooperative federalism.

Legislative Sovereignty: The dispute significantly highlights the complete power and immunity that a legislative body possesses over its internal processes,

discussions, and proprietary documents, safeguarding them from external police intervention.

Weaponization of Technology: The dependence on contradictory forensic evidence reveals the contemporary challenges faced by law enforcement and the need for political accountability when addressing potentially manipulated or deepfake media within the political landscape.

3. UGC Equity Regulations 2026: Constitutional, Procedural, and Federal Challenges

Context:

Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) announced the Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations aimed at addressing discrimination on campuses. Nevertheless, in response to significant student protests and claims of bias towards students from the general category, the Supreme Court issued a stay on these regulations on recently, which initiated a nationwide discussion regarding institutional equity.

I. Key Highlights of the 2026 Regulations:

Mandatory Institutional Framework: All Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) are required to set up Equal Opportunity Centres (EOCs) and Equity Committees that must include obligatory representation from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), women, and Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

Strict Deadlines: The regulations mandate swift grievance resolution, necessitating that Equity Committees convene within 24 hours of a complaint being lodged and provide their findings within 15 working days.

Clear Definitions: The guidelines clearly articulate "caste-based discrimination" as unjust treatment aimed specifically at individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

Punitive Measures: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has implemented stringent penalties for institutions that fail to comply, which may include the revocation of financial support, suspension of degree-awarding rights, and de-recognition.

II. Issues & Dimensions of the Controversy:

The Debate on the "Exclusionary Definition":

Students from general and unreserved categories contested the regulations in the Supreme Court, asserting that the exclusive focus on SC/ST/OBC groups in defining caste-based discrimination establishes an "untenable presumption" that only upper-caste students can be offenders, thereby denying them legal protection in instances of harassment.

Elimination of Protections:

Detractors pointed out that the finalized regulations for 2026 eliminated a vital provision from the 2025 draft that outlined penalties for "false or motivated complaints."

Ambiguity in Procedures:

Scholars expressed apprehensions regarding the unclear evidentiary standards.

The rapid pace required for investigations, coupled with the potential for severe penalties from the UGC, raised concerns about a "guilty until

proven innocent" paradigm that could irreparably harm the reputation of students or faculty members.

Concerns Regarding Federalism and Autonomy:

The centralization of appellate authority in an Ombudsperson appointed by the UGC circumvents state governments (which finance state universities) and jeopardizes academic independence by fostering a culture of risk aversion and superficial compliance.

III. Present Challenges on Campuses:

Rising Identity-Based Friction:

The announcement of the regulations incited significant polarization on campus.

Institutions such as Delhi University (DU) were compelled to enforce a month-long prohibition on protests after violent confrontations occurred between opposing student factions in late January 2026.

Historical Institutional Inertia:

The impetus for the new regulations arises from the inability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to execute the previous 2012 UGC equity guidelines.

Numerous prestigious institutions still do not have operational SC/ST cells, and data from the UGC indicates a greater than 100% increase in complaints related to caste-based discrimination over the past five years, underscored by the heartbreaking suicides of students like Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi.

The "Chilling Effect" Dilemma:

Institutions are facing challenges in finding a balance between safeguarding marginalized students—who frequently encounter systemic obstacles in voicing their grievances—and the necessity to shield the wider student population from potentially weaponized or retaliatory claims.

IV. Way Forward Measures:

Harmonizing Definitions with the Constitution:

The Supreme Court is presently evaluating whether a distinct, exclusive definition of caste-based discrimination infringes upon the right to equality as outlined in Article 14.

The UGC is required to enhance its definitions to guarantee universal protection while simultaneously recognizing the specific historical vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups.

Restoring Procedural Safeguards:

The regulations ought to reinstate a mechanism aimed at deterring malicious complaints.

Nevertheless, the criteria for establishing a complaint as "false" must be stringent (necessitating evidence of malicious intent rather than merely a lack of evidence) to ensure that authentic victims are not coerced into silence.

Democratic Committee Formation:

Rather than permitting the Head of the Institution to unilaterally appoint members to the Equity Committee, representatives should be elected democratically or selected from a wider, transparent pool to promote neutrality and foster trust.

Focusing on Sensitization over Punishment:

Genuine equity necessitates institutional dialogue.
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must allocate resources towards capacity building, implement mandatory orientation programs on social inclusion, and encourage peer-led sensitization, rather than depending solely on the apprehension of punitive actions from the UGC.

4. Parliamentary Democracy in Focus: Lok Sabha Passes Motion of Thanks in PM's Absence

Context:

For the first occasion since 2004, the Lok Sabha approved the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address through a voice vote, foregoing the traditional response from the Prime Minister. The unusual absence of the PM during the vote in February 2026 sparked a significant political controversy regarding parliamentary protocols and the entitlement to protest.

I. Key Highlights of the Event:

The Speaker's Justification:

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conveyed to the House that he had clearly recommended Prime Minister Narendra Modi to refrain from attending the session.

The Speaker referenced "concrete information" indicating that members of the Opposition, especially Congress MPs, were intending to execute an "unexpected act" of protest in proximity to the Prime Minister's position.

Opposition's Rebuttal:

Dismissing the Speaker's assertions as "unfounded and slanderous," numerous Congress women MPs addressed a letter to the Speaker, claiming that the PM's absence was not a result of a security concern but rather an "act of trepidation."

They contended that the government was dodging inquiries related to the India-China border conflict and the unpublished memoir of former Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane.

Procedural Anomalies Raised:

The Opposition brought attention to purported breaches of Lok Sabha regulations. Congress MP K.C. Venugopal noted that according to Rule 20, the PM is required to clarify the government's stance at the conclusion of the debate, and if he is unable to do so, he must formally notify the House. Additionally, under Rule 362, concluding a debate without a minister's response necessitates a specific motion that must be sanctioned by the House, which was overlooked.

Passage Amidst Chaos:

The Motion of Thanks was eventually approved through a voice vote amidst intense sloganeering and repeated adjournments, effectively wrapping up the debate without the customary executive summary and defense of the President's address.

—• Motion of Thanks •—

Constitutional Mandate

Article 87: President's address to both Houses at the start of each year and after every general election.



Nature of the Address

Government's Policy Statement on Achievements & Agenda



The Motion

"Motion of Thanks"
Debate & Vote in Both Houses



Significance

Test of Majority in Lok Sabha:
Defeat means Govt must resign.



Amendments

MPs can propose Amendments.
Rejected Amendments equal
Political Embarrassment.



II. Present Challenges in Parliamentary Functioning:

Decline in Deliberative Democracy: The rising occurrence of enacting significant motions and legislation through voice votes amidst the noise signifies a profound degradation of the Parliament's deliberative essence.

Weaponization of Disruptions: Opposition parties often employ tactics such as rushing the well and creating disruptions as their main forms of protest, contending that their microphones are intentionally silenced and their speaking time unjustly limited.

Erosion of Parliamentary Conventions: Ignoring established practices—like the Prime Minister's thorough response to the Motion of Thanks—creates a perilous precedent that undermines the executive's accountability to the legislature.

Questions on the Chair's Neutrality: The Speaker's office increasingly finds itself in a contentious position. The choice to proactively counsel the PM against participation, along with the removal of opposition comments, exacerbates allegations of institutional partiality and a decline in democratic integrity.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Codifying Disruption Penalties & Rights: It is imperative for Parliament to reach a consensus that imposes strict penalties for unjustified disruptions, while also establishing guaranteed "Opposition Days" (akin to the UK model) that empower minority parties to determine the legislative agenda for discussion.

Strict Adherence to Procedural Rules: The Lok Sabha Secretariat is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that parliamentary procedures, such as Rule 20

and Rule 362, are upheld and not bypassed under the pretext of maintaining order. The integrity of procedures is fundamental to the legitimacy of parliamentary operations.

Strengthening the Speaker's Impartiality: To guarantee complete neutrality, India should contemplate adopting the British practice whereby the Speaker formally resigns from their political party upon taking on the role of chair.

Fostering Backchannel Dialogue: It is essential for floor managers from both the ruling and opposition parties to actively engage in backchannel negotiations to resolve deadlocks, thereby ensuring that critical national matters are addressed constructively rather than being completely stalled.

5. Democracy Restored as President's Rule Ends in Manipur

Context:

Recently, the Union Government lifted the nearly year-long President's Rule in Manipur. BJP leader Yumnam Khemchand Singh has taken the oath as the 13th Chief Minister, signifying the reinstatement of an elected government intended to stabilize the ethnically divided state.

I. Key Highlights of the Political Transition:

The New Leadership: Yumnam Khemchand Singh, previously serving as Assembly Speaker and Singjamei MLA, was sworn into office by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Lok Bhavan in Imphal.

Inclusive Cabinet Dynamics: In an effort to promote ethnic reconciliation, the newly formed NDA government appointed two Deputy Chief Ministers who represent significant tribal groups: Nemcha Kipgen from the Kuki-Zo community (who took her oath virtually from New Delhi) and Losii Dikho from the Naga People's Front.

Background of the Crisis: The state has been under central administration since February 13, 2025, following the resignation of former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh. His government fell apart amid a prolonged and violent ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, which initially began in May 2023.

Bypassing a Constitutional Hurdle: The reinstatement of the popular government came after thorough security assessments. This prompt action averted the necessity for a complicated constitutional amendment, as prolonging President's Rule beyond one year necessitates special parliamentary consent and certification from the Election Commission.

II. Present Challenges in Manipur:

Deep Ethnic Polarization: The significant physical and emotional rift between the Meitei community, which is dominant in the valley, and the Kuki-Zo community, which holds sway in the hills, remains acute. Numerous civil society organizations representing the Kuki-Zo have dismissed the legitimacy of the newly formed government, cautioning their MLAs against engaging in the administration.

Internal Displacement & Rehabilitation: The challenge of facilitating the safe return and economic reintegration of approximately 62,000 internally displaced individuals currently residing in relief camps poses a substantial logistical and humanitarian challenge.

Law, Order, and Armed Groups: The widespread availability of advanced weaponry and the ongoing presence of radicalized armed factions and vigilante

groups consistently jeopardize the already fragile law and order framework of the state.

President's Rule

Constitutional Provision



Article 356 empowers the President to issue a proclamation if satisfied that the government of a state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Parliamentary Approval & Duration



- Must be approved by both Houses of Parliament within **2 months**.
- Continues for **6 months**, extendable up to 3 years with six-monthly approvals.

The One-Year Constraint



- Beyond **1 year**, extension only if:
 1. National Emergency is in operation.
 2. Election Commission certifies state elections can't be held.



Revocation



- The President can **revoke** the proclamation anytime.
- No Parliamentary approval needed.

III. Positive Implications (The Stabilizing Factors):

Centralized Security Apparatus: The direct oversight by the Union Home Ministry facilitated a cohesive command and deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and the Army, thereby removing state-level political tensions in security operations.

Administrative "Cooling-Off" Period: The suspension of the politically divided state assembly provided a crucial interlude, temporarily ceasing the legislative exploitation of ethnic divisions.

Unimpeded Relief Operations: This arrangement enabled the Centre to circumvent bureaucratic obstacles and directly allocate emergency funds, rations, and medical supplies to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in both hill and valley camps.

Facilitation of Backchannel Talks: The neutral administrative framework fostered a safer atmosphere for Intelligence Bureau (IB) officials and central representatives to engage in discreet negotiations with conflicting factions.

IV. Negative Implications (The Democratic Costs):

Erosion of Federalism: The suspension of the elected government undermined the fundamental principles of federalism, depriving the citizens of Manipur of their democratic voice and local representation for nearly a year.

Bureaucratic Disconnect: Central administrators and advisors frequently lack a genuine understanding of hyper-local, grassroots dynamics, resulting in a "top-down" methodology that alienated civil society organizations.

Stagnation of Development: Long-term infrastructure and economic initiatives were effectively stalled, as the Governor's administration operated mainly as a crisis-management entity rather than one focused on development.

Accountability Deficit: In the absence of an active legislative assembly or opposition to scrutinize policies within the House, executive actions during this timeframe were devoid of direct public oversight and accountability.

V. Way Forward Measures:

Immediate Disarmament: Initiate a time-sensitive, unwavering, and unbiased operation to retrieve thousands of advanced weapons that have been pilfered from government armories.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Create a legally mandated, multi-ethnic commission chaired by former Supreme Court judges to record grievances, guarantee accountability for acts of violence, and promote healing at the community level.

Decentralized Governance (ADCs): Grant the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the hilly areas greater financial and administrative independence to alleviate tribal concerns regarding the marginalization of land and resources.

Targeted IDP Rehabilitation: Accelerate the secure repatriation of over 62,000 displaced persons by constructing safe, prefabricated transit housing and providing direct benefit transfer (DBT) livelihood support packages.

Police Reforms & Depoliticization: Revamp the state police system to ensure equitable representation of all communities at every level, thereby dispelling the notion of biased law enforcement.

Economic Integration Corridors: Transform the discourse from conflict to commerce by revitalizing the infrastructure projects under the Act East Policy, ensuring that both valley and hill communities are equal partners in economic development.

6. Labour Rights in the Digital Age: The Push for a 'Right to Disconnect'

Context:

Recently, A.A. Rahim, a Member of Parliament from CPI(M), presented the 'Right to Disconnect Bill' in the Rajya Sabha. This proposed legislation aims to provide legal safeguards for employees against work demands outside of regular hours, with the goal of mitigating the detrimental 'always-on' digital culture and reestablishing boundaries between work and personal life.

I. Key Highlights of the Proposed Bill:

Statutory Recognition of Personal Time: The proposed legislation ensures that employees have the legal right to refrain from engaging with work-related communications, such as calls, emails, and messages, outside of their designated working hours, on weekends, and during holidays.

Protection from Retaliation: The Bill explicitly forbids employers from imposing penalties on employees who choose not to respond to work communications after hours. Workers who exercise this right are protected from facing disciplinary measures, receiving unfavorable performance evaluations, or being denied promotions.

Mandatory Corporate Policies: Organizations will be mandated to create and enforce a detailed "Right to Disconnect" policy, developed in collaboration with employee representatives or recognized labor unions.

Overtime Compensation & Wellness: Should an employee opt to work outside of regular hours, they are entitled to receive standard overtime compensation. Additionally, the legislation promotes the establishment of digital detox centers and workplace counseling services to address issues related to "telepressure" and information overload.

Global Precedents: This legislation is aligned with progressive labor laws that have already been implemented in countries such as France (which was the first to introduce it in 2017), Belgium, Portugal, and Australia, reflecting a worldwide movement against the unregulated extraction of digital labor.

About The Private Member's Bill



Definition: A Private Member's Bill is a legislative proposal introduced by any Member of Parliament (MP) who is not a Minister. It reflects the stand of an individual MP or the Opposition, drawing the government's attention to specific legal gaps or public concerns.

Procedural Rules: Drafting is the responsibility of the concerned member.



- Requires prior notice of one month.
- Debated only on Fridays in the parliamentary session.

Political Implication: Rejection of a Private Member's Bill does not mean loss of confidence in the government.



- No requirement for the ruling administration to resign.

Historical Success Rate: Chances of passage are very low.



- Since 1950, only 14 Private Members' Bills have been passed by both Houses and received Presidential assent.
- Last one passed in 1970.

II. Present Challenges in India's Work Culture:

The "Always-On" Expectation: The advent of remote work and digital collaboration tools has significantly obscured the distinction between home and

workplace, transforming perpetual availability into an implicit, unpaid form of labor.

Severe Mental & Physical Health Toll: The recent tragic incidents involving young corporate professionals in India have underscored the profound burnout, sleep deprivation, and metabolic stress resulting from unregulated and exhaustive working hours.

Power Asymmetry: The capacity to "switch off" is presently a privilege that hinges on corporate hierarchy and job security, rather than being a universal entitlement. Junior employees frequently find themselves without the bargaining power to disregard after-hours communications without jeopardizing their careers.

Absence of a Legal Framework: The existing labor framework in India is devoid of specific, contemporary provisions that address the distinct mental health risks associated with digital hyper-connectivity and platform-based employment.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Institutionalizing Corporate Boundaries: Organizations should take the initiative to implement "communication charters" that outline emergency procedures and arrange for the postponement of non-urgent emails sent outside of regular hours

Phased Legislative Integration: Although the existing Private Member's Bill may not succeed, the Ministry of Labour and Employment ought to incorporate its fundamental tenets into the comprehensive Labour Codes, thereby legally acknowledging digital burnout as a workplace risk.

Redefining Productivity Metrics: There is a necessity for a significant transformation in corporate performance evaluations, shifting the focus from rewarding "constant availability" to emphasizing actual productivity efficiency during designated working hours.

Strengthening Grievance Mechanisms: It is essential for organizations to create anonymous and effective internal complaint systems that allow employees to report persistent after-hours harassment without the apprehension of facing retaliation from management.

7. Demographic Data & Social Justice: The Push for a Mandated Decennial Census Context:

Recently, Member of Parliament Haris Beeran from Kerala presented the Census Amendment Bill as a Private Member's Bill in the Rajya Sabha. This proposed legislation aims to modify the Census Act of 1948, establishing a legal obligation for the Union government to carry out a comprehensive nationwide Census at a minimum interval of every ten years.

I. Key Highlights of the Proposed Bill:

The Statutory Vacuum: The Bill underscores a significant legal gap: neither the Constitution of India nor the Census Act of 1948 explicitly requires a strict 10-year interval for conducting the Census, even though this has been a rigid historical practice since 1881.

Impact on Affirmative Action: The Member of Parliament contended that the unprecedented postponement (which relies on data that is now 15 years old from 2011) critically jeopardizes social justice initiatives. In the absence of precise demographic and caste information, the equitable distribution of electoral reservations, educational quotas, and public employment benefits becomes unfeasible.

Sub-Categorization & The Creamy Layer: The legislation asserts that new, comprehensive census data is fundamentally necessary to scientifically sub-categorize castes within reserved categories and to accurately establish the income and wealth criteria for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) 'creamy layer'.

The Pandemic Backlog: The 2021 Census was indefinitely delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bill highlights that India stands as the only major global economy that has not yet finalized its decennial data collection following the pandemic.



The Census & Legislative Mechanics



Constitutional Jurisdiction

'Population Census' is a Union subject, explicitly listed under Entry 69 of the Union List (Seventh Schedule).

Under Article 246, the Parliament has the exclusive power to legislate on matters related to the census.



The Census Act, 1948

Provides the statutory framework for conducting the population census.

Central Government can declare its intention to take a census 'whenever it may consider it necessary,' leaving the timing to executive discretion.



Private Member's Bill

Introduced by IUML MP Haris Beeran.

- Requires one-month prior notice.
- Debated only on Fridays.
- Aims to highlight legislative gaps but has near-zero probability of becoming law without ruling party support.

II. Present Challenges Due to the Census Delay:

Welfare Exclusion Errors: Due to the reliance of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and various Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) initiatives on the 2011 population statistics, approximately 100 million newly qualified beneficiaries are presently left out of food security and state welfare programs.

The Delimitation Dilemma: The essential upcoming delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies is currently on hold until the release of the first Census conducted

after 2026. This postponement results in significant political implications and federal tensions regarding the alteration of political representation.

Flawed Macro-Economic Planning: Key indicators necessary for economic planning—such as trends in internal migration, fertility rates, and the rate of urbanization—are completely outdated, compelling policymakers and urban planners to depend on estimates and sample surveys instead of concrete data.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Statutory Time-Binding: It is imperative for Parliament to revise the Census Act of 1948 to impose a legally binding decennial schedule, thereby eliminating the discretionary provision that permits the executive to postpone the process indefinitely.

Accelerating the Digital Transition: The Ministry of Home Affairs is required to hasten the implementation of the recently introduced digital Census instruments (such as the 'Pragati' and 'Vikas' portals) to facilitate swift self-enumeration and significantly reduce data processing durations.

Synchronized Socio-Economic Enumeration: A comprehensive socio-economic and caste enumeration framework should be incorporated into the conventional digital census to effectively address the data shortfall that obstructs both state and central affirmative action initiatives.

Decoupling from Contentious Exercises: In order to guarantee widespread public cooperation and seamless enumeration, the conventional demographic Census must be distinctly separated from politically sensitive initiatives such as the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

8. Parliamentary Standoff: Opposition Moves Resolution to Remove Lok Sabha Speaker

Context:

In a notable recent parliamentary occurrence, 118 Opposition Members of Parliament filed a notice to propose a resolution aimed at the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. The Opposition has charged the Speaker with engaging in "blatantly partisan" behavior throughout the initial phase of the Budget Session, thereby setting the stage for a significant debate within Parliament.

I. Key Highlights of the Controversy:

Trigger for the Notice:

The Opposition contended that the Speaker unjustly denied the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) the opportunity to address the assembly during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks.

They also pointed to the sudden suspension of several MPs amidst significant disruptions as indicative of biased conduct.

Procedural Rectifications:

The original notice submitted on February 10, 2026, was flagged by the Lok Sabha Secretariat due to technical deficiencies, as it mistakenly referenced events from 2025.

Speaker Om Birla instructed the Secretariat to rectify these issues and move forward, asserting that the Opposition is entitled to employ democratic mechanisms.

Cross-Party Support:

The amended motion received endorsements from 118 MPs within the INDIA coalition, which includes the Congress, Samajwadi Party, and DMK.

It is noteworthy that members of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) chose not to endorse the removal notice.

The Upcoming Debate:

The resolution is set to be debated on March 9, 2026, coinciding with the commencement of the second phase of the Budget Session.

During this session, Om Birla will not preside over the House but will be positioned among the members on the Treasury benches.

Procedure for Removal of the Speaker

Constitutional Basis

Under Article 94(c), the Speaker may be removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the Lok Sabha.

• Effective Majority: Total Strength Minus Vacant Seats

Notice Period & Admission

14 Days' Written Notice to the Secretary-General Required

At Least 50 Members Must Support the Motion for Admission in the House

Speaker's Rights (Article 96)



Speaker Cannot Preside Over the House During the Resolution

Speaker Can Participate in Debate & Vote in the First Instance (No Casting Vote)

Historical Precedents

• No Speaker Has Ever Been Successfully Removed.



• Motions Brought Against:

• G.V. Mavalankar (1954)

• Hukam Singh (1966)

• Balram Jakhar (1987)

• But All Failed

II. Present Challenges in Parliamentary Functioning:

Erosion of Institutional Trust: The extraordinary decision to oust the Speaker underscores a significant collapse of trust and mutual respect between the Treasury and Opposition benches.

Perception of Bias: The Opposition perceives that they are unfairly targeted by expunctions, suspensions, and the muting of microphones, resulting in claims that the Chair functions as an arm of the ruling government.

Disruption as a Strategy: When the Opposition perceives themselves as sidelined in addressing contentious matters, they increasingly turn to persistent disruptions and well-rushing as their main political strategy.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Enhancing Absolute Neutrality: India ought to consider the adoption of the British parliamentary practice whereby the Speaker formally resigns from their political party upon taking the chair, thereby ensuring a clear demonstration of impartiality.

Organized Backchannel Communication: Create an informal, cross-party 'Business Advisory Committee' backchannel aimed at proactively addressing floor-management conflicts before they escalate into severe constitutional actions.

Assured Opposition Time: Formalize designated days or hours exclusively allocated for issues brought forth by the Opposition, thereby minimizing the tensions that contribute to legislative stalemate.

Clear Disciplinary Procedures: Establish uniform guidelines for the suspension of MPs to ensure that disciplinary measures are transparent, equitable, and thoroughly shielded from claims of political bias.

9. Patriotism & Protocol: Vande Mataram to Precede National Anthem at Official Events

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released new guidelines stipulating that the National Song, Vande Mataram, is to be played prior to the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, during official events where both are performed. This directive aligns with the 150th anniversary of the song's creation.

I. Key Highlights of the New Guidelines:

Ceremonial Sequencing: In instances where both the National Song and National Anthem are included in an official government function, it is imperative that Vande Mataram is performed or played first.

Full Rendition Mandated: The protocol stipulates that the complete six-stanza official version of Vande Mataram must be performed in its entirety.

The duration for this full rendition is officially set at around 3 minutes and 10 seconds.

Standing Protocol: It is required that the audience stands at attention whenever the official version is performed or played.

An exception is granted if the song is featured in a newsreel or documentary, as standing in such contexts may lead to disruption and confusion.

Specific Occasions: This requirement is obligatory during Civil Investitures, the unfurling of the National Flag, and the arrival or departure of the President and Governors at formal State events.

Educational Institutions: The guidelines advocate for all educational institutions to commence the day's activities with the collective singing of the National Song to promote civic values among students.



Jana Gana Mana

Adopted on January 24, 1950

Declared Equal Status by Dr. Rajendra Prasad



Vande Mataram

Adopted on January 24, 1950

Declared Equal Status by Dr. Rajendra Prasad

National Symbols



Fundamental Duties

Article 51A(a) of the Constitution:

“It shall be the duty of every citizen to abide by the the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem.”

Statutory Protection Discrepancy



National Anthem

- Protected by the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- Disrespect or disruption is a punishable offense.



National Song

- No Specific Law Exists to Penalize Disrespect to the National Song.

Legal Gap: National Anthem has Statutory Protection,
National Song Does Not

II. Present Challenges & Sensitivities:

Historical Contentions: During the debates of the Constituent Assembly, only the initial two stanzas of Vande Mataram were recognized as the National Song, as the subsequent four stanzas were viewed by certain minority groups as containing religious implications.

The recent directive to perform all six stanzas has attracted political backlash, with opposition parties contending that it undermines the secular agreement established by the Constituent Assembly.

Federal Friction & Special Provisions: The enforcement of the central directive has encountered legislative resistance in states that possess special constitutional protections.

The Nagaland Legislative Assembly has recently sent the MHA directive to a select committee, raising concerns about its relevance under the religious and social safeguards provided to the state by Article 371A.

Enforceability vs. Voluntary Respect: Given that the National Song does not have the explicit penal support of the 1971 Act, the enforcement of the existing protocol is largely dependent on executive orders rather than stringent legal penalties, which may result in uncertainty regarding compliance.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Statutory Clarification: It is imperative for Parliament to contemplate revising the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, to explicitly include the National Song within its legal framework, thereby resolving any uncertainties concerning the authorized protocols.

Promoting Cooperative Federalism: The Central Government should engage in discussions with states that possess special constitutional protections (such as Nagaland and Mizoram) to align national protocols with local and cultural sensitivities.

Focusing on Civic Education: Rather than depending solely on executive orders, the government ought to incorporate the historical significance of the Swadeshi Movement—during which the song emerged as a unifying symbol—into educational curricula to cultivate genuine, informed patriotism.

Clear Guidelines for Public Spaces: To avert civilian vigilantism, the Ministry of Home Affairs must clearly state that these stringent standing and sequencing protocols are primarily applicable to official state events and institutional contexts, rather than informal public assemblies.

10. Parliamentary Accountability or Political Vendetta? The Substantive Motion Row

Context:

Recently, BJP Member of Parliament Nishikant Dubey filed a notice for a 'substantive motion' targeting Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. This motion controversially demands the prompt revocation of his parliamentary membership along with a lifetime prohibition on participating in elections.

I. Key Highlights of the Controversy:

The Allegations:

Nishikant Dubey has accused Rahul Gandhi of deceiving the House and conspiring with foreign organizations such as the Soros Foundation and USAID.

Dubey claimed that Gandhi's recent trips to Southeast Asian nations (Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia) constituted collaboration with "anti-India forces."

The Extreme Demands:

In contrast to a typical privilege motion, this substantive motion calls for the permanent expulsion of Gandhi from the Lok Sabha.

It also requests a lifetime ban on electoral participation, representing an unprecedented intensification of parliamentary disciplinary actions.

The Opposition's Counter:

Congress General Secretary K.C. Venugopal has characterized the motion as a tactic of intimidation aimed at silencing the Leader of the Opposition.





The Opposition contended that this is a response to Gandhi's heavily censored speech regarding the India-US trade agreement, emphasizing alleged "double standards" exhibited by the Chair.

Speaker's Discretion:

The decision to admit the motion lies solely with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

Should it be accepted, the Lok Sabha will be obligated to engage in a formal debate regarding the allegations and cast a vote on a binding resolution.

What is a Substantive Motion?

 <h3>Definition & Nature</h3> <p>A self-contained, independent proposal submitted to the House for formal approval.</p> <p>Capable of expressing a clear decision of the legislative body.</p>	 <h3>Independence from Other Business</h3> <p>Complete in itself, not linked to any other ongoing debate or business in the House.</p> <p>Used for critical matters like Impeachment of the President or Removal of a Supreme Court Judge.</p>
 <h3>Procedural Requirements</h3> <p>Requires prior written notice to the Speaker.</p> <p>Only moved by the member who submitted the notice.</p>	 <h3>Binding Effect</h3> <p>If adopted via voting, it represents the formal and binding will of the House.</p>

II. Present Challenges in Parliamentary Functioning:

Weaponization of Procedures:

Parliamentary tools, which were initially intended to guarantee accountability from the executive branch, are increasingly being utilized as instruments for political retribution.

This redirection diverts the House's attention from productive policy development to incessant, highly partisan legal confrontations.

Erosion of Deliberative Space:

The regular removal of the Opposition's comments significantly undermines the essential democratic right to hold the government accountable.

Consequently, Members of Parliament are compelled to resort to disruptive strategies or extreme procedural motions to express their opposition.

Questioning the Speaker's Neutrality:

As the Opposition concurrently initiates a removal notice against Speaker Om Birla, the Chair's ruling on this significant motion threatens to further divide the House.

Any indication of partiality severely undermines the institutional integrity of the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Strict Admission Criteria:

The Speaker is required to set a strong, impartial legal standard for the acceptance of substantive motions of this kind.

This is essential to avert the capricious application of such motions that could jeopardize the positions of democratically elected officials.

Empowering the Privileges Committee:

Claims of misleading the House should initially undergo thorough investigation by the all-party Privileges Committee.

Initiating expulsion through a majority vote on the floor circumvents principles of natural justice and institutional oversight.

Protecting Parliamentary Privilege:

The unassailable freedom of speech within the House (Article 105) must be vigorously safeguarded against political influence.

Expunctions ought to be exceedingly uncommon and confined strictly to instances of unparliamentary language, rather than critiques of political or policy matters.

Reviving Cross-Party Dialogue:

The governing party and the Opposition must promptly reinstate the practice of informal negotiations.

Reestablishing a fundamental working consensus is vital for the passage of essential legislation, preventing the Parliament from descending into ongoing stalemate.

11. Labour Reforms & Legal Certainty: Parliament Passes Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026**Context:**

Recently, Parliament swiftly enacted the Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026. This legislation modifies the 2020 Code to eliminate legal uncertainties concerning the repeal of outdated labour laws, thereby ensuring continuity and averting potential jurisdictional disputes in labour courts.

I. Key Highlights of the Amendment:**The Core Objective:**

The amendment introduced in 2026 aims to provide clear legal understanding concerning the "repeal and savings" provisions outlined in Section 104 of the Industrial Relations Code, 2020.

It effectively prevents any erroneous legal challenges that might argue the delegation of the power to repeal previous laws was unconstitutionally assigned to the executive.

Clarifying the Repeal Mechanism:

The Bill clearly states that the repeal of three significant legacy labour laws occurred automatically through the law's operation, rather than through a distinct executive notification.

The three legacy laws that have been subsumed are the Trade Unions Act (1926), the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act (1946), and the Industrial Disputes Act (1947).

Protecting Past Rights & Disputes:

The amendment ensures that past rights, obligations, and ongoing adjudications under the previous laws are maintained without interruption.

This guarantees a smooth transition for both employers and employees as they move to the newly unified four-code labour framework.

Labour & Legislative Mechanics:

Constitutional Jurisdiction:

“Labour” is placed in the Concurrent List (Entries 22, 23, and 24) of the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

- Dual jurisdiction allows both the Parliament and State Legislatures to enact laws regarding trade unions, industrial disputes, and social security.
- State laws must not contradict Central statutes.



Delegated Legislation vs. Substantive Law:

The necessity of this 2026 Amendment stems from the doctrine against “excessive delegation.”

While the legislature can delegate rule-making powers to the executive, the power to repeal a statute must rest with the legislature itself.



Delegated Legislation



Substantive Law

Substantive repeal authority must remain **firmly & explicitly** with the legislature.

II. Present Challenges:

Concerns Regarding the "Ease of Firing":

Opposition leaders and prominent trade unions contend that the foundational 2020 Code significantly undermines collective bargaining rights.

They claim that the structure predominantly benefits corporate interests by easing the criteria for layoffs and rendering legal strikes exceedingly challenging.

Procedural Urgency & Absence of Debate:

The 2026 Amendment Bill was introduced and approved in both Houses within a span of 24 hours, amidst substantial protests from the Opposition.

Critics assert that circumventing thorough parliamentary examination and the Indian Labour Conference erodes the democratic consensus necessary for delicate labour reforms.

Compliance Overload for MSMEs:

Although the government maintains that the amendment streamlines the legal framework, frequent retrospective clarifications lead to compliance ambiguity.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) continue to face difficulties due to the fluctuating regulatory demands and complex transitional regulations.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Reviving Tripartite Dialogue:

The government must take immediate action to establish regular and transparent consultations that include the state, corporate employers, and recognized central trade unions.

This approach guarantees that future implementation regulations will reflect the realities faced by grassroots communities and the concerns of workers, rather than merely focusing on top-down economic objectives.

Balancing Flexibility with Security:

Although industries need operational flexibility to remain competitive on a global scale, this should not come at the expense of fundamental job security.

The state should emphasize the importance of strong, portable social security systems and the rigorous enforcement of mandated appointment letters across all sectors.

Establishing Dedicated Labour Tribunals:

In order to fully leverage the legal clarity offered by this amendment, the government must swiftly address the systemic vacancies present in labour courts and tribunals.

Accelerating the resolution of outstanding industrial disputes is crucial for restoring workforce confidence in the new Labour Codes.

12. Judiciary & Transparency: 8,630 Complaints Against Judges Expose Accountability Gaps

Context:

Recently, the Union Law Minister announced to the Lok Sabha that the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) has received a total of 8,630 complaints concerning current Supreme Court and High Court judges from 2016 to 2025. This substantial number has sparked renewed discussions across the country regarding the transparency of the judiciary's internal mechanisms for addressing grievances.

I. Key Highlights of the Disclosure:

The Decade's Data: An astonishing total of 8,630 complaints concerning corruption, sexual misconduct, and significant impropriety were recorded over a span of ten years.

Almost half of these complaints were submitted in the last four years alone, reaching a record high of 1,170 in 2024.

The CPGRAMS Routing: A growing number of citizens are now utilizing the government's digital Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) to lodge their grievances.

The Law Ministry has clarified that these complaints are merely forwarded to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) or the appropriate Chief Justice of the High Court, without any executive interference or monitoring.

The Missing Action Report: Although the government has provided the total number of complaints received, it has conspicuously failed to reveal the outcomes.

Currently, there is no publicly available data indicating how many of these complaints were dismissed at the initial stage, investigated, or led to any form of disciplinary action.

Judicial Removal & The In-House Mechanism

Constitutional Removal (The Extreme Step)

Under Article 124(4) (for the SC) and Article 217 (for HCs), a judge can only be removed through parliamentary impeachment.



Special Majority In Both Houses



On Grounds Of "Proved Misbehaviour Or Incapacity"

Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968



The 1999 In-House Procedure

- Internal Mechanism To Handle Lesser Complaints



CJI/HC Chief Judge Scrutinizes Complaint



Three-Member Fact-Finding Committee



Confidentiality Clause

- Strictly Confidential Process

- If Misconduct Found:



Private Warning



Advise Voluntary Resignation



Withdrawal Of Judicial Work

II. Present Challenges in Judicial Accountability:

The "Transparency Deficit":

The total secrecy surrounding the internal mechanisms creates a "black box" situation, preventing citizens who submit complaints from ever discovering the results.

This lack of transparency fosters public skepticism and gives rise to claims that the system is structured to shield judges instead of holding them accountable.

The Intermediate Penalty Gap:

Impeachment is frequently referred to as a "Brahmastra"—a drastic, highly politicized tool that is nearly impossible to implement.

Due to the infrequency of impeachment, the system is devoid of formal, statutory "intermediate penalties" for moderate ethical violations that do not justify removal.

"Judges Judging Judges":

The total lack of an independent, external oversight entity raises significant conflict-of-interest issues.

Dependence solely on peer evaluations by fellow judges restricts objective examination and undermines the democratic tenet of institutional checks and balances.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Publishing Aggregated Outcomes:

Although it is essential to safeguard the identities of individual judges from frivolous or malicious allegations, the judiciary ought to release an annual report detailing aggregated disposal data.

This transparency report should explicitly indicate the number of complaints that were dismissed, the number that underwent internal inquiry, and the number that led to reprimands.

Statutory Oversight Body:

Parliament should reinitiate discussions regarding the establishment of a permanent, statutory National Judicial Oversight Committee.

This committee should ideally comprise distinguished external, non-political jurists in addition to senior judges to guarantee impartial investigations into judicial misconduct.

Standardizing the Inquiry Process:

The informal internal mechanism must be formalized with stringent, time-bound deadlines for addressing public complaints.

Extended, open-ended inquiries deprive the complainant of justice and impose unnecessary psychological stress on the accused judge.

Clear Categorization of Offenses:

A codified range of judicial misconduct should be developed, clearly delineating what qualifies as a "minor" ethical lapse in contrast to an impeachable offense.

13. India's Federalism is in Need of a Structural Reset

Context:

Recently, the Justice Kurian Joseph Committee Report concerning Union-State relations was presented in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. The report contends that years of excessive centralization have undermined state autonomy, urging an immediate "structural reset" of Indian federalism to reinstate democratic balance.

I. Key Highlights of the Justice Kurian Joseph Report:

Reclaiming Educational Federalism: The report emphatically advocates for the complete transfer of Education back to the State List.

Freeing Universities: It promotes the liberation of premier institutions from UGC regulation and suggests the replacement of centralized examinations such as NEET with admission processes led by the states.

Divesting Gubernatorial Powers: It proposes that Governors should be relieved of their statutory responsibilities as Chancellors of State universities.


Accountability Deficit: The committee contended that the office of the Governor currently possesses significant administrative power without the necessary democratic accountability.

Critique of the "Centralising Bias": The report highlights that the original centralizing tendency of the Constitution—stemming from post-Partition concerns—is no longer warranted in contemporary India.

Suppressing Innovation: It asserts that excessive centralization hinders State-level policy innovations, referencing initiatives like Tamil Nadu's noon meal program and Kerala's public health framework.


Federal System & Centre-State Relations

Quasi-Federal Design




"Union of States" (Article 1)
"Quasi-Federal"
 – K.C. Wheare

Division of Powers




Union List
 State List
 Concurrent List
Seventh Schedule

Basic Structure Doctrine



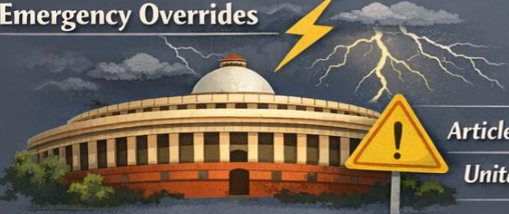
S.R. Bommai v. Union of India
 (1994)
"Federalism is a Basic Structure of the Constitution."

Plenary State Authority



States are Supreme in Their Own Spheres

Emergency Overrides



Articles 352 to 360
Unitary Powers During Crisis

II. Present Challenges to Indian Federalism:

Fiscal Centralisation: The Union government has markedly increased its dependence on non-divisible cesses and surcharges for the purpose of revenue collection.

Revenue Dilution: This dependence effectively deprives States of their rightful, constitutionally guaranteed share of revenue as stipulated in Article 270.

Legislative Encroachment: The Union is progressively legislating on matters within the Concurrent List without sufficient consultation with the states.

One-Size-Fits-All Policies: The lack of consultation imposes uniform policies on varied populations, disregarding regional socio-cultural priorities (for instance, the debates surrounding the National Education Policy).

The Governor's Discretion: Governors are often accused by state cabinets of functioning as biased political agents instead of impartial constitutional leaders.

Legislative Paralysis: Extended, unexplained delays in approving State Bills critically hinder the operations of democratically elected state governments.

Delimitation Anxieties: The forthcoming delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies post-2026 has incited significant political anxiety among Southern states.

Penalizing Performance: States that have effectively managed their populations are concerned that they will face permanent penalties in the form of proportionately diminished political representation in Parliament.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Right-Sizing the Union: Confine direct Union involvement exclusively to truly national issues such as defense, foreign policy, and macroeconomic matters.

Restoring Plenary Autonomy: Reinstate State independence in fundamental governance areas including education, healthcare, and the development of local infrastructure.

Reforming the Governor's Office: Execute the Punchhi Commission's suggestion to strictly and legally curtail the discretionary authority of the Governor.

Enforcing Timelines: It is imperative for Parliament to establish a stringent constitutional deadline for Governors to either approve or reject State Bills.

Revitalizing the Inter-State Council: Convert the Inter-State Council (Article 263) from a mere discussion forum into a proactive, obligatory consultative entity.

Pre-Legislative Consensus: Leverage the Council to foster consensus at the state level prior to the formulation of any national legislation concerning subjects on the Concurrent List.

Fiscal Restructuring: Expand the divisible tax base by instituting a legal limit on the proportion of cesses and surcharges that the Centre is permitted to impose.

Promoting Untied Grants: Allocate significantly larger shares of untied financial grants to States to stimulate local, context-sensitive policy innovation.

14. Legislative Milestones vs. Reality: The Extended Wait for Women's Reservation

Context:

Recent discussions have underscored that the historic Women's Reservation Act (2023) cannot be enacted prior to the 2029 general elections. Its implementation is constitutionally linked to the conclusion of the first post-2026 Census and a following delimitation process, thereby deferring women's political empowerment until 2034 or later.

I. Key Highlights of the Constitutional Reality:

The 2023 Landmark Act:

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam establishes a 33% reservation for women in both the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

It incorporates a compulsory sub-reservation for women within the current electoral quotas for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

The "Delay Clause":

The Act clearly indicates that the quota will be implemented only after the data from the first Census conducted after 2026 is released.

Subsequently, a comprehensive delimitation process must be undertaken to redraw electoral boundaries and designate specific reserved constituencies.

The Exclusion of Upper Houses:

This legislation is applicable exclusively to directly elected lower houses, thereby excluding indirectly elected bodies.

It specifically omits the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils from the obligatory gender quota.

Absence of OBC Sub-Quota:

Although women from SC/ST backgrounds are safeguarded, the Act does not provide a distinct sub-quota for women from Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

This lack of provision continues to be a significant issue of political debate concerning intersectional social justice.

Reservation & Delimitation:

New Constitutional Articles

Reservation Provisions

- **Article 330A:** Reservation of Seats in the **Lok Sabha**.
- **Article 332A:** Reservation of Seats in State Assemblies.

Empowered by Article 15(3): Special Provisions for Women

Delimitation Mechanism (Article 82)

- Parliament enacts a **Delimitation Act** after every census.
- **Freeze** on delimitation extended by the **42nd & 84th Amendments**.
- Seat reallocation restricted until first census after **2026**.

The Sunset Clause: Article 334A

- Women's reservation for an initial period of **15 years**.
- Extension possible through future legislation.



II. Present Challenges to Implementation:

Sequential Procedural Hurdles:

Historically, the national Census process requires a duration of 12 to 18 months for thorough data verification and subsequent publication.

Delimitation commissions have traditionally taken between three to six years, rendering a rollout in 2029 both legally and logistically unfeasible.

The North-South Federal Friction:

Delimitation entails the adjustment of parliamentary seat allocations based on revised population growth statistics.

States in the South are apprehensive about potentially losing political representation to their Northern counterparts, thereby transforming gender justice into collateral damage amid a regional demographic conflict.

The Incumbency Dilemma:

The implementation of the 33% quota within the current 543 Lok Sabha seats would result in the immediate displacement of approximately 181 male incumbents.

By associating the quota with delimitation, political parties can depend on increasing the overall number of seats (a "bigger pie") to mitigate the displacement of male politicians.

Democratic Disillusionment:

Critics contend that the adage "representation delayed is representation denied" is particularly relevant to this legislation.

Women who rejoiced at the historic passage in 2023 now confront the discouraging reality of having to wait over a decade to actually compete for these reserved seats.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Constitutional Delinking:

Parliament ought to enact a specific constitutional amendment to separate women's reservation from the extended Census and delimitation processes.

This would legally allow for immediate execution within the current electoral framework for the 2029 elections.

Interim Seat Expansion:

Consideration should be given to a temporary, gradual increase in Lok Sabha seats designated solely for women candidates.

This approach avoids the displacement of existing officeholders while upholding the democratic commitment without unnecessary postponement.

Mandating Internal Party Quotas:

The Representation of the People Act, 1951, should be amended to require all recognized political parties to nominate women candidates in no less than 33% of constituencies.

This offers an immediate, legally enforceable solution while the intricate structural delimitation challenges are addressed.

Expanding Legislative Scope:

Future amendments should aim to encompass the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils to guarantee comprehensive gender equality in all legislative bodies.

Substantial cross-party discussions should also be conducted to respond to the calls for an OBC women's sub-quota.

15. Democracy & Dissent: Protecting the Freedom of Speech of MPs

Context:

The recent Budget Session has been marked by significant political turmoil due to the extensive removal of Opposition speeches and the contentious approval of the Motion of Thanks. This situation has rekindled an important national discussion regarding the potential misuse of parliamentary procedural rules to undermine the constitutional right to free speech afforded to Members of Parliament.

I. Key Highlights of the Controversy:

The February 2026 Flashpoint: Leaders in Congress have officially raised concerns regarding "serious procedural irregularities" within the Lok Sabha, contending that the abrupt cessation of debates without permitting the customary executive responses infringes upon parliamentary rights.

The Expunction Debate: The frequent application of Rule 380 by presiding officers to eliminate significant segments of opposition speeches has led to allegations of "selective expunction" by the Chair.

The Opposition contended that the removal of critical policy critiques, as opposed to merely "unparliamentary" language, fundamentally alters the legislative record.

Substantive Motions as Deterrents: The recent introduction of unprecedented substantive motions that call for the permanent disqualification of current MPs based on their speeches has faced substantial criticism.

Experts in constitutional law perceive this as a tactic of intimidation aimed at suppressing dissent and circumventing the conventional Privileges Committee process.

Supreme Court's Stance: Recent judicial discussions have consistently highlighted that while Parliament has the authority to regulate its own procedures, internal regulations must not undermine the essential fundamental right of free expression within the House.

ARTICLE 105 & PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Constitutional Guarantee:

- Article 105(1) grants Members of Parliament the freedom of speech in the House.
- Article 105(2) provides absolute immunity from any civil or criminal proceedings for "anything said or any vote given" in Parliament or its committees.

Broader than Article 19(1)(a):

- Not subject to the "reasonable restrictions" of Article 19(2).

Subject to Institutional Rules:

- Limited by the Constitution and rules of Parliament.

Article 121 Restriction:

- No discussion on conduct of Supreme Court or High Court Judges except upon a motion for their removal.



Rule 380 (Power of Expunction):

- Speaker can expunge words deemed "defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified."



Once expunged, these words cease to exist on the official record.

II. Present Challenges to Legislative Free Speech:

Weaponization of Procedure: Critics contend that the internal disciplinary regulations are increasingly employed to stifle legitimate political discourse and protect the executive, rather than simply upholding parliamentary decorum.

Erosion of the Deliberative Record: Omitting substantial, coherent segments of speeches from the official record denies citizens their right to be informed about the discussions that took place.

This practice ultimately undermines the government's accountability to the electorate.

The "Mutual Forbearance" Crisis: The collapse of fundamental trust between the Treasury and Opposition benches has altered Parliament from a venue for constructive dialogue into a battleground of incessant procedural conflict.

Digital Age Complications: In the context of live broadcasts and social media, removing statements from the official text is frequently ineffective in practice.

The speech is already recorded and disseminated widely online, resulting in a disparity between the official parliamentary record and the public's perception.

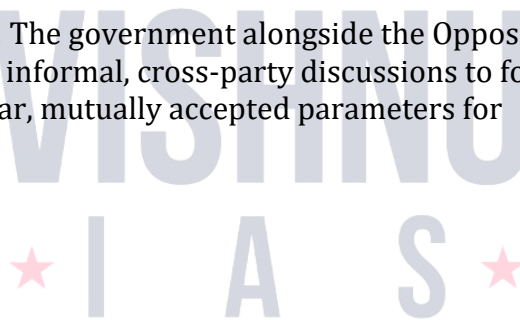
III. Way Forward Measures:

Primacy of Constitutional Privilege: It is imperative for presiding officers to guarantee that the enforcement of procedural regulations (such as Rule 380) does not unintentionally overshadow the essential, substantive constitutional right conferred by Article 105.

Targeted and Restrained Expunctions: The removal of comments should be confined strictly to overtly abusive or unparliamentary language. It must never extend to the elimination of entire sentences or significant political discourse.

Ensuring Absolute Speaker Neutrality: In order to restore confidence in the institution, presiding officers are required to exhibit clear impartiality, enforcing disciplinary measures and expunctions uniformly across both the government and opposition sides.

Reviving Backchannel Consensus: The government alongside the Opposition should proactively participate in informal, cross-party discussions to foster mutual respect and delineate clear, mutually accepted parameters for parliamentary discussions.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

16. India's Push for a Comprehensive Gaza Peace Plan

Context:

During the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in early 2026, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted that advancing a comprehensive peace initiative aimed at resolving the Gaza conflict is a "commonly held priority." He reiterated a stance of zero tolerance towards terrorism, while also affirming India's dedication to a two-state solution and the maintenance of regional stability.

I. Key Highlights of the Diplomatic Address:

The Transformation of West Asia:

Jaishankar observed that the Middle East is experiencing a significant transformation, which is affecting the wider global economic and political landscape.

He clearly articulated that addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a primary and pressing issue for the international community.

Support for Transitional Peace:

India recalled the essential discussions from the Sharm-el-Sheikh Peace Summit and UN Security Council Resolution 2803.

New Delhi expressed its support for multilateral frameworks, including a 'transitional administration' and an International Stabilisation Force, aimed at restoring order in Gaza.

Zero Tolerance for Terrorism:

The Minister delivered a stern warning against cross-border terrorism, deeming it an intolerable breach of fundamental international relations.

He recognized that affected societies possess the right to self-defense, yet strongly suggested that all military actions must comply with international humanitarian law.

Broadening the Arab Partnership:

In addition to immediate conflict resolution, India is swiftly enhancing its relations with the League of Arab States (LAS) through a new cooperation agenda for 2026-28.

The partnership is actively transitioning from conventional sectors such as energy to emerging fields like digital technologies, space exploration, and start-up innovation.

India's De-hyphenated Policy



Early Palestinian Support

- ▶ India's historical stance has deep roots in its own anti-colonial struggle.
- ▶ In 1974, India became the first non-Arab country to officially recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.



Establishing Ties with Israel

- ▶ India formally established full diplomatic relations with Israel much later, in 1992.
- ▶ Since then, the two nations have built a highly robust, multi-billion dollar defense, agriculture, and technology partnership.



The Era of De-hyphenation

- ▶ Under recent administrations, India officially adopted a "de-hyphenated" foreign policy.
- ▶ India's relationship with Israel stands entirely on its own strategic merits, completely independent of its bilateral relationship with Palestine.



The Two-State Solution

- ▶ Despite growing strategic and military ties with Tel Aviv, New Delhi has consistently maintained its historical stance at the United Nations.
- ▶ India repeatedly votes in favor of a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine living peacefully alongside Israel within secure and recognized borders.

II. Present Challenges in the Region:

The Humanitarian Catastrophe:

The extended military operations have significantly undermined the civilian infrastructure in Gaza, resulting in critical shortages. The provision of essential humanitarian assistance, including food and medicine, is severely hindered by the ongoing hostilities and border restrictions.

Spillover Regional Conflicts:

The conflict in Gaza has aggressively escalated secondary fronts, particularly with Houthi attacks that are disrupting international shipping in the Red Sea. Concurrent tensions in Lebanon and Syria pose a threat to broader stability in West Asia, which directly affects Indian peacekeeping forces deployed under UNIFIL.

India's Balancing Act:

India is navigating a complex diplomatic situation: denouncing the terror attacks of October while strongly advocating for the humanitarian needs of Palestinians. Any perceived shift in diplomatic stance could risk alienating either its crucial defense ally (Israel) or its essential energy and diaspora partners (the Arab nations).

III. Way Forward Measures:

Prioritizing Immediate Relief:

The global community must effectively implement unrestricted humanitarian corridors to guarantee a continuous influx of vital aid into Gaza.

India should simultaneously enhance its direct developmental support through UNRWA and its bilateral funding mechanisms.

Advancing the Two-State Framework:

Diplomatic initiatives must vigorously progress beyond temporary ceasefires towards reinstating direct, unconditional discussions for an independent Palestinian state.

International powers must work together to create a binding, adequately funded timeline for post-conflict reconstruction and civilian governance.

Securing Maritime Routes:

India must utilize its growing naval presence in the Arabian Sea to safeguard essential maritime communication routes from asymmetric militant threats.

Establishing collaborative regional security frameworks that include both Arab nations and external partners is crucial for securing the global supply chain.

17. Economic Diplomacy Triumphs: The Historic U.S.-India 18% Tariff Deal

Context:

Recently, Prime Minister Modi and President Trump revealed a significant interim trade agreement, reducing U.S. tariffs on Indian products from an excessive 50% to 18%. This agreement addresses months of intense trade tensions, providing extensive market opportunities for Indian exporters while ensuring reciprocal tariff concessions.

I. Key Highlights of the Trade Deal:

The 18% Tariff Reset:

The United States has pledged to reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian exports to 18%.

This adjustment greatly enhances the cost-competitiveness of Indian products in comparison to regional competitors such as Vietnam and Bangladesh, which are subjected to tariffs ranging from 19% to 20%.

Removal of the "Russian Oil Penalty":

President Trump enacted an executive order that rescinds an additional 25% punitive tariff.

This penalty had been controversially instituted in August 2025 due to India's acquisition of Russian crude oil.

Reciprocal Zero-Tariff Access: The United States has provided zero-duty access for high-value Indian exports, which include generic pharmaceuticals, gems, diamonds, and smartphones.

Concessions by India:

In exchange, India has consented to lower or eliminate import duties on a broad spectrum of American industrial and agricultural goods.

These imports notably consist of dried distillers' grains, tree nuts, red sorghum, and soybean oil.

FROM FRICTION TO FRAMEWORK

The **2025 Trade Escalation**: Bilateral trade relations hit a severe low in mid-2025 when the U.S. escalated reciprocal tariffs to **25%**.

By August 2025: Tariffs Doubled to **50%**



In retaliation to India's independent energy policy and continued reliance on discounted Russian oil.

Historical Baseline



U.S. Tariffs on Indian Imports: **2-3%**



Indian Tariffs on American Imports: **5% - 30%**

(Agricultural Duties Averaging Nearly 39%)

The Shift to De-escalation

February 2026 Framework

A New Era of Economic Cooperation

Resetting the Path to a Bilateral Trade Agreement

II. Gains from Economic Diplomacy:

Industry Leaders Commend the Agreement:

Organizations such as Nasscom have lauded the arrangement for reinstating "macro predictability" within the IT and services sector.

The solar manufacturing sector, in particular, perceives the 18% limit as a pivotal moment for the export of "Made-in-India" cells and modules to American utility companies.

Accessing a \$30 Trillion Market:

Government officials emphasize that the reduction in tariffs presents unparalleled opportunities for India's labor-intensive industries.

Sectors including apparel, leather, and MSME handicrafts are set to experience a significant surge in export orders, which will directly contribute to the creation of domestic jobs.

III. Present Challenges:

Domestic Agricultural Anxieties:

Farmers' unions, including the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), have vehemently opposed the agreement.

They are concerned that permitting inexpensive, duty-free American agricultural goods will severely impact the domestic market and jeopardize the livelihoods of rural Indians.

Strategic Autonomy Concerns:

The political Opposition has strongly condemned the implicit conditions of the agreement.

They contend that succumbing to U.S. demands to reduce Russian oil imports undermines India's enduring strategic energy autonomy and its independent foreign policy.

Lingering Non-Tariff Barriers:

In spite of the announced tariff reductions, Indian exporters continue to encounter intricate procedural obstacles in the U.S. market.

These obstacles encompass rigorous Rules of Origin stipulations, elevated documentation expenses, and erratic customs inspections.

IV. Way Forward Measures:

Protecting Sensitive Industries: India needs to rigorously implement minimum import pricing and strong anti-dumping measures to shield its at-risk domestic dairy and agricultural sectors from abrupt surges in U.S. imports.

Accelerating the BTA: Both countries should leverage this temporary momentum to conclude a thorough Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by mid-2026, thereby permanently establishing these tariff limits to avert future executive changes.

Enhancing Export Compliance: The Ministry of Commerce should actively support MSMEs in overcoming the remaining U.S. non-tariff barriers by providing subsidies for compliance audits and programs aimed at capacity building.

Expanding Energy Security:

To address the geopolitical threats associated with the potential loss of discounted Russian crude, India must swiftly enhance its strategic petroleum reserves.

Simultaneously, it should vigorously pursue alternative, cost-efficient energy supply chains from the Middle East and Latin America.

18. India Fulfills \$120M Chabahar Commitment Amid Sanctions Cloud

Context:

Recently, the Union Government notified Parliament that it has completely allocated its \$120 million commitment for Iran's Chabahar port prior to the expiration of the U.S. sanctions waiver in April 2026. Nevertheless, the total lack of new funding in the 2026-27 Union Budget has ignited vigorous discussions regarding India's prospective strategic presence at the port.

The Strategic Gateway

The Genesis (2003-2016)

India's interest in the warm-water port on Iran's Makran coast began in 2003. It materialized into a tripartite transit agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan in 2016, aimed at bypassing Pakistan for overland trade.

Countering the "String of Pearls"

Lying just 170 km from Pakistan's China-developed Gwadar port, Chabahar (Shahid Beheshti Terminal taken over by India in 2018) is widely viewed as New Delhi's strategic maritime counterweight in the Arabian Sea.

The 2024 Milestone

In May 2024, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) signed a crucial 10-year bilateral contract with Iran to equip & operate the port, cementing it as a foundational node for the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).



Chabahar Port, Iran



I. Key Highlights of the Development:

Financial Commitment Completed:

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirmed the full \$120 million transfer for procuring heavy port equipment.

This fulfills India's financial obligation under the 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with Iran in May 2024.

The Budgetary Shift:

The Union Budget 2026-27 explicitly made no fresh allocations for the Chabahar project.

This contrasts sharply with the revised estimates of ₹400 crore allocated in the previous fiscal year, leading to Opposition claims of an unceremonious "exit."

U.S. Waiver Timeline:

The current conditional sanctions waiver granted by the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is strictly valid only until April 26, 2026.

The MEA emphasized that New Delhi remains deeply engaged with Washington to negotiate the implications of these shifting red lines.

Iran's Official Stance:

Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Fathali clarified that Tehran has not received official notice of India abandoning the port.

He expressed optimism that India intends to continue managing the Shahid Beheshti terminal, noting the potential upcoming visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to India for the BRICS summit later this year.

II. Present Challenges in the Region:

The Threat of Secondary Sanctions:

The renewed U.S. administration under President Donald Trump has adopted a zero-tolerance policy, explicitly threatening a sweeping 25% tariff on nations doing business with Iran.

This forces India into a severe diplomatic dilemma: risking its \$130+ billion bilateral trade with the U.S. to protect a \$120 million strategic investment.

Supply Chain and Procurement Hurdles:

Even with the funds officially paid out, actually procuring and installing specialized port cranes has been historically difficult.

Global heavy-machinery suppliers remain highly hesitant to participate in Iranian tenders due to the overarching fear of U.S. OFAC penalties.

Geopolitical Isolation of Central Asia:

Without a fully functional and India-managed Chabahar, New Delhi risks losing its most viable overland route to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and secure vital energy and mineral partnerships in Central Asia.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Ring-Fencing Port Operations: India should explore structuring an independent, localized Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) using local Iranian manpower to insulate the parent Indian entity from direct U.S. sanctions exposure.

Aggressive Diplomatic Lobbying: New Delhi must leverage its growing defense and trade leverage with Washington to argue for a permanent "humanitarian and regional stability" carve-out for Chabahar, strictly separating it from broader Iran-centric sanctions.

Exploring Alternative Corridors: To prevent a total strategic bottleneck, India should concurrently accelerate its investments in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and explore alternative maritime-land routes to Central Asian markets.

Deepening the INSTC Integration: Actively integrate Russia and Central Asian republics into the port's financial risk-sharing model to transform Chabahar from an exclusively "Indo-Iranian" project into an indispensable, multilateral Eurasian necessity.

19. India and GCC Launch Historic FTA Negotiations

Context:

Recently, India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have formalized the initiation of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations by signing the Terms of Reference (ToR) and a Joint Statement. This significant development seeks to create a thorough economic partnership, enhancing bilateral trade, investment opportunities, and energy security between India and the six-member coalition.

I. Key Highlights of the Development:



The Strategic Framework:

The Terms of Reference (ToR) was officially signed in New Delhi by the Commerce Ministry of India and the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), thereby initiating the negotiation process. This document serves as a foundational guide that delineates the scope, modalities, and structure for the forthcoming discussions on tariffs, services, and trade.

Massive Economic Footprint:

The GCC represents India's most significant regional trading partner bloc. In the fiscal year 2024–25, bilateral trade reached a record high of \$178.56 billion, constituting over 15% of India's total global trade. Additionally, the GCC region is a vital source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with total investments into India surpassing \$31.14 billion by the end of 2025.

Sectoral Focus & Diaspora:

Prominent Indian exports encompass engineering goods, rice, textiles, and gemstones, whereas imports are predominantly characterized by crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and gold.

The agreement is specifically designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of the nearly 10 million Indian expatriates who reside and work throughout the Gulf region.

II. Present Challenges in the Trade Corridor

The Structural Trade Deficit:

India runs a massive trade deficit with the GCC—amounting to nearly \$64.8 billion in 2024-25 alone.

Because this deficit is structurally driven by India's inelastic demand for Gulf hydrocarbons (crude oil and LNG), standard tariff reductions are unlikely to automatically balance the trade scales.

Lack of Export Diversification:

India's export basket remains narrowly concentrated on traditional goods (like rice, textiles, and jewelry).

As GCC nations aggressively diversify their own economies under initiatives like 'Saudi Vision 2030', Indian exporters face fierce new regional competition in manufacturing.

Rules of Origin & MSME Vulnerabilities:

There are deep concerns that third-party countries (like China) could dump cheaper goods into India by re-routing them through zero-duty Gulf transshipment hubs like Dubai.

This unchecked influx could severely undercut domestic Indian Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

A Two-Decade Journey

- The 2004 Framework Agreement -

- * The foundational idea of an India-GCC economic partnership is not new. A Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation was originally signed in 2004 to explore an FTA.
- * While initial discussions took place, negotiations stalled multiple times over the past two decades before finally being revived and formalized in 2026.



- The Evolution of the GCC -

- * Established in 1981 and headquartered in Riyadh, the GCC comprises six nations: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain.
- * The bloc was formed to promote political, economic, and security cooperation based on shared cultural identities and strategic Gulf interests.



- From Transactional to Strategic -

- * Historically, the relationship was viewed strictly through the lens of buyer-seller oil transactions and remittance channels.
- * Under recent administrations, it has transformed into a comprehensive strategic partnership encompassing defense, space technology, and digital infrastructure.



III. Way Forward Measures:

Strict Rules of Origin (RoO):

Indian negotiators must insist on watertight RoO clauses to prevent trade circumvention.

This ensures that only goods with substantial, genuine value addition within the GCC region benefit from the FTA.

Beyond Hydrocarbons—The Green Energy Pivot:

The FTA must institutionalize partnerships in emerging sectors, specifically renewable energy and green hydrogen value chains.

This will help India future-proof its energy security rather than remaining solely dependent on crude oil imports.

Pushing for Services and Labour Mobility:

India should aggressively leverage its competitive global advantage in the IT, healthcare, and services sectors.

The final agreement must include institutional mechanisms for easier visa regimes, professional degree recognition, and social security portability for Indian workers.

Calibrated Tariff Phasing:

India must protect its sensitive domestic sectors (such as agriculture, dairy, and small-scale manufacturing).

This can be achieved by opting for a phased, multi-year reduction of tariffs rather than an immediate, shock-inducing zero-duty implementation.

20. India-Malaysia Ties 'Back on Track' with Strategic Reset

Context:

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on an important two-day official visit to Malaysia, signifying the first high-level interaction since the bilateral relationship was upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2024. This visit effectively reestablished diplomatic relations, culminating in 11 significant agreements centered on trade, technology, and defense.

I. Key Highlights of the 2026 Summit:

11 Strategic Agreements: Agreements were established across various sectors, notably including a framework agreement aimed at incorporating India into Malaysia's sophisticated semiconductor manufacturing and packaging supply chains.

Local Currency Trade & Digital Payments:

Both countries pledged to enhance bilateral trade transactions utilizing the Indian Rupee and Malaysian Ringgit to diminish reliance on the US dollar. Furthermore, a new connection was formed between India's NPCI International (NIPL) and Malaysia's PayNet to facilitate smooth cross-border QR payments.

Zero Tolerance on Terrorism:

The leaders released a robust joint statement underscoring "no double standards, no compromise" in the fight against terrorism. They committed to increased intelligence sharing to address radicalization, terror financing, and cross-border militant networks.

Shared Affection for Tamil:

Recognizing the profound cultural ties of Malaysia's 2.9 million-strong Indian diaspora, PM Modi emphasized the establishment of a dedicated Thiruvalluvar Centre at Universiti Malaya and announced new Thiruvalluvar Scholarships.

India also declared the opening of a new Consulate General in Malaysia to enhance support for the diaspora.



II. Present Challenges in the Partnership:

The China Factor: Malaysia's significant economic dependence on Beijing for trade and infrastructure development frequently limits its capacity to fully align with India's wider strategic security framework in the Indo-Pacific.

Structural Trade Deficit: Although bilateral trade has approached nearly \$20 billion, the balance is heavily skewed in favor of Malaysia, primarily due to India's substantial imports of palm oil and electronics.

Indian exporters concurrently face challenges posed by strict non-tariff barriers and issues related to market access within the Malaysian market.

Geopolitical Divergences: The differing strategies regarding the South China Sea disputes and the inconsistent voting patterns on multilateral UN resolutions necessitate ongoing, careful diplomatic management to avert localized conflicts from undermining the overall partnership.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Diversifying the Economic Basket: India should proactively shift its export emphasis from conventional commodities to high-value industries such as Artificial Intelligence, fintech, green hydrogen, and defense equipment (including the LCA Tejas).

Accelerating the ASEAN Trade Review:

Both countries need to lead the swift finalization of the current review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).

This is crucial for addressing trade imbalances, optimizing customs processes, and promoting more efficient regional supply chains.

Enhancing Maritime Security:

The defense sector must advance collaboration beyond typical joint exercises (such as Harimau Shakti) to encompass real-time sharing of naval intelligence and capacity development.

Joint patrols and synchronized domain awareness in the Malacca Strait are essential for safeguarding these vital global maritime routes.

21. Neighborhood Diplomacy: Myanmar's Military-Scripted Polls and India's Strategic Bind

Context:

Five years following the coup in 2021, Myanmar's military junta organized tightly regulated elections from December 2025 to January 2026 in an effort to convey a sense of political normalcy. These elections, which have faced significant criticism, have exacerbated the ongoing civil conflict in the country, thereby presenting India with a serious strategic challenge concerning border security and its Act East Policy.

I. Key Highlights of the Controversial Polls:

Manufactured Legitimacy:

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which is aligned with the military, predictably achieved a decisive victory in the orchestrated elections.

Voting was significantly limited, permitted in only 265 of Myanmar's 330 townships, with a primary focus on closely monitored urban wards.

Suppression of the Opposition:

The Union Election Commission, appointed by the junta, disbanded major opposition parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Prominent political figures continue to be incarcerated, systematically removing any substantial democratic rivalry.

A Crisis of Credibility:

The regime asserted a voter turnout of around 55% (approximately 13.14 million voters).

This represents a notable decrease from the 70% turnout recorded in the elections of 2015 and 2020, indicating a broad public repudiation rather than simple voter indifference.

The Cycle of Coups and Realpolitik

The 2021 Democratic Collapse:

- On February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) deposed the democratically elected civilian government, citing unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud.
- This sparked a nationwide civil war, reversing a decade of fragile democratic transition.

India's Traditional "Twin-Track" Policy:

- Historically, India strongly supported Myanmar's democratic struggle in the 1990s but shifted to a pragmatic "engagement" policy in the 2000s to counter China's growing footprint.

New Delhi maintains that it cannot afford to alienate whichever entity holds power in Naypyidaw, given the critical security imperatives of India's Northeast.

II. Present Challenges in the Region:

Escalating Civil War and Loss of State Control:

Since the coup, more than 7,700 individuals have lost their lives, 30,000 have been detained, and upwards of 113,000 homes have been destroyed.

Armed resistance factions, such as the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), currently govern approximately 91 towns, significantly constraining the junta's genuine territorial authority.

The Refugee Crisis in the Northeast:

Ongoing military airstrikes and acts of violence have compelled over 90,100 displaced individuals from Myanmar to seek refuge in India.

This influx is imposing a substantial administrative and demographic burden on border states, especially Mizoram and Manipur.

Stalled Connectivity Initiatives:

Myanmar serves as a vital land corridor for India's "Act East Policy".

Essential infrastructure projects, including the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, are experiencing indefinite postponements due to the ongoing conflict.

Surge in Transnational Organized Crime:

The political void in Myanmar's border regions has catalyzed extensive narcotics trafficking and illegal arms trade

A significant emerging danger is the rise of cyber-slavery networks, with Indian authorities having rescued over 2,165 Indian nationals who were trapped since 2022.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Principled Pragmatism:

India should persist in its measured strategy—interacting with the junta on critical security issues while clearly refraining from any formal recognition of the fundamentally flawed election outcomes.

Diversifying Engagement Channels:

New Delhi ought to subtly broaden its diplomatic efforts to encompass significant ethnic organizations, the National Unity Government (NUG), and civil society entities.

Relying exclusively on the military constrains India's influence in regions effectively controlled by resistance groups.

Bolstering Border Management:

The Home Ministry must vigorously enhance border intelligence systems and physical infrastructure to address the influx of narcotics and armed insurgents.

At the same time, a coherent and standardized national policy is required to address the humanitarian needs of incoming refugees without jeopardizing local demographics.

Empowering Regional Diplomacy:

India should proactively collaborate with the ASEAN bloc to implement the 'Five-Point Consensus' peace initiative.

Multilateral pressure is crucial to urge the junta to halt violence, establish unobstructed humanitarian corridors, and commence authentic political discussions.

22. India and Greece Forge a New Strategic Axis

Context:

Recently, the Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, convened with his Greek counterpart, Nikolaos-Georgios Dendias, in New Delhi to reinforce the Strategic Partnership between India and Greece. The two leaders formalized a significant Joint

Declaration of Intent, which delineates a five-year plan aimed at enhancing defense industrial collaboration, thereby effectively connecting the security frameworks of the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean.

From Antiquity to Strategic Partnership



Ancient Seafaring Civilizations

India and Greece share deep civilizational connections dating back thousands of years. Historical maritime trade across the Mediterranean–Indian Ocean continuum.

The 2023 Strategic Upgrade



Modern bilateral ties gained massive momentum when the relationship was officially elevated to a “**Strategic Partnership**” during PM Modi’s visit to Athens in August 2023.

The IMEC Vision

Greece: India’s Gateway to Europe

Piraeus Port

Key Hub for the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

I. Key Highlights of the Bilateral Summit:

The Five-Year Defense Roadmap:

The recently ratified Joint Declaration of Intent transitions the emphasis from solely diplomatic relations to a strong defense-industrial partnership. This framework specifically aligns India’s ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ (self-reliance) initiative with Greece’s ‘Agenda 2030’ military reforms to collaboratively develop defense capabilities.

Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan (2026):

Both parties exchanged a definitive military strategy outlining the agenda for the year.

It formalizes joint exercises, training initiatives, and consistent service-to-service engagements to enhance interoperability between their military forces.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):

In a significant strategic development, Greece declared its intention to assign an International Liaison Officer at the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) located in Gurugram.

This deployment significantly improves real-time, cross-regional intelligence sharing concerning piracy, illicit trafficking, and vulnerabilities in the global supply chain.

Innovation & Start-up Synergy:

The Greek delegation visited prominent defense and industrial facilities in Bengaluru and New Delhi.

The emphasis was on linking the defense innovation ecosystems and start-ups of both countries to promote agile, next-generation military technologies.

II. Present Challenges to the Partnership:

The "Turkey Factor":

Greece and Turkey are engaged in historical and deeply rooted territorial and maritime conflicts in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.

As India strengthens its relationship with Athens, it must judiciously manage the geopolitical implications to prevent a total diplomatic collapse with Turkey, a country that is already closely allied with Pakistan.

Scale and Fiscal Constraints:

Greece has a relatively limited domestic defense market and operates under stringent European fiscal regulations.

This economic situation limits the potential for large-scale, comprehensive manufacturing initiatives, compelling the partnership to depend on smaller, specialized technological collaborations.

Regulatory Complexities:

The process of exporting and co-producing military equipment with a European Union member state is laden with procedural challenges.

Defense agreements must comply with rigorous EU export regulations and intricate technology transfer protocols, which frequently delay the execution of collaborative projects.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Focusing on Specialized Maritime Technology: Collaborative research and development initiatives should avoid overcrowded markets and concentrate solely on sectors where both parties possess complementary strengths, including naval shipbuilding, marine electronics, and aerospace components.

Establishing a Strategic Framework: The two countries need to create a lasting, high-level defense working group to guarantee that the five-year political agreement is effectively converted into concrete, signed defense contracts.

Facilitating a "Start-up Bridge": Proactively promote direct connections between Indian and Greek defense technology start-ups.

This grassroots industrial collaboration will assist in circumventing conventional, slow procurement processes and encourage swift technological prototyping.

Enhancing Naval Interoperability: Build on the inaugural bilateral maritime exercise held in 2025 by implementing a permanent, annual naval drill in the Mediterranean to safeguard vital Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs).

23. NATO Launches 'Arctic Sentry' Following the Greenland Crisis

Context:

Recently, NATO has officially initiated the 'Arctic Sentry' mission aimed at strengthening its military presence in the High North. This action comes in response to the extraordinary diplomatic crisis triggered by U.S. President Donald Trump's threats to annex Greenland, compelling the alliance to urgently reassess its Arctic security strategy.

I. Key Highlights of the Mission:

Unified Command Structure:

'Arctic Sentry' represents a year-long, multi-domain military initiative spearheaded by NATO's Joint Force Command (JFC) based in Norfolk. This initiative consolidates existing national exercises, including Denmark's Arctic Endurance and Norway's Cold Response, under a unified NATO command structure.

Strategic Objectives:

The primary goal of this mission is to equip NATO planners with comprehensive visibility of allied operations throughout the region, enabling the identification of capability deficiencies.

A significant emphasis is placed on countering the growing military presence of Russia and China in the strategically crucial Arctic maritime corridors.

De-escalating the Greenland Rift:

The deployment is a result of a tense "framework deal" established at the 2026 Davos summit, involving President Trump and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte.

This agreement transitions the emphasis from unilateral U.S. territorial assertions to a cooperative approach characterized by "shared responsibility" in Arctic defense.

Troop and Asset Deployments:

Although this does not constitute a permanent troop presence, the UK has pledged to increase its forces in Norway to 2,000 personnel.

Other nations, such as Germany and Sweden, are providing air policing resources, including Eurofighter and Gripen aircraft designed for extreme operational conditions.

II. The Contest for the High North:

Cold War Legacy: Throughout the Cold War, the United States sustained a significant military presence in Greenland, with troop levels reaching as high as 10,000, to ensure the security of the North Atlantic. This presence continues today with the operation of the Pituffik Space Base.

The Annexation Ambition: In 2019, President Trump proposed the controversial notion of 'buying' Greenland, a suggestion that was promptly rejected by Denmark. The escalation in early 2026 included actual threats of tariffs and military action, culminating in a recent diplomatic de-escalation.

NATO's Arctic Blindspot: Traditionally, NATO has been reluctant to heavily militarize the High North, aiming to avoid antagonizing Russia.

Nevertheless, the recent inclusion of Finland and Sweden has irrevocably altered the alliance's geographic and strategic dynamics in the region, necessitating a more unified northern strategy.



Formation & Core Purpose

- Founded on April 4, 1949, with 12 founding nations
- Created to counter Soviet expansion in Europe after WWII

Membership & Recent Expansion

- 32 Member States
- Finland joined April 2023
- Sweden joined March 2024



The Principle of Collective Defence (Article 5)

- An attack on one is an attack on all.
- Invoked only once after 9/11 attacks in 2001



Structure & Decision-Making

- HQ in Brussels, Belgium
- Consensus-based decisions
- The North Atlantic Council (NAC)



32 Member Countries

III. Present Challenges:

Transatlantic Trust Deficit:

The unprecedented threat posed by the United States towards Denmark, a founding member of NATO, has significantly undermined the trust among allies.

European countries are increasingly concerned about the unpredictability of Washington's dedication to the fundamental principle of mutual defense and the sovereignty of territories.

Asymmetric Arctic Capabilities:

Russia holds a substantial asymmetric advantage in the Arctic region, equipped with a large fleet of heavy nuclear icebreakers and upgraded military bases in the north.

Currently, NATO lacks the necessary specialized maritime assets designed for cold-weather operations to effectively project power through the dense ice.

Environmental Operating Complexities:

The operation of multinational forces in extremely low temperatures presents considerable logistical challenges.

Ensuring the maintenance of equipment, securing communication channels, and carrying out rapid deployments are exceptionally challenging in the severe conditions of the High North.

IV. Way Forward Measures:

Establishing a European Strategic Pillar:

European NATO allies must promptly create a specialized strategic coordination forum to synchronize their defense objectives.

This initiative will diminish their complete dependence on the United States for regional security and foster independent deterrence capabilities.

Expediting Icebreaker Acquisition:

The alliance should consolidate defense resources to swiftly design, acquire, and collaboratively deploy a modernized fleet of armed icebreakers.

Defining the Shared Sovereignty Framework:

NATO must clearly delineate the legal and operational boundaries of the U.S. security presence in Greenland.

This is crucial to ensure that Danish sovereignty is honored while effectively addressing legitimate North American homeland defense issues.

Strengthening Space and Cyber Resilience:

NATO must protect its undersea cables and satellite communication networks in the High North, which are particularly susceptible to Russian hybrid warfare strategies.

24. The Panchsheel Illusion and India's Himalayan Frontier

Context:

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan recently emphasized that India mistakenly believed the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement had definitively resolved its northern border with China. During a strategic forum in Dehradun in February 2026, he elaborated on how varying historical interpretations turned a tranquil buffer zone into a heavily militarized boundary.

I. Key Highlights from the CDS's Address:

The Post-Independence Dilemma:

Following the exit of the British, India was left with ambiguous borders and was tasked with independently defining its territorial boundaries.

Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought to implement the Panchsheel Agreement to bring stability to the region, fully cognizant of the unclear claims in Ladakh and the McMahon Line to the east.

The "Evaporated" Buffer:

General Chauhan observed that after China's occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, the historical "Himalayan buffer" that existed between India and Tibet entirely disappeared.

As a result, this traditional buffer zone transformed into a direct and rigid border separating the two Asian powers.

The Misinterpreted Settlement:

India believed that by acknowledging Tibet as a part of China and officially designating six Himalayan passes (including Shipki La, Lipulekh, and Niti) for trade, it had effectively established the border.

In contrast, China argued that the agreement was solely negotiated for trade and transit purposes, completely dismissing it as a border delineation.

The Strategic Middle Sector:

The Chief of Defence Staff highlighted that Uttarakhand serves as a vital frontline state.

He reminded military strategists that the roots of the Sino-Indian border conflict actually took hold in the "Middle Sector" right after the signing of the 1954 agreement.

The Panchsheel Pact

Signed on April 29, 1954, by PM Jawaharlal Nehru and Premier Zhou Enlai.

The Genesis

Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India.



PM Nehru & Premier Zhou Enlai

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence "Panchsheel"

• Mutual Respect for Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty



• Mutual Non-Aggression



• Mutual Non-Interference in Internal Affairs



• Equality and Mutual Benefit



• Peaceful Co-Existence



The Strategic Trade-Off

India Recognized Chinese Sovereignty Over Tibet
Surrendered British-Era Privileges in Lhasa.



The Aftermath



India Expected China to Respect Traditional Frontiers...

Shattered by the 1962 Sino-Indian War

II. Present Challenges Along the LAC:

Differing Perceptions of the LAC:

Both military forces actively monitor their respective—and frequently overlapping—interpretations of the Line of Actual Control, resulting in regular tactical tensions.

China consistently declines to share mutually accepted maps that outline their precise LAC assertions, intentionally maintaining ambiguity regarding the border.

Massive Infrastructure Asymmetry:

China has developed extensive dual-purpose "Xiaokang" (model) border villages alongside significant military infrastructure in close proximity to the LAC.

While India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is hastening its initiatives, navigating the challenging Himalayan terrain on the Indian side continues to present a considerable logistical obstacle.

Multi-Domain Threats:

The contemporary border conflict extends beyond mere infantry confrontations. It now encompasses cyber warfare, psychological operations, and electronic interference.

Additionally, the changing climate in the Himalayas introduces new ecological challenges, further complicating year-round troop deployments at extreme elevations.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Accelerating Border Infrastructure:

The government must guarantee continuous funding and expedited environmental approvals for key roads, tunnels, and advanced landing sites.

Improving civilian access to isolated border villages is essential to avert demographic decline in critical regions.

Integrated Himalayan Strategy:

As proposed by the CDS, India requires a comprehensive policy that includes military modernization, water security, and disaster readiness.

Institutions such as the recently established Bharat Himalayan International Strategic Manch (BHISM) should be utilized to develop localized policy initiatives.

Maintaining Diplomatic Leverage:

In the process of enhancing military deterrence, New Delhi must continue high-level military and diplomatic discussions (WMCC) to advocate for complete disengagement at longstanding friction points.

India must also firmly separate the normalization of bilateral trade from the border situation, ensuring that peace along the LAC is the fundamental condition for normalizing relations.

25. India-France Renew 10-Year Pact, Cementing Global Stability

Context:

Recently, at the 6th Annual Defence Dialogue held in Bengaluru, India and France reaffirmed their fundamental defense cooperation agreement for an additional ten years. Simultaneously, Prime Minister Modi highlighted that the lasting Indo-French strategic partnership acts as an essential stabilizing force in a global order that is becoming increasingly volatile.

I. Key Highlights of the 2026 Bilateral Dialogue:

The 10-Year Framework Renewal:

The renewed agreement, which was signed by the Defence Secretary of India and the Deputy Director General for International Relations of France, establishes a binding roadmap for military cooperation over the next decade.

This agreement officially aligns with the broader vision of 'Horizon 2047', shifting the focus from simple buyer-seller transactions to extensive co-development.

Pushing 'Make in India' in Aerospace:

India has explicitly requested that France increase the indigenous content in the Rafale fighter jets to 50%.

Furthermore, New Delhi has sought a significant expansion of the Rafale Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities within India to service regional fleets.

Joint Missile Production:

A significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Safran Electronics & Defence.

This agreement will lead to the establishment of a Joint Venture aimed at manufacturing the advanced HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) smart precision missiles in India.

Sixth-Generation Fighter Pitch (FCAS):

India has formally expressed its intent to join France's innovative Future Combat Air System (FCAS).

This represents a substantial advancement, proposing Indian involvement in the co-development of a sixth-generation stealth fighter jet in collaboration with European partners.

Military-to-Military Interoperability:

Both nations have announced the reciprocal deployment of military officers at establishments of the Indian Army and the French Land Forces.

In addition, the bilateral army exercise, Exercise Shakti, has been upgraded from a biennial event to an annual occurrence.

The “First” Western Strategic Partner

The 1998 Turning Point:
France was the very first Western country with which India established a formal “Strategic Partnership” in 1998. Crucially, Paris refused to impose sanctions on New Delhi after the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests, cementing a deeply trusted relationship.

Pillars of Cooperation:

- Defense:** Mirage 2000s, Scorpene Submarines, Rafale Jets
- Space:** ISRO-CNES Satellite Missions
- Civil Nuclear Energy:** Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project

The Horizon 2047 Roadmap:
Adopted during PM Modi’s Bastille Day Visit

Charting the future to **2047**:
100 Years of Indian Independence
& **50 Years of Strategic Partnership**

II. Present Challenges in the Strategic Axis:

Navigating Technology Transfer (ToT):

France's willingness to engage in co-production is evident; however, the process of finalizing the precise terms regarding Intellectual Property (IP) rights and the comprehensive transfer of technology for essential components, such as jet engine cores, presents significant legal and commercial challenges.

The European Security Shift:

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has compelled European defense manufacturers, including French Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), to prioritize the armament of their own continent significantly. This situation has resulted in critical supply chain bottlenecks and delays in the provision of essential spare parts and defense platforms to global partners, including India.

Geopolitical Balancing Act:

As India strengthens its defense-industrial relationships with the United States while simultaneously relying on Russian military hardware, it must navigate the complexities of ensuring that its collaborations with France do not become ensnared in conflicting global export control frameworks.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Accelerating Aero-Engine Collaborative Development: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) alongside France's Safran must promptly finalize their strategic plan for the co-development of a 110kN thrust engine intended for India's indigenous Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Enhancing Indo-Pacific Joint Maritime Patrols: India and France, which possesses extensive overseas territories such as La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, should formalize regular joint maritime patrols aimed at monitoring critical chokepoints and combating illegal fishing activities.

Utilizing the EU Security Framework: As proposed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, both countries should leverage the newly established India-EU Security and Defence Partnership to enhance stability in the wider Indo-Pacific and Mediterranean regions.

Integrating Defense Start-ups: It is essential to create a dedicated Indo-French defense innovation fund that directly connects Indian start-ups, operating under the iDEX framework, with French technological incubators, thereby circumventing the delays associated with bureaucratic procurement processes.

26. Tehran Reenters the Global Geopolitical Spotlight: The 2026 West Asian Crisis Context:

Recently, synchronized military actions by the U.S. and Israel targeting Iran's senior leadership and essential infrastructure have altered the geopolitical dynamics in West Asia. In response, Tehran launched significant direct retaliatory measures throughout the Gulf, heightening tensions that have unsettled global energy markets and sparked concerns over a potential extended regional conflict.

I. Key Highlights:

"Operation Epic Fury" & Leadership Decapitation:

The United States and Israel executed extensive joint airstrikes aimed at Iranian nuclear facilities, military command centers, and air defense systems.

These strikes culminated in the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, precipitating an immediate succession crisis in Tehran and severely undermining the regime's institutional framework.

Iran's Direct Retaliation:

Shifting from its customary dependence on proxy warfare, Iran initiated a direct state-to-state confrontation.

Tehran deployed hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles aimed at Israel, in addition to U.S. military bases throughout the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

Global Economic and Trade Disruption:

In retaliation to the offensive, Tehran imposed a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, effectively halting global trade through this vital waterway.

This stranglehold has resulted in an immediate surge in global energy prices and a significant increase in maritime insurance costs.

Internal Iranian Dynamics:

The external conflict coincided with Iran's "Winter Uprising," a phase marked by severe domestic turmoil driven by a plummeting national currency and pervasive state repression.

Severe internet outages, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and emergency measures have rendered daily life in the country nearly paralyzed.

Historical Background

Collapse of Nuclear Diplomacy:

- U.S. Withdrawal from JCPOA in 2018 & Maximum Pressure Sanctions
- Failed Talks in Feb 2026: Iran Refused to Dismantle Nuclear Program



Cycle of Regional Escalation:

- Aftermath of 2023 Gaza War & Proxy Clashes
- 'Twelve-Day War' in June 2025 & U.S. Strikes on Iran



Strategic Vulnerability:

- Economic Sanctions Weakened Iran
- U.S.-Israeli Military Intervention Calculated as "Best Option"



II. Present Challenges:

Energy Security and Supply Chains:

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz poses a significant threat to approximately one-third of the global maritime oil trade.

A sustained blockade could lead to drastic global inflation, increased logistics expenses, and energy shortages for economies dependent on imports, such as India.

Threat of State Balkanization:

The power vacuum resulting from the removal of leadership may lead to the fragmentation of the Iranian state along ethnic and provincial lines, reminiscent of the "Syria Model."

Such a disintegration would create a substantial regional security gap, empowering separatist militias and igniting a prolonged humanitarian and refugee crisis.

Expansion of the Theatre of War:

Cross-Gulf retaliatory strikes have forcibly involved neighboring Arab monarchies in the conflict, resulting in civilian casualties and infrastructure damage.

The targeting of Western military installations, including British bases in Cyprus, extends the geopolitical repercussions far beyond the immediate area.

Cyber Warfare Escalation:

State-sponsored Iranian actors have initiated aggressive retaliatory cyber operations on a global scale.

These initiatives opportunistically target essential infrastructure, such as water, energy, telecommunications, and financial networks, thereby posing significant risks of operational downtime.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Urgent Diplomatic De-escalation:

The UN Security Council is required to facilitate an immediate and enforceable ceasefire to interrupt the damaging cycle of retaliation. Neutral regional actors, along with global powers possessing strategic autonomy, should actively engage in mediation to create diplomatic channels and establish humanitarian corridors.

Securing Global Chokepoints:

A coordinated and multilateral maritime coalition is essential to ensure the security of the Strait of Hormuz and the wider Gulf region. Guaranteeing the safe passage of commercial shipping is crucial for stabilizing global energy markets and averting a more extensive economic crisis.

Managing Regional Stability:

The international community must vigilantly observe Iran's leadership succession to avert total state collapse and regional fragmentation. Global intelligence and security frameworks must concentrate on containing the spread of extremist militant groups that flourish in the ensuing power vacuums.

India's Strategic Balancing Act:

India should prioritize the safety and potential evacuation of its extensive diaspora residing in the Gulf. New Delhi must utilize its multi-aligned foreign policy to secure alternative energy supplies while diplomatically engaging with all parties to restore a balance-of-power equilibrium in West Asia.

27. India and Brazil Forge Strategic Alliance: Mineral Security, Steel Pacts, and a \$30 Billion Trade Vision

Context:

Recently, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva undertook a state visit to India, during which significant agreements were established concerning critical minerals, steel mining, and digital collaboration. In an effort to diminish dependence on monopolized global supply chains, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Lula also established an ambitious bilateral trade goal of \$30 billion by the year 2030.

I. Key Highlights:

Critical Minerals and Rare Earths Pact:

Both countries have entered into a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together on the exploration and provision of critical minerals such as lithium, niobium, and nickel. These materials are vital for the development of green energy infrastructures, electric vehicles (EVs), and advanced manufacturing technologies.

Steel Supply Chain Resilience:

A formal agreement has been established to ensure the availability of raw materials for India's expanding steel production capacity of 218 million tonnes.

This initiative will utilize Brazil's extensive deposits of iron ore and manganese, while also fostering AI-enhanced geoscientific data analysis to optimize exploration efforts.

Trade Target Upgrade:

In light of a remarkable 25.5% increase in trade in 2025 (exceeding \$15 billion for the first time), the leaders have elevated their economic aspirations.

They have adjusted their bilateral trade objective from the earlier \$20 billion target to an ambitious \$30 billion by the year 2030.

Tech and Digital Partnership:

The leaders have inaugurated a "Digital Partnership for the Future," which emphasizes artificial intelligence, supercomputing, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

This initiative enables India to share its technology diplomacy model with the largest economy in Latin America.

Global South Solidarity:

The agreements represent a collective stance against trade fragmentation and the rise of "tariff nationalism."

They are actively working to diversify mineral processing supply chains to reduce reliance on Chinese dominance.



II. Present Challenges:

Supply Chain Monopolies:

At present, China holds a dominant position in the global processing and refining sectors for rare earth elements.

Overcoming this monopoly necessitates considerable investment in time, capital, and technology transfer, which India and Brazil must fundamentally establish from scratch.

Geopolitical Trade Turbulence:

The recent unilateral tariff measures implemented by the U.S. (including a 50% tariff imposed on both India and Brazil in 2025) have resulted in significant trade uncertainties.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court annulled these particular tariffs in early 2026, the persistent threat of Western protectionism continues to cast a shadow over the economies of the Global South.

Infrastructure and Regulatory Bottlenecks:

In spite of the immense potential in renewable energy and biofuels, there are still structural challenges.

Pricing distortions, gaps in the supply chain, and varying regulatory frameworks obstruct the smooth integration of collaborative technologies.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Enhancing the MERCOSUR PTA:

India should proactively strive to expand the tariff lines within the India-MERCOSUR agreement from the existing 450 to 4,000.

This expansion is essential for increasing market access for Indian exports throughout Latin America.

Accelerating Collaborative Investments:

The integration of public and private sectors is imperative. Both countries ought to expedite joint investments in mining infrastructure and sustainable processing technologies.

The application of AI and automation in mining will guarantee environmentally sustainable and economically viable mineral extraction.

Reinforcing the "Union" of the Global South:

As emphasized by President Lula, developing countries must align their trade negotiation strategies instead of pursuing individual agreements that may place them at a disadvantage.

Pooling resources within BRICS and IBSA will enhance leverage and safeguard the multilateral independence of developing nations.

28. India's Trade Strategy in a Multipolar World

Context:

In the early months of 2026, India markedly enhanced its integration into the global economy by finalizing the landmark India-EU Free Trade Agreement alongside an interim trade framework with the United States. These significant developments illustrate New Delhi's proactive transition towards employing trade diplomacy as a means of achieving strategic autonomy, with the objective of reaching \$2 trillion in exports by the year 2030 as outlined in its Foreign Trade Policy.

I. Key Highlights of the Evolving Strategy:

The Export Boom & 2030 Vision:

In spite of global supply chain challenges, India's overall exports, encompassing both merchandise and services, achieved an unprecedented \$825.25 billion in 2025, reflecting an annual growth rate of 6.05%.

The existing Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) aims to build upon this momentum to reach the \$2 trillion export target by the conclusion of this decade.

Massive FTA Expansion:

India is actively broadening its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) presence. Projections indicate that FTAs will encompass nearly 71% of India's total export portfolio by 2026, representing a remarkable increase from merely 22% in 2019.

The Historic India-EU Deal (Jan 2026):

Finalized after almost twenty years of discussions, this agreement establishes a free trade zone that includes nearly two billion individuals.

It abolishes tariffs on over 90% of traded commodities, significantly benefiting labor-intensive industries such as textiles, leather, and marine products, while facilitating access to advanced machinery from Europe.

India-U.S. Interim Framework (Feb 2026):

This reciprocal trade framework gradually lowers tariffs and acts as a precursor to a comprehensive Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

Importantly, it emphasizes strategic cooperation in high-technology fields, including rare earth elements, semiconductors, and electronics manufacturing.

From Defensive Cautiousness to Global Integration



II. Present Challenges in Trade Liberalization:

The Risk of Import Increases:

Although Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) facilitate access to international markets, they simultaneously subject local industries to intense global competition.

Vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, dairy, and small-scale manufacturing are perpetually at risk of abrupt influxes of inexpensive imports.

MSME Integration Challenges:

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are essential to the Indian manufacturing sector, yet they encounter significant obstacles in assimilating into Global Value Chains (GVCs).

These challenges encompass limited access to credit, hurdles in obtaining global quality certifications, and inadequate digital trade facilitation.

Infrastructure and Logistics Shortcomings:

The openness to trade, when not supported by competitive cost structures, can perilously exacerbate the trade deficit.

Elevated domestic logistics expenses and prolonged port turnaround times continue to undermine the competitive pricing of Indian exports in comparison to their East Asian counterparts.

Non-Tariff Barriers and Standards:

Developed nations often impose stringent environmental, labor, and sustainability standards (such as the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) as non-tariff barriers to impede the exports of developing countries.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Aligning Trade with Domestic Capacity:

India must diligently synchronize its proactive FTA strategy with its domestic Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) initiatives.

It is crucial to ensure that domestic manufacturing increases concurrently to avert the risk of trade deficits escalating uncontrollably.

Institutionalizing Standards Harmonization:

The government should make substantial investments in enhancing the domestic quality infrastructure to comply with rigorous European and American standards.

Prioritizing the establishment of advanced testing laboratories and subsidizing international certifications for MSMEs is essential.

Developing "Platform Power":

Instead of merely exporting tangible products, India should aim to influence the global digital trade landscape.

This necessitates the export of modular digital public infrastructure (such as UPI and digital identity systems) to gain leverage in international payment and compliance frameworks.

Modernizing Customs & Logistics:

Accelerating the complete digitization of customs through ICEGATE and vigorously advancing infrastructure modernization via the PM Gati Shakti master plan is imperative for minimizing transaction costs.

ECONOMY

29. SBI Unveils 'CHAKRA': A Strategic Mega-Fund Engine for India's Sunrise Sectors

Context:

Recently, the State Bank of India (SBI) introduced 'CHAKRA', a specialized Centre of Excellence (CoE) focused on financing essential "sunrise sectors." This strategic initiative aims to cultivate institutional knowledge and facilitate an anticipated investment of approximately ₹100 lakh crore into future-oriented, sustainability-driven industries by the year 2030.

I. Key Highlights:

Vision for Viksit Bharat 2047:

CHAKRA serves as a knowledge-driven, practical execution platform aimed at expediting India's shift towards a technology-oriented economy. It transcends conventional banking by facilitating project evaluation, evidence-based policy interaction, and the development of white papers.

Focus on Eight Sunrise Sectors:

Green Energy: Renewable Energy, Green Hydrogen & Ammonia, and Decarbonisation.

Technology & Infrastructure: Semiconductors, Data Centre Infrastructure, and Smart Infrastructure.

Future Mobility: Electric Mobility (EVs) and Advanced Cell Chemistry (ACC) / Battery Storage.

Massive Investment Targets:

SBI anticipates a total capital expenditure requirement exceeding ₹100 lakh crore in these sectors by the decade's conclusion.

From this, the bank foresees a lendable debt opportunity of ₹20–22 lakh crore within the next five years.

Strategic Global Partnerships:

To effectively manage the scale, SBI has established MoUs with 21 domestic and international financial institutions to enable collaborative project evaluation.

Prominent partners include leading Japanese banks such as MUFG and SMBC, which contribute extensive global expertise in infrastructure and data center financing.

What is a Sunrise Sector?



A “**sunrise sector**” refers to a nascent or newly emerging industry that shows **massive potential for rapid growth** and economic impact.

Characteristics of Sunrise Sectors:



High Innovation



Rapid Technological Advancements



High Initial Capital Requirements



Significant Economic Impact

They Replace:

Older, Obsolete Industries



Sunrise sectors drive the **future economy** with **growth, jobs & innovation**.



II. Present Challenges:

High Capital Intensity & Financial Risk:

Sectors such as semiconductor manufacturing and advanced battery technology necessitate substantial, concentrated initial investments. These sectors are vulnerable to swift technological changes, rendering conventional loan underwriting particularly hazardous for typical commercial banks.

Lack of Complete Domestic Ecosystems:

India presently depends significantly on imports for essential components, including lithium-ion cells and raw materials for semiconductors. Establishing comprehensive manufacturing value chains from the ground up requires "patient capital," which cannot be supported by short-term debt alone.

Skill and Knowledge Gaps in Risk Assessment:

Financing these intricate projects demands highly specialized technological and geoscientific assessments. Conventional banking systems frequently lack the specific technical knowledge necessary to appraise the long-term commercial potential of emerging technology initiatives.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Developing Innovative Financing Models:

Financial institutions must transition from a model that relies solely on deposits for asset accumulation to one that incorporates structured financing, which combines equity, viability gap funding (VGF), and patient debt.

According to recommendations from the Department of Financial Services, lenders are encouraged to mitigate their risk by distributing their exposure across two to three emerging sectors instead of focusing on a single sector.

Strengthening Ecosystem Collaboration:

CHAKRA should play a proactive role in promoting collaboration among development finance institutions, start-ups, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and state policymakers.

The establishment of joint funding consortiums, particularly with seasoned international lenders, will be essential for safely distributing the substantial credit burden.

Aligning with Green Commitments:

Financing initiatives must be closely linked to sustainability metrics to support India's objective of reaching Net Zero by 2070.

The expansion of dedicated "green lines of credit" will guarantee structured, accountable, and transparent funding pathways for climate-related megaprojects.

30. Revitalising India's Economic Backbone: New Schemes for Labour-Intensive Textiles and MSMEs

Context:

The Union Budget for 2026-27 has strategically emphasized the creation of employment opportunities and the strengthening of industrial resilience through the introduction of a thorough array of initiatives targeting the labor-intensive textile and MSME sectors. With a 25% increase in funding for textiles and a doubling of financial support for MSMEs, these measures are designed to modernize production clusters, enhance liquidity, and improve competitiveness in global export markets.

I. Key Highlights: Textile Sector Push:

Integrated Programme for the Textile Sector: The government has introduced a comprehensive five-pronged strategy aimed at strengthening the entire value chain:

National Fibre Scheme: This initiative encourages self-sufficiency in both natural fibers (such as silk, wool, and jute) and synthetic/new-age fibers, thereby decreasing reliance on imports.

Textile Expansion and Employment (TEEM) Scheme: This program is dedicated to the modernization of traditional clusters by providing financial assistance for machinery and testing facilities.

National Handloom & Handicraft Programme: This initiative consolidates existing programs to offer focused support to weavers and artisans.

Tex-Eco Initiative: This program advocates for globally competitive, environmentally friendly manufacturing practices to ensure that Indian exports meet international sustainability benchmarks.

Samarth 2.0: This initiative enhances the industry-linked skill development framework to address the talent shortage in high-tech manufacturing.

Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative:

Aimed at enhancing Khadi, handlooms, and the 'One District One Product' (ODOP) initiative.

Promotes global market connections, branding, and modernization processes for rural youth and traditional artisans.

Mega Textile Parks (Challenge Mode):

Concentrates on developing integrated infrastructure with a particular emphasis on technical textiles.

Intended to elevate India's proficiency in defense, medical, and infrastructure textile sectors.

II. Key Highlights: MSME Sector Revitalization:

₹10,000 Crore SME Growth Fund:

This fund offers essential risk capital to small enterprises with high growth potential, facilitating their development into industrial "champions." Additionally, a ₹2,000 crore enhancement to the Self-Reliant India Fund is allocated for micro-enterprises.

Liquidity and TReDS Integration:

The Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) has been mandated as the settlement platform for all purchases made by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) from Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

In a groundbreaking initiative, receivables from TReDS will be transformed into asset-backed securities, thereby establishing a secondary market that will significantly enhance liquidity.

Infrastructure & Cluster Modernization:

A detailed initiative has been unveiled to revitalize 200 legacy industrial clusters, aimed at mitigating regional stagnation.

CPSEs will set up advanced Automated Service Bureaus at two key locations to offer MSMEs access to cost-effective precision manufacturing tools.



III. Present Challenges:

Global Supply Chain and Tariff Challenges:

Geopolitical conflicts, fluctuating international shipping expenses, and weakened global demand have significantly pressured the profit margins of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The sector is also confronted with formidable tariff obstacles and fierce cost competition from regional competitors such as Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Technological Obsolescence and ESG Compliance:

Numerous legacy industrial clusters function with antiquated machinery, which greatly hampers their productivity.

The increasing necessity for stringent Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance in Western markets imposes a substantial financial strain on small, traditional enterprises.

Working Capital Shortages:

In spite of earlier financial support measures, slow payment processes continue to be a fundamental and debilitating obstacle for small businesses.

Conventional banking systems frequently categorize MSMEs as high-risk, compelling them to depend on informal credit sources with exorbitant interest rates.

IV. Way Forward Measures:

Ensuring Effective Implementation of TReDS:

It is crucial for Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and large corporations to adhere strictly to the TReDS platform, along with the imposition of penalties for any delays in invoice settlements.

The prompt integration of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) with TReDS is necessary to facilitate information sharing with financiers and to promote expedited financing.

Accelerating Tech Transfer & Green Manufacturing:

Government and industry organizations should utilize the "Tex-Eco Initiative" to expedite subsidies for solar-powered looms and systems that ensure zero-liquid discharge processing.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) should be strongly encouraged to take advantage of the newly established Automated Service Bureaus, which provide cost-effective, high-precision prototyping, thereby enabling them to ascend the value chain.

Maximizing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):

The industry must proactively exploit the recently established FTAs, such as the India-EFTA and India-Oman CEPA, to overcome tariff disadvantages.

Export promotion councils ought to provide comprehensive support to small artisans and rural weavers, assisting them in navigating the intricate compliance and quality standards required in these emerging international markets.

31. Union Budget 2026-27 Analysis: A Credible Exercise in Fiscal Prudence Over Adventurism

Context:

Amidst considerable geopolitical fragmentation, the Union Budget for 2026–27 has ignited a discussion regarding its potential as a structural turning point versus simple policy adjustments. Avoiding populist "Big Bang" declarations, the government has deliberately opted for a diverse, multipronged strategy that emphasizes long-term capital investment, manufacturing capabilities, and macroeconomic stability.

I. The Core Debate: Turning Point or Tinkering?

The "Tinkering" Perspective:

Critics contend that the budget is devoid of comprehensive, structural reforms—especially in relation to the relaxation of direct tax rates for both individuals and corporations.

The lack of substantial subsidies aimed at boosting consumption leads some to perceive it as a "status quo" budget, which merely adjusts existing systems instead of fundamentally transforming them.

The "Turning Point" Reality:

In contrast, the budget reorients the economic focus entirely towards the development of long-term capabilities.

By significantly investing in deep technology, infrastructure, and setting an ambitious ₹12.2 lakh crore Capital Expenditure (Capex) target, it effectively shifts India from a reactive, consumption-driven model to a strategy centered on investment and structural growth.

II. Prudence Over Adventurism: The Fiscal Math

Upholding Fiscal Discipline:

The government has successfully resisted the allure of "fiscal adventurism" (which refers to imprudent spending or populist giveaways prior to state elections), instead focusing on the objective of reducing the fiscal deficit to an anticipated 4.3% of GDP by the fiscal year 2026-27.

This credible path towards consolidation effectively averts the crowding out of private investment and ensures that government borrowing costs remain manageable.

Prudent Revenue Forecasts:

Tax revenue forecasts are grounded in realism, with an expected contraction of 13.5% in Gross GST revenue, taking into account the cessation of the Compensation Cess and the rate adjustments scheduled for September 2025.

III. Multipronged Measures Over "Big Bang" Reforms:

Scattershot Sectoral Targeting: Rather than implementing a sweeping policy overhaul, the budget adopts a focused strategy across seven vital manufacturing sectors: biopharma (₹10,000 crore allocated for the SHAKTI scheme), semiconductors (India Semiconductor Mission 2.0), electronics, rare earths, chemicals, capital goods, and textiles.

Geopolitical De-risking:

The establishment of dedicated rare earth corridors in mineral-abundant states (Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu) directly responds to the necessity of reducing critical mineral reliance on China.

The reduction of basic customs duties on intermediate goods is intended to rectify inverted duty structures and enhance export competitiveness, thereby countering the aggressive tariffs imposed by the U.S. and Europe.

Decoding Budget Terminologies

Big Bang Reforms

Sudden, sweeping, large-scale changes to rapidly overhaul the economy (e.g, 1991 Liberalization, GST)



Fiscal Prudence

Disciplined government spending to keep debt sustainable.



Fiscal Adventurism

High-risk, reckless spending leading to inflation & instability.



Capex (Capital Expenditure)

Investment in infrastructure like roads, railways, hospitals.



IV. Present Challenges:

Manufacturing Stagnation: In spite of earlier PLI initiatives, the overall contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP and employment continues to be lackluster, with a significant reliance on China for essential sub-assemblies remaining prevalent.

Private Investment Lag: Although the government is undertaking substantial efforts with a ₹12.2 lakh crore capital expenditure, private sector fixed investments in advanced and heavy industries have not increased at a comparable rate due to elevated capital costs and uncertainties in global trade.

Job Creation vs. Skilling: Even though more than ₹95,000 crore has been designated for rural employment programs, structural unemployment continues to be an issue. The disparity between the skills needed for emerging sectors (such as semiconductors and deep-tech) and the existing labor force constitutes a significant obstacle.

V. Way Forward Measures:

Implementation and State Synergy:

The effectiveness of this capital expenditure-intensive budget is wholly dependent on the execution capabilities of state governments.

The Centre is required to institutionalize expedited approvals and fund disbursements to guarantee that substantial infrastructure projects do not encounter cost overruns.

Strengthening the "Champion MSMEs":

The government must guarantee that the newly established MSME support frameworks, which include equity and liquidity infusions, are swiftly delivered to grassroots enterprises to facilitate their integration into global value chains.

Crowding-In Private Capital:

In order to shift from public-led to private-led growth, India must proactively stabilize its regulatory frameworks, ensuring predictability in taxation

and utilizing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to instill confidence in private investors to commit substantial resources.

32. The Fiscal Glide Path: Centre Targets a 4.3% Deficit for FY27 Amidst Macroeconomic Realignment

Context:

The Union Budget for the fiscal year 2026-27 has established a disciplined fiscal deficit goal of 4.3% of GDP, thereby maintaining its consistent path of macroeconomic consolidation. Supported by a substantial capital expenditure (capex) initiative amounting to ₹12.2 lakh crore, the government's approach intentionally emphasizes the creation of long-term assets rather than focusing on short-term consumption.

I. Key Highlights:

Steady Consolidation Trajectory:

The fiscal deficit has been systematically reduced from 4.4% (Revised Estimates for FY26) to 4.3% for FY27.

This conveys a significant message to international credit rating agencies and bond markets about India's dedication to fiscal responsibility.

Capex as the Growth Engine:

Capital expenditure has experienced a 7.7% rise, elevating public investment to ₹12.2 lakh crore (approximately 4.4% of GDP).

The borrowing is intentionally directed towards high-multiplier infrastructure projects instead of revenue expenditure.

A New Fiscal Anchor (Debt-to-GDP):

The government is progressively transitioning its primary fiscal anchor from strict annual deficit targets to a focus on medium-term debt sustainability.

The explicit objective is to decrease the Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio from the current 55.6% to 50(±1)% by the fiscal year 2030-31.

Base Year Revisions & Nominal Growth:

The Ministry of Statistics has recently launched a new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base year, which has mathematically lowered nominal GDP estimates.

As a result, sustaining a 4.3% ratio will necessitate strong nominal economic growth to ensure the denominator remains expanded.

Decoding Fiscal Terminologies

Fiscal Deficit

The total shortfall in a government's income compared to its spending.

The total borrowing requirements of the government for the year.



Primary Deficit

Fiscal Deficit minus Interest Payments on previous borrowings.

(Budgeted at 0.7% of GDP for FY27)

Shows the *actual* borrowing needed to fund current expenses.

Revenue Deficit

Excess of Revenue Expenditure (Daily Consumption/Salaries/Subsidies) over Revenue Receipts.

Targeted at 1.5%.

Lower number indicates not borrowing just to run daily operations.



Fiscal Multiplier

Ratio of change in National Income to change in Government Spending.

Capital Expenditure (Building Highways) has a much higher multiplier effect than Revenue Expenditure (Subsidies).



II. Present Challenges:

The "Denominator" Effect of GDP Revision:

Due to the reduction in the overall nominal GDP size resulting from the new GDP base year, reaching the target ratio of 4.3% becomes increasingly challenging from a mathematical perspective.

Achieving this may necessitate a nominal growth rate of 13-14%, which is considerably above the conservative 10% estimate presented in the Budget.

High Structural Interest Burden:

Interest payments on the accumulated historical debt account for approximately 26% of total expenditures and nearly 40% of all revenue receipts.

This mandatory spending significantly constrains the "fiscal space" available for sectors such as health, education, and social protection.

Global Uncertainties and Revenue Dips:

Expected declines in GST receipts following the rate rationalizations in September 2025 present a short-term challenge for revenue generation.

Geopolitical tensions in West Asia may lead to increased crude oil prices, complicating the government's calculations regarding fertilizer and fuel subsidies.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Emphasizing the 'Quality' of Deficit:

Provided that the funds acquired through borrowing are allocated towards the creation of productive assets that generate future income, the deficit can be deemed sustainable.

The Centre must guarantee the complete execution of the ₹12.2 lakh crore capital expenditure target without succumbing to bureaucratic hindrances.

Encouraging Private Investment:

The government is unable to bear the infrastructure burden indefinitely.

It is essential for public capital expenditure to effectively 'crowd in' (attract) investments from the private sector to ensure sustained long-term GDP growth.

Fostering Fiscal Discipline at the State Level:

The Centre should leverage the recommendations put forth by the 16th Finance Commission to motivate states to align with the overarching national capital expenditure vision.

States should be discouraged from misallocating their borrowed resources towards populist and non-productive revenue expenditures.

Establishing an Independent Fiscal Council:

As previously suggested by the N.K. Singh Committee on the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM), the creation of an independent Fiscal Council would enhance transparency and provide independent oversight regarding India's debt consolidation trajectory.

33. Urban Governance 2.0: 16th Finance Commission Triples Grants for Urban Local Bodies

Context:

The 16th Finance Commission (2026-31), led by Dr. Arvind Panagariya, has proposed a groundbreaking grant of ₹3.56 lakh crore for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Presented in Parliament in February 2026, this substantial increase of 230% in funding raises the urban portion of local grants to 45%, indicating a significant policy shift aimed at addressing India's swift urbanization.

I. Key Highlights:

Unprecedented Fiscal Allocation:

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are set to receive ₹3,56,257 crore over a span of five years, significantly surpassing the ₹1.55 lakh crore allocation from the 15th Finance Commission.

The proportion of urban funding within total local body grants has consistently increased: 26% during the 13th Finance Commission, 36% in the 15th Finance Commission, and now a substantial 45% in the 16th Finance Commission.

Four-Tier Grant Structure: The allocated funds are systematically categorized to achieve a balance between stability and reform:

Basic Grants (80%): ₹2.32 lakh crore is designated to guarantee reliable cash flows for essential civic services.

Performance Grants (20%): ₹58,032 crore is strictly tied to the implementation of institutional and financial reforms.

Special Infrastructure Component: ₹56,100 crore is allocated specifically for comprehensive wastewater management in urban growth centers.

Urbanisation Premium: A new ₹10,000 crore fund is introduced to encourage states to formalize rapidly expanding peri-urban regions.

Expenditure Caps on Untied Funds:

In a significant developmental change, the Commission has mandated that no more than 20% of untied grants may be allocated to road expenditures.

This requirement compels ULBs to redirect their spending priorities towards sectors that have historically received less attention, such as health, water management, and climate resilience.

Push for Digital Property Taxation:

The Commission places a strong emphasis on enhancing Own Source Revenue (OSR).

It requires the implementation of unique property identification numbers and the integration of property databases with utility networks (including water, electricity, and trade licenses) to facilitate automated verification and reduce tax evasion.

Decoding FC Terminologies



Finance Commission (Article 280)

Constitutional body constituted every five years to recommend the distribution of net tax proceeds between the Centre and States.



16th FC retained the states' vertical share at **41%**

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)



- Constitutionalized via the 74th Amendment Act (1992)
- Third tier of governance:
 - Municipal Corporations
 - Municipal Councils
 - Nagar Panchayats

Untied vs. Tied Grants

Untied Grants



- Can be used for any local priority (Except salaries & establishment costs)

Tied Grants



- Strictly ring-fenced for specific national priorities:
 - Solid Waste Management
 - Drinking Water Supply

II. Present Challenges:

Capacity Constraints in Local Governance:

Numerous municipalities are deficient in technical expertise, full-time administrative personnel, and planning capabilities necessary to effectively absorb and utilize substantial funds.

In the absence of a well-structured project pipeline, the likelihood of fund underutilization or misallocation remains significantly elevated.

Uneven Inter-State Allocations:

Due to the formulaic nature of grants, which heavily emphasizes population and Own Source Revenue (OSR), allocations exhibit considerable variability, thereby raising concerns regarding equity.

For example, Kerala experiences an increase of over 400% in urban grants, whereas less urbanized states such as Bihar encounter a reduction of 8%.

The "Census Town" Dilemma:

Grants are legally confined to statutory Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Numerous "Census Towns" (areas that display distinct urban characteristics yet remain governed by rural Panchayats) are completely excluded from this urban financial boon.

Over-Reliance on State Devolution:

Historically, cities have faced challenges due to frequent delays in State Finance Commissions (SFCs).

State governments often exhibit reluctance in devolving promised funds, functions, or taxation authority to autonomous city administrations.

The 16th Finance Commission (2026–31): Core Recommendations Unpacked

Chaired by Dr. Arvind Panagariya, the 16th Finance Commission report was tabled in Parliament in February 2026.

41% Vertical Devolution Maintained
41% share of central taxes retained for states.

GDP 10% New Horizontal Formula
10% 'Contribution to GDP' criterion introduced.

Adjusted Devolution Weights
Income Distance **42.5%**, Area **10%**

Abolition of Revenue Deficit Grants
RD grants & special grants abolished.

Total Grants-in-Aid
₹9.47 Lakh Crore overall grants package.

Massive Local Body Funding
₹8 Lakh Crore for Panchayats & Urban Local Bodies.

Disaster Management Corpus
₹2.04 Lakh Crore for Disaster Relief Funds.

Deficit Reduction Targets
Fiscal Deficit:
3.5% of GDP by Centre,
3% of GSDP by States.

Mandatory State Reforms
Privatize DISCOMs,
End Off-budget Borrowings,
Shut Down Loss-Making SPSEs.



- Privatize DISCOMs, End Off-budget Borrowings,
- Shut Down Loss-Making SPSEs.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Revitalizing State Finance Commissions (SFCs):

States are required to strengthen SFCs, ensuring they are effective, timely, and obligatory.

They must comply with the 16th Finance Commission's mandate to allocate at least 20% of their own Finance Commission grants as devolution to local governments, thereby guaranteeing fiscal sustainability.

Building Institutional Capacity:

It is crucial to establish a dedicated 'Learning Management System' for municipal personnel.

State governments must promptly implement technical cells to assist smaller Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in identifying, tendering, and managing high-quality infrastructure initiatives.

Formalizing Peri-Urban Areas:

In order to access the new "Urbanization Premium," states need to develop clear, rule-based policies governing the transition from rural to urban.

This approach will integrate organically expanding urban peripheries and Census Towns into formal municipal governance and structured development frameworks.

Maximizing Own Source Revenue (OSR):

ULBs must break free from political stagnation and vigorously reform property tax systems.

A complete shift to GIS-based property mapping and automated, dynamic tax collection represents the only viable route to achieving long-term fiscal autonomy for Indian cities.

34. The Green Transition: India's Next Industrial Shift from Molecules to Electrons

Context:

The global landscape of industrial competitiveness is swiftly transitioning from the direct use of fossil fuels (molecules) to an increased dependence on clean electricity supplied through the grid (electrons). In order to prevent significant international trade penalties and to ensure a sustainable manufacturing future, India must urgently expedite its industrial electrification efforts, which entails not only enhancing renewable generation capacity but also fundamentally transforming energy consumption at the factory level.

I. Key Highlights:

The Global Electrification Race:

Leading economies such as China, the United States, and the European Union have reached nearly one-third electrification within their industrial sectors.

In contrast, India is currently behind, with its overall industrial electricity consumption at approximately 25%, and green electricity constituting merely 7–8% of the total demand.

Efficiency over Combustion:

Electric motors are capable of converting over 90% of the energy they receive into productive work, significantly surpassing the performance of internal combustion engines, which function at an efficiency of less than 35%.

Each incremental rise in electrification results in a disproportionately greater reduction in fuel consumption, thereby lowering both input costs and emissions concurrently.

Sectoral Shifts in Manufacturing:

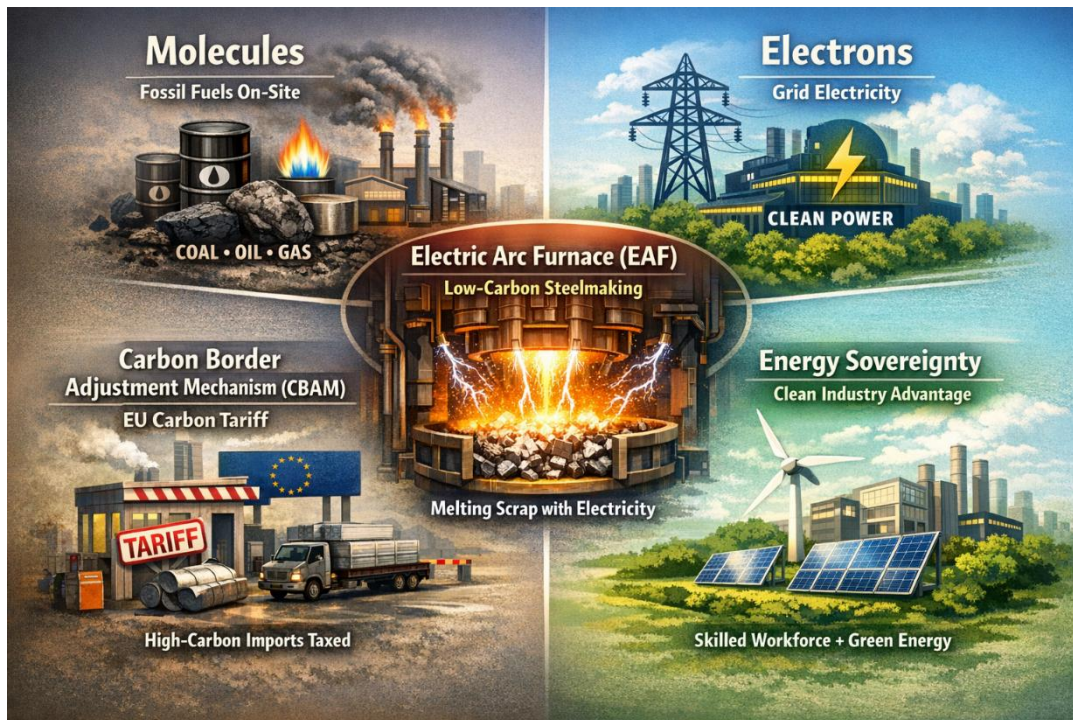
The global steel sector is transitioning towards electric processing, driven by strong incentives from scrap recycling systems and favorable tariffs.

Similarly, the cement industry is implementing electrified kilns and extensive waste-heat recovery systems to minimize unavoidable emissions from their processes.

The Trade-Climate Nexus:

The competitiveness of exports is increasingly linked to carbon intensity, as international buyers seek low-carbon supply chains.

Incorporating "green electrons" into production processes is essential for obtaining global contracts and avoiding newly imposed international carbon taxes.



II. Present Challenges:

Structural Constraints & Legacy Assets:

Indian industries exhibit a profound legacy reliance on on-site fuel combustion for thermal heating.

Sunk investments in conventional coal boilers and blast furnaces render the transition to electric systems, which is capital-intensive, commercially challenging.

Grid Reliability and Storage Deficits:

Continuous-process industries, such as chemical refining, necessitate stable, high-quality, and uninterrupted power supply.

Inconsistent power quality from DISCOMs, coupled with insufficient grid-scale energy storage, hampers a complete transition to electric systems.

Policy Asymmetry:

Present energy policies disproportionately emphasize the expansion of renewable generation, such as large-scale solar parks.

There is a lack of adequate policy attention and financial backing for the electrification of end-use industries and the essential wiring enhancements within manufacturing facilities.

The MSME Bottleneck:

A significant number of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are heavily dependent on inexpensive coal boilers and backup diesel generators.

They are deficient in the technical know-how and affordable capital necessary to reconfigure their operations for electricity.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Initiate a National Industrial Electrification Mission:

The government should create a specialized mission aimed at subsidizing the initial capital expenses associated with industrial electrification.

This initiative ought to encompass explicit directives for the development of "electrification-ready" industrial parks that are furnished with high-capacity grid connections.

Enhance EAF and Scrap Ecosystems:

India needs to formalize and vigorously promote its domestic steel scrap recycling and trading frameworks.

A strong scrap supply chain is essential for the swift increase of Electric Arc Furnaces' contribution to domestic steel manufacturing.

Targeted Financial Assistance for MSMEs:

The administration should offer concessional financing and technical support specifically designed for smaller businesses.

Facilitating "pooled renewable procurement" can enable MSME clusters to obtain green energy at competitive wholesale prices.

Expedite Digital Integration:

Sophisticated digital controls and intelligent energy management systems should be implemented in emerging industrial clusters.

This approach facilitates demand-response strategies, minimizes energy waste, and delivers verifiable, auditable carbon data to meet the requirements of international purchasers.

35. Status Quo on Rates: RBI Holds Repo at 5.25% Amidst a 2.1% Inflation

Outlook

Context:

In the initial Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of the year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reached a unanimous decision to maintain the repo rate at 5.25% in February 2026. This decision was influenced by an inflation trajectory that was softer than anticipated and robust domestic growth, leading the central bank to uphold its 'neutral' policy stance, indicating a sustained pause on interest rates.

I. Key Highlights:

Unchanged Policy Rates:

The benchmark repo rate is maintained at 5.25%, having paused following a cumulative easing cycle of 125 basis points (bps) that took place throughout 2025.

As a result, the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) is held steady at 5.00%, while the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) remains at 5.50%.

Benign Inflation Outlook:

The CPI inflation projection for FY26 (2025-26) has been adjusted downward to a remarkably low 2.1%.

Nevertheless, the RBI anticipates a minor increase to 3.2% in Q4 FY26 due to adverse base effects, before stabilizing around 4% in the early part of FY27.

Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel, continues to exhibit historical stability at approximately 2.6%, aside from fluctuations in precious metal prices.

Upgraded Growth Projections:

The RBI has elevated its real GDP growth forecast for FY26 to 7.4%, supported by robust private consumption, government capital expenditure, and fixed investments.





Growth estimates for early FY27 have also been revised upward, with projections of a solid 6.9% in Q1 and 7.0% in Q2.

Impending Base Year Revisions:

The RBI has pointed out the forthcoming transition in the base year for CPI, IIP, and GDP metrics from 2011-12 to 2024.

This statistical adjustment may introduce a 20-40 bps upward bias to future inflation readings, prompting the MPC to adopt a cautious "wait-and-watch" strategy.

Decoding Monetary Terminologies

<h3>Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)</h3>  <p>A six-member statutory body constituted under the RBI Act, 1934, tasked with determining the policy rate required to achieve the inflation target (4% +/- 2%).</p>	<h3>Repo Rate</h3>  <p>The fixed interest rate at which the RBI provides overnight liquidity to banks against the collateral of government and other approved securities.</p>
<h3>Neutral Stance</h3>  <p>Indicates that the central bank has the flexibility to either increase or decrease interest rates depending on incoming macroeconomic data, without being committed to a specific direction.</p>	<h3>Base Effect</h3>  <p>The distortion in monthly inflation figures caused by abnormally high or low prices in the corresponding month of the previous year.</p>

II. Present Challenges:

Global Macroeconomic Challenges:

Increasing geopolitical tensions, evolving global trade dynamics, and stringent trade protectionism present considerable external threats to India's export expansion.

Volatile global crude oil prices continue to be a significant risk factor, with the potential to rapidly introduce inflationary pressures into the domestic economy.

Weather and Supply Chain Challenges:

In spite of a robust rabi sowing season, erratic weather patterns and climate change-related anomalies can lead to abrupt increases in the prices of perishable food items.

Historically, food inflation has exhibited considerable volatility, frequently affecting the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) calculations and influencing household expectations.

Liquidity Oversight:

Although the systemic liquidity is presently in a favorable surplus (approximately ₹2 lakh crore), overseeing this without instigating asset price inflation is a delicate balancing act for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The central bank must guarantee that the earlier 125 basis points rate reductions are completely reflected in the lending rates offered to end consumers by commercial banks.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Data-Dependent Policy Normalization:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) must maintain a high level of vigilance and be guided by data, particularly as the new base year of 2024 for macroeconomic indicators is officially implemented.

Future considerations for rate cuts should only be made when the headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation consistently aligns with the 4% target on a durable basis, free from statistical anomalies.

Strengthening Systemic Liquidity Tools:

The central bank should persist in the active deployment of flexible, two-way liquidity management instruments such as Variable Rate Repo (VRR) and Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auctions.

This adjustment will avert abrupt liquidity shortages and guarantee smooth monetary policy transmission throughout the banking sector.

Leveraging Macro-Stability for Growth:

In response to global trade fragmentation, the government should capitalize on the RBI's stable macroeconomic framework to proactively negotiate highly advantageous Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

State governments ought to take advantage of this lower interest rate environment to sustainably fund their local infrastructure initiatives without exceeding fiscal deficit limits.

36. The Mineable Self: How Human Identity is the Digital Economy's Ultimate Commodity

Context:

In the current landscape of digital capitalism, the latest extractable resource is not merely physical data or labor; it is the "human self." Fueled by artificial intelligence and platform algorithms, our identities, profound emotions, and personal stories are perpetually extracted, commodified, and monetized as endlessly renewable assets.

I. Key Highlights:

From Physical Labor to Identity Extraction:

Classical industrial capitalism primarily generated surplus value through physical human labor and material resources.

In contemporary society, the economic focus has significantly transitioned towards our social existence—encompassing friendships, preferences, emotional expressions, and daily habits.

The Global 'Story' Economy:

Personal narratives, everyday challenges, and cultural folklore are now exchanged globally as highly valuable commodities.

Streaming platforms (OTT) flourish in this context by democratizing visibility while also commodifying relatable, everyday human experiences.

AI's Amplification of Extraction:

Generative AI accelerates the commodification of human interiority by processing vast amounts of human-generated text, voice, and style.

By effectively imitating human emotions and providing digital companionship, AI obscures the distinction between genuine personhood and fabricated corporate identities.

The Illusion of Infinite Renewability:

In contrast to rare earth elements or fossil fuels, the "mineable self" is perceived as an endlessly renewable resource.

Digital infrastructures facilitate the continuous recording and interpretation of human life, transforming one's personality into a perpetual, productive economic asset.



II. Present Challenges:

Uncompensated Digital Labour:

Ordinary internet users dedicate considerable time to content creation and inadvertently assist in training algorithms, all without receiving ownership or financial reward.

Professional creators are confronted with the grave danger of having their distinctive styles and efforts appropriated by AI systems without just compensation.

Erosion of Autonomy and Privacy:

Unrestricted digital surveillance and algorithmic profiling swiftly undermine intimacy, privacy, and social trust.

As everyday life becomes fully observable and commercially exploitable, individuals experience a profound loss of control over their own digital identities.

Democratic and Social Strain:

The unregulated commodification of identity significantly distorts public discourse and heightens emotional manipulation.

This undermines democratic discussion by favoring highly profitable, emotionally charged narratives over factual information that serves the public interest.

Weak Regulatory Accountability:

Existing methods of digital identity extraction function under completely opaque governance and exceedingly weak user consent frameworks. This structure perpetuates historical power imbalances, echoing the exploitative characteristics of resource extraction from the industrial era.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Redefining and Compensating Digital Labour:

Future policy frameworks, such as the Digital India Act, must legally acknowledge and delineate affective and digital labor.

Tech monopolies are required to implement transparent systems that ensure fair compensation and strong intellectual property protections for creators.

Establishing Ethical AI Norms:

There is an urgent need for clear and enforceable global standards regarding the content that can be utilized to train AI systems.

AI developers must be subjected to strict transparency requirements that compel them to reveal the origins of their training data, thereby preventing unauthorized identity exploitation.

Building Institutional Safeguards:

Regulators must fundamentally reassess the notion of "digital consent," moving past deceptive "Terms & Conditions" check-boxes.

Governments are obligated to create and enforce rigorous data ownership laws that provide citizens with complete control over their behavioral and emotional data.

Protecting Democratic Deliberation:

Independent regulatory agencies must consistently audit social media platforms to ensure that their algorithms do not favor divisive narratives solely for profit.

It is essential to guarantee algorithmic transparency to prevent rapid technological advancements from eroding human agency and democratic decision-making.

37. Measuring a Slice of Life: MoSPI Overhauls CPI Base Year to 2024

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has officially updated the base year of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from 2012 to 2024. This significant revision, prompted by the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) for 2023-24, modernizes the consumption basket to better represent the current digital and post-pandemic economic landscape of India.

Decoding CPI Terminologies

Consumer Price Index (CPI)



Measures the average change over time in the retail prices of a fixed basket of goods & services.

Primary anchor for the RBI's monetary policy.

Base Year

"Normal" reference year (2024, previously 2012) set at index value of 100.

Benchmark for calculating inflation.



Engel's Law

As income rises, spending on food decreases while spending on services & luxury items increases.



Laspeyres Index Formula

$$CPI = \frac{\sum P_1 \times Q_0}{\sum P_0 \times Q_0}$$

Formula used by MoSPI to calculate CPI using fixed basket from base year.



I. Key Highlights:

Expansion of the Consumption Basket:

The total count of monitored items has risen from 299 to 358, which includes 308 goods and 50 services.

Outdated items such as VCRs, DVD players, tape recorders, and audio cassettes have been entirely eliminated.

Contemporary expenses like OTT (streaming) subscriptions, rural housing rent, pen drives, babysitting services, and fitness equipment have been incorporated.

Re-balancing of Expenditure Weights:

The proportion allocated to 'Food and Beverages' has been markedly decreased from 45.86% to 36.75%.

In contrast, the proportions for housing, health, transport, and digital communication have experienced a corresponding increase, reflecting higher incomes and evolving lifestyle preferences.

Methodological Upgrades:

The index now categorizes items into 12 broad groups, an increase from the previous 6, in accordance with the international COICOP 2018 standards (Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose).

Data collection has been enhanced through computer-assisted price tracking and direct online price capture for services such as airfares and telecommunications.

Immediate Inflation Impact:

The newly computed retail inflation for January 2026 was recorded at a well-controlled 2.75% (provisional).

This decline is primarily due to the diminished weight of the historically volatile food category.

II. Present Challenges:

Data Collection in the Informal Economy:

In spite of the ongoing efforts to enhance digital capabilities, obtaining precise price information from remote rural markets and informal, unregulated vendors continues to pose significant logistical challenges.

Variations in unregulated local street markets frequently evade the conventional online monitoring systems.

The "Lived Reality" of the Poor:

Even though the national food weightage has diminished, food remains the predominant component of expenditure for the lowest economic deciles. As a result, the headline inflation figure may not accurately reflect the genuine financial hardships experienced by lower-income households during agricultural supply disruptions.

Service Sector Inflation Risks:

With an increased emphasis on health, education, and digital services, abrupt corporate price increases (such as telecom tariff hikes or escalating hospital fees) will disproportionately elevate the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Policy Transmission Lags:

The shift to a new base year introduces a temporary statistical void, complicating historical year-on-year comparisons in the short term. This necessitates that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) exercise considerable caution regarding its immediate interest rate modifications until a discernible trend is established under the new series.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Institutionalizing Regular Revisions:

In accordance with the recommendations from the OECD and World Bank, it is imperative for the government to institutionalize base year revisions every five years instead of postponing them for over a decade.

This proactive measure will help avert structural "representation gaps" that could skew essential macroeconomic policymaking in the future.

Enhancing Administrative Data Integration:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) should further enhance the integration of real-time administrative data (such as Public Distribution System prices, direct benefit transfers, and regulated utility tariffs) into the Consumer Price Index (CPI) computation.

This approach will diminish dependence on manual field surveys, reduce the reporting time lag, and lessen the potential for human error.

Expanding Inflation Management Strategies:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the central government must embrace a more sophisticated strategy for inflation targeting, extending their focus beyond merely agricultural supply chains and monsoon patterns.

It is now equally vital to tackle structural constraints in urban housing, healthcare infrastructure, and the costs associated with private education to effectively manage the headline CPI.

Improving State-Level Data Utilization:

States should actively utilize the newly available, highly detailed data (accessible across 12 divisions) to customize their localized welfare initiatives.

This will ensure that revisions to Dearness Allowance (DA) and minimum wages genuinely safeguard the purchasing power of the average citizen in accordance with specific regional conditions.

38. Expanding the Horizons: India's Taxpayer Base More Than Doubles in a Decade

Context:

In a significant sign of economic formalization, the number of direct taxpayers in India has more than doubled in the past ten years, increasing from 5.26 crore in 2013-14 to over 12.13 crore in 2024-25. This structural growth underscores enhanced tax compliance, propelled by technology-driven administrative reforms and the consistent rise of the Indian middle class.

I. Key Highlights:

Unprecedented Growth in Filings:

The volume of Income Tax Returns (ITRs) submitted has experienced a significant increase, indicating a deeper engagement in formal economic activities rather than a fleeting spike in compliance.

This represents a pivotal transition from a limited, elite tax base to a more extensive involvement of citizens in the formal economy.

Surge in Direct Tax Revenue:

Gross Direct Tax Collections have exhibited robust growth, more than doubling over the past five years to approximately ₹27 lakh crore by FY 2024-25.

The proportion of direct taxes within the overall tax revenue framework has steadily risen, indicating a more robust and progressive taxation system.

Technology-Driven Compliance:

The Income Tax Department (ITD) has utilized 'Project Insight' to establish a comprehensive data repository, thereby creating a holistic financial profile of taxpayers.

Additionally, the government has effectively implemented the 'NUDGE' (Non-Intrusive Usage of Data to Guide and Enable) strategy to subtly shape taxpayer behavior through data-informed alerts instead of coercive measures.

Simplification and Ease of Compliance:

Administrative reforms, including faceless assessments and the introduction of the Annual Information Statement (AIS), have significantly minimized physical interactions and human errors.

The streamlined new tax framework and dispute resolution initiatives (such as Vivad se Vishwas) have further encouraged voluntary compliance.

II. Present Challenges:

Skewed Tax Contribution:

In spite of the rapidly growing tax base, a significantly disproportionate share of total income tax revenue is still derived from a very small segment of high-income earners.

The extensive agricultural sector, which employs almost half of the labor force, remains completely excluded from the income tax framework, thereby imposing a strict limit on the expansion of the tax base.

The Salaried Class Burden:

The salaried middle class continues to shoulder a comparatively greater load of direct taxes due to TDS (Tax Deducted at Source), in contrast to informal business proprietors.


Monitoring and taxing unreported income in cash-dominant sectors and the informal gig economy presents an ongoing administrative hurdle.

Evasion and Litigation Backlogs:

Although faceless assessments have modernized the preliminary processes, significant delays in tax tribunals and appellate bodies continue to obstruct considerable government revenue.


Complex tax evasion strategies involving shell companies, cryptocurrency dealings, and offshore tax havens necessitate ongoing regulatory adaptation.

TAX CONCEPTS EXPLAINED




Tax Base

The total amount of assets, income, or economic activity that a government can legally tax.
A **wider tax base** ensures that the national tax burden is distributed **equitably** across a larger population.





Tax Buoyancy

An indicator measuring the **efficiency and responsiveness** of revenue mobilization.
A tax is "**buoyant**" if tax revenues **increase more than proportionately** with a rise in GDP.



Direct vs. Indirect Taxes

Direct Taxes	Indirect Taxes
(Income, Corporate Tax)	(GST, Consumption Tax)
 Progressive – burden increases with income	 Regressive – affects poor & rich equally

III. Way Forward Measures:

Utilizing AI and Big Data Integration:

The tax authority should enhance the application of Artificial Intelligence to cross-reference information between the direct tax portal and the GST network.

This approach will facilitate the seamless monitoring of high-value, undeclared business transactions while not imposing additional compliance burdens on law-abiding taxpayers.

Streamlining the Capital Gains Framework:

The government ought to consider simplifying the intricate structure of capital gains taxes across various asset categories (equity, real estate, gold).

A more straightforward, unified framework will motivate a greater number of retail investors to transparently report their market earnings.

Enhancing Financial Literacy and Formalization:

The continuous development of digital public infrastructure (such as UPI) in remote rural regions should be utilized to formally integrate micro-enterprises into the banking system.

Focused financial literacy initiatives can gradually shift these informal businesses into the formal, tax-compliant economy.

39. Parliamentary Panel Pulls Up Govt for 'Lackadaisical' Implementation of ₹4,455-Crore SANKALP Scheme

Context:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has issued a strong critique of the Union Government regarding the sluggish and inadequately strategized execution of the SANKALP skill development initiative. Drawing from a scathing report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the parliamentary committee highlighted significant underutilization of funds and the lack of a centralized monitoring system, which raises substantial concerns about the effectiveness of India's skill development framework.

I. Key Highlights:

Severe Fund Underutilization:

A recent audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has disclosed that merely 44% of the total budgeted allocation for SANKALP was disbursed from 2017-18 through October 2023.

This highlights ongoing challenges in financial planning and the capacity for fund absorption at the implementation level.

Unspent World Bank Assistance:

From the initial tranche of the World Bank loan amounting to \$250 million, the bank allocated ₹1,606.15 crore.

Nevertheless, as of December 2023, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) managed to utilize only ₹850.71 crore, resulting in a significant portion of external funding remaining unutilized.

"Lackadaisical" Execution & Non-Preparedness:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), led by K.C. Venugopal, highlighted the lack of adequate due diligence and institutional "non-preparedness" by the MSDE prior to the commencement of the loan period.

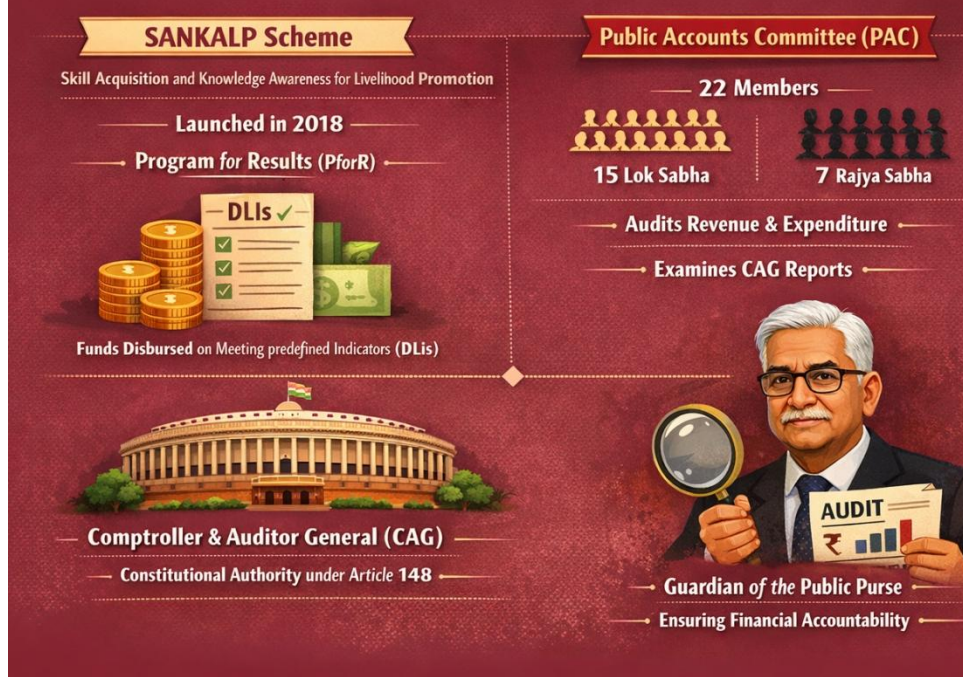
The slow execution across various components has considerably weakened the scheme's intended impact on marginalized communities.

Missing School-Level Integration:

Members of Parliament voiced significant concerns regarding the absence of a definitive strategy for incorporating vocational skilling into school curricula.

This directly jeopardizes the long-term employability objectives outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

SANKALP Scheme & Public Accounts Committee (PAC)



II. Present Challenges:

Weak Institutional Capacity at District Level:

The inability to effectively absorb and utilize available external funding underscores a significant deficiency in both administrative and technical capabilities within District Skill Committees (DSCs) and State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs).

Fragmented Monitoring Frameworks:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) explicitly raised concerns regarding the lack of a robust, centralized monitoring system.

In the absence of a cohesive dashboard to monitor progress across various states, it becomes exceedingly difficult to pinpoint real-time physical implementation challenges.

Poor Industry Linkage and Demand Mapping:

Although the primary aim of the scheme is to improve alignment with industry needs, the challenge of converting short-term skill training into genuine, demand-driven employment remains substantial.

The involvement of the private sector in curriculum development and on-the-job training continues to fall significantly short of the necessary levels.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Establishing a Centralized Digital Dashboard:

The MSDE is required to promptly implement a real-time, integrated digital monitoring system to effectively track the flow of funds and physical targets down to the Gram Panchayat level.

This initiative will promote transparency and ensure that local implementing agencies are held accountable for any delays.

Focusing on Institutional Readiness:

Future disbursements of external loans should only be initiated following a comprehensive audit of institutional readiness.

The government must guarantee that implementing agencies possess the requisite administrative personnel and infrastructure prior to the start of the project period.

Expediting NEP 2020 Integration:

A detailed, time-sensitive action plan must be developed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Incorporating vocational exposure at an early stage in the educational system (beginning from upper primary levels) is crucial to mitigate future dropout rates and cultivate a workforce that is genuinely prepared for the future.

40. Scaling Global Value Chains: Govt Rolls Out 7 Additional Measures Under Export Promotion Mission

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce initiated seven new interventions as part of the ₹25,060 crore Export Promotion Mission (EPM). These initiatives, primarily targeting MSMEs, enhance support in areas such as trade finance, compliance facilitation, logistics, and access to international markets, with the goal of strengthening India's export competitiveness on a global scale in the face of increasing protectionism.

I. Key Highlights: Advancing Niryat Protsahan (Financial Enablers)

Support for Alternative Trade Instruments:

Encourages export factoring as an economical working capital option for MSMEs.

It offers a 2.75% interest subsidy on factoring expenses, limited to ₹50 lakh per MSME each year, processed through a clear digital claim system.

Credit Assistance for E-Commerce Exporters:

The Direct E-Commerce Credit Facility provides financing of up to ₹50 lakh with a 90% guarantee coverage.

The Overseas Inventory Credit Facility allows for up to ₹5 crore with 75% coverage and a 2.75% interest subsidy, assisting exporters in keeping inventory closer to international buyers.

Support for Emerging Export Opportunities:

Aids in entering high-risk or entirely new markets through shared-risk and credit enhancement tools.

It utilizes mechanisms such as Letters of Credit confirmation to bolster exporter confidence and enhance liquidity flows.

II. Key Highlights: Advancing Niryat Disha (Non-Financial Enablers)

TRACE Initiative (Trade Regulations, Accreditation & Compliance Enablement):

Aids Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in adhering to rigorous international standards for testing, inspection, and certification (TIC).

Offers reimbursement of 60% for eligible expenses under the Positive List and 75% under the Priority Positive List, with a maximum limit of ₹25 lakh per Import Export Code (IEC) each year.

FLOW Programme (Facilitating Logistics, Overseas Warehousing & Fulfilment):

Provides subsidies of up to 30% on approved project expenditures to assist exporters in accessing overseas warehousing and e-commerce fulfillment centers for a duration of up to three years.

LIFT Scheme (Logistics Interventions for Freight & Transport):

Addresses geographical challenges faced by exporters situated in hilly, remote, and landlocked regions.

It offers partial reimbursement of up to 30% of qualifying freight costs, limited to ₹20 lakh per fiscal year.

INSIGHT (Integrated Support for Trade Intelligence & Facilitation):

Enhances the capacity-building of exporters and facilitates district-level initiatives under the 'Districts as Export Hubs' program.

Delivers financial support of up to 50% of the project cost for trade intelligence systems.

EXPORT PROMOTION MISSION (EPM)
2025-26 to 2030-31 – Integrated Export Support Framework Managed by DGFT

Export Factoring
Selling invoices to a factor for immediate funds

Importer-Exporter Code (IEC)
10-Digit Business Identification Number

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)
Quotas, ESG Standards, Product Regulations

Digitally Monitored Export Support
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FOREIGN TRADE

III. Present Challenges:

High Logistics Costs:

India's logistics expenses currently hover around 13-14% of GDP, which is considerably higher than the 8% average observed in developed nations.

This aggregate inefficiency significantly undermines the cost-competitiveness of Indian MSME products in the international marketplace.

Global Protectionism & Tariff Escalations:

Indian exporters are confronted with unpredictable global trade regulations and tariff threats, exemplified by recent aggressive tariff actions from the U.S.

These geopolitical changes disproportionately affect labor-intensive industries such as textiles, leather, and marine products.

Navigating Non-Tariff Barriers:

More than half of global trade conflicts involve non-tariff barriers (NTBs), which are frequently employed by developed countries to safeguard their domestic industries.

Indian MSMEs, which represent approximately 45% of total exports, often lack the financial and technical resources necessary to obtain costly product certifications from European or American markets.

Credit Gap and Procedural Delays:

In spite of assurances of complete coverage under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Exporters (CGSE), the challenge of converting broad mission frameworks into prompt, grassroots credit disbursement persists. The establishment of dedicated digital IT platforms and the formulation of clear disbursement guidelines often lead to bureaucratic holdups.

IV. Way Forward Measures:

Accelerating Digital Disbursement Systems:

The DGFT must guarantee that its specialized digital platform functions without interruption, achieving seamless integration with current banking systems

This is essential to avert delays in the disbursement of interest subventions and freight reimbursements to financially constrained MSMEs.

Utilizing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):

Exporters and Export Promotion Councils should actively engage with the recently established FTAs (such as the India-EFTA TEPA and agreements with the UAE and Australia).

By comprehending the specific Rules of Origin requirements, exporters can effectively navigate around broader tariff challenges in Western markets.

Focused Capacity Development for Compliance:

The government ought to vigorously advocate for the TRACE scheme at the level of industrial clusters.

It is crucial to deploy technical specialists to assist MSMEs in conforming to stringent international ESG and quality standards to thrive in the contemporary trade environment.

Enhancing the District Hubs Framework:

State governments must take proactive steps to align with the INSIGHT initiative to cultivate localized trade intelligence.

Recognizing distinctive geographical indication (GI) products and converting non-traditional districts into strong export hubs will enhance the diversity of India's export portfolio.

41. Redefining Growth: India's New GDP Series with 2022-23 Base Year

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has officially introduced the updated GDP series, changing the base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23. This comprehensive methodological revision incorporates dynamic digital datasets—such as GST and UPI—to effectively reflect India's formalized, service-oriented, and post-pandemic economic framework.

I. Key Highlights:

Base Year Shift (2011-12 to 2022-23):

The year 2022-23 was chosen as it signifies the latest "normal" and stable economic phase following the significant disruptions instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Robust Growth Estimates:

The projected real GDP growth for FY26 (2025-26) is anticipated to be a robust 7.6%.

Nominal GDP, which reflects the actual monetary scale of the economy, has been adjusted to ₹345.47 lakh crore.

Data Modernization & Integration:

The new series departs from obsolete proxy indicators. It now extensively employs real-time administrative data sourced from GST collections, the e-Vahan portal, PFMS, and UPI digital transactions.

More than 260 item-level CPI indices have been integrated as highly detailed deflators.

Capturing the Informal and Gig Economy:

The dependence on the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) guarantees that the contributions of MSMEs, gig workers, and digital platforms are directly estimated annually rather than simply extrapolated.

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section, titled 'GDP vs. GVA', explains that GVA (Gross Value Added) is calculated as 'Value of Output - Intermediate Consumption (Sector-wise Performance)'. It then shows the formula for GDP: $GDP = GVA + \text{Product Taxes} - \text{Product Subsidies}$, which is labeled as 'Gross Domestic Product'. The right section, titled 'Supply and Use Tables (SUT)', lists three key features: 1) 'Accounting Framework aligned with the UN System of National Accounts (SNA)', 2) 'Balances Total Supply of Goods & Services with Total Use', and 3) 'Minimizes Statistical Errors (Discrepancies) in National Income Calculations'.

II. Present Challenges:

The "Denominator Effect" on Fiscal Mathematics:

Due to the new base year methodology, there has been a slight reduction in the nominal GDP size (approximately 3.3%), resulting in key macroeconomic ratios appearing to be mathematically deteriorated.

For example, the fiscal deficit for FY26 has risen from 4.36% to 4.51% of GDP, and the debt-to-GDP ratio has also increased mathematically, despite no actual rise in government borrowing.

Time Series Disruption:

The transition to the year 2022-23 has caused a disruption in the continuity of historical data.

Accurately estimating the "back-series" data extending back to 1950-51 without introducing methodological distortions will pose significant challenges for statisticians.

Data Collection in Deep Informal Sectors:

In spite of the implementation of ASUSE, effectively capturing the rapidly changing output of hyper-local micro-enterprises and non-digital cash economies continues to be a significant statistical challenge.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Expediting the Release of Back-Series Data:

MoSPI should prioritize the swift release of the spliced back-series data, which is anticipated by December 2026.

This is essential for enabling policymakers, economists, and international investors to conduct precise long-term historical comparisons and structural analyses.

Preparing for SNA 2025:

As the United Nations Statistical Division transitions to the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2025 by the decade's end, India needs to ready its statistical frameworks to ensure a seamless shift to this global standard in the upcoming base revision cycle.

Enhancing State Statistics:

State-level Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DES) must be equipped with advanced technology and training to calculate Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) utilizing the same high-frequency GST and UPI datasets for improved and coordinated regional planning.

42. Institutional Finance and the Blue Transformation: Scaling Credit to India's Fisheries Sector

Context:

India's fisheries sector, which has recently been designated as a "Sunrise Sector," is experiencing a significant transformation from reliance on subsidies to a model driven by credit-based growth. In order to formalize and expand this vibrant industry, the government has introduced extensive digital credit frameworks that effectively incorporate institutional financing, thereby benefiting more than 30 million stakeholders.

I. Key Highlights:

Unprecedented Sectoral Growth:

Fish production has achieved a record high of 197 lakh tonnes in FY 2024–25, nearly doubling from 95.79 lakh tonnes in 2013–14.

This remarkable growth is primarily attributed to inland fisheries, which now account for over 75% of total production, with states such as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana spearheading the culture-based aquaculture revolution.

The National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP):

A comprehensive, single-window digital framework has been established, successfully registering more than 30 lakh stakeholders.

It has integrated 12 nationalized banks, enabling fishers and entrepreneurs to apply for loans remotely with real-time tracking, thereby democratizing access to credit.

Expanding the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) for Fisheries:

Designed to address short-term working capital requirements, KCC-Fisheries has disbursed ₹3,214.32 crore across 4.76 lakh cards as of June 2025.

The loans feature an affordable interest rate of 7%, which reduces to an effective 4% upon timely repayment.

De-risking and Long-term Infrastructure Funding:

A dedicated ₹750 crore Credit Guarantee Fund (managed by NABSAnrakshan) has been established to offer collateral-free risk coverage for loans up to ₹12.5 crore.

The Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) continues to support long-term capital projects with a 3% interest subvention.

Performance-Linked Incentives:

Under PM-MKSSY Component 1A, a one-time post-disbursement incentive of up to ₹5,000 is directly awarded to borrowers as a “success fee” to assist in offsetting documentation and processing costs.

BLUE TRANSFORMATION
— Sustainable Growth in Fisheries & Aquaculture —

Sustainable Aquaculture • Capture Fisheries Management • Fish Value Chain Upgradation

NABSanrakshan
A Subsidiary of NABARD
Boosting Credit Access for Agriculture & Allied Sectors

INTEREST SUBVENTION
Government Subsidy on Loan Interest Rates

BANK 7%
Bank Interest Rate 7%

3% Interest Subvention

Govt Pays 3% to the Bank

You Pay 4%

II. Present Challenges:

Fragmented and Informal Ecosystem:

In spite of significant economic expansion and substantial export figures, the sector continues to be markedly disorganized at the grassroots level. Small-scale fishers frequently do not possess adequate documentation for land or water bodies, which complicates traditional bank risk assessments considerably.

Geographical and Financing Heterogeneity:

The capital requirements exhibit considerable variation—from as little as ₹15,000 for a local pond farmer to more than ₹10 crore for a contemporary deep-sea processing facility.

Commercial banks have traditionally been reluctant to create tailored, activity-specific loan products to accommodate such a wide range of operational demands.

Climatic and Biological Risks:

Aquaculture is particularly vulnerable to abrupt disease outbreaks, severe cyclones, and swift deterioration of water quality.

The conspicuous absence of comprehensive and affordable insurance options for inland aquaculture leads financial institutions to exercise extreme caution when considering the extension of substantial credit lines.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Enhancing Financial Literacy:

It is imperative for banks and State Fisheries Departments to proactively organize collaborative credit camps and targeted outreach initiatives for beneficiaries.

Providing small-scale fishers with comprehensive information regarding the necessary documentation for the NFDP portal is essential for achieving effective last-mile financial inclusion.

Broadening Parametric Insurance Coverage:

The expansion of institutional credit should be intricately linked with the introduction of comprehensive parametric insurance products.

Safeguarding farmers from immediate climate-related and biological disruptions will inherently strengthen the long-term trust of lending institutions.

Encouraging Value Addition and Traceability:

The flow of credit should strategically focus on enhancing post-harvest infrastructure, including the integration of modern cold-chain systems and facilities for value-added products.

Improving digital traceability will facilitate the seamless entry of Indian seafood into stringent sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) markets, particularly in the US and the EU.

43. India's Labour Market Navigates Seasonal Shifts: Decoding the PLFS January 2026 Bulletin

Context:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has recently published the Monthly Bulletin for January 2026, derived from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). The findings indicate a generally stable macroeconomic job market, albeit with a slight seasonal decline, showing an overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of 55.9% and a minor increase in the unemployment rate to 5.0%.

I. Key Highlights:

Steady Labour Force Participation:

In January 2026, the overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for individuals aged 15 and older was a robust 55.9%, showing a slight decrease from 56.1% in December 2025.

The LFPR in rural areas was noted at 58.7%, whereas the urban LFPR remained stable at 50.3%.

Sustained Female Economic Inclusion:

The female LFPR continued its strong upward trend, remaining constant at 35.1% at the national level.

This growth is largely supported by rural women, who achieved a significant participation rate of 39.7%, in contrast to 25.5% in urban regions.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR) Dynamics:

The overall WPR demonstrated considerable stability, settling at 53.1%.

While the urban WPR did not change across genders, remaining at 46.8% overall, the rural WPR saw a slight decrease to 56.2%.

Modest Rise in Unemployment (UR):





The overall Unemployment Rate (UR) experienced a minor increase to 5.0%, up from 4.8% in the preceding month.

This rise was entirely attributed to rural areas, where the rate increased from 3.9% to 4.2%, while the male UR remained notably stable across all demographics.

The "Seasonal Slack" Factor:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) officially indicated that the slight decline in LFPR/WPR and the increase in rural UR are influenced by seasonal factors associated with winter. A natural post-harvest slowdown tends to reduce activities in agriculture-related sectors, rural transport, and local construction during the month of January.

Key Labour Force Indicators

- **Current Weekly Status (CWS)**
Worked at least 1 hour on any day during the last 7 days
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)**
Percentage of the population working or actively seeking/available for work
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)**
Percentage of the total population that is actually employed
- **Unemployment Rate (UR)**
Percentage of persons unemployed among the labor force
Those looking for work but cannot find it

II. Present Challenges:

Vulnerability to Agricultural Seasonality:

The data from January underscores the profound structural dependence of the rural labor force on the agricultural calendar.

The absence of diversified, year-round, non-agricultural employment opportunities renders rural incomes particularly vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations and climatic disturbances.

Urban Female Participation Gap:

Although the labor force participation rate (LFPR) for rural women is nearing 40%, the LFPR for urban women remains stubbornly around 25%.

This situation reveals considerable urban obstacles, such as insufficient safe public transportation, inadequate childcare facilities, and rigid corporate employment practices.

The "Quality" of Employment:

A considerable segment of the newly integrated labor force—particularly women in rural settings—finds itself engaged in unpaid domestic work or low-yield self-employment.

Facilitating the transition of these individuals into high-productivity, formal wage employment presents a significant structural challenge.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Promoting Non-Farm Rural Industries:

In order to address the issue of seasonal unemployment following harvests, it is imperative for the government to significantly enhance agro-processing units, rural storage facilities, and localized MSMEs through the 'One District One Product' (ODOP) initiative.

Implementing the New Labour Codes:

The recently enacted four Labour Codes should be strategically utilized by the private sector to establish more flexible working hours.

This approach is essential for accommodating urban women and increasing the urban female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) while ensuring that social security measures remain intact.

Scaling Up the e-Shram Ecosystem:

With more than 31 crore unorganized workers registered, it is crucial for the e-Shram portal to be thoroughly integrated with the National Career Service (NCS) to function as an effective, real-time job-matching platform for gig and informal workers.

Skilling for the "Sunrise" Sectors:

To prevent the workforce from experiencing disguised unemployment, future skilling programs under the Skill India Mission must specifically focus on high-growth sectors such as green energy, semiconductors, and digital services.



SOCIAL ISSUES & SOCIAL JUSTICE

43. A Full Stop: Elevating Menstrual Hygiene to a Fundamental Right

Context:

In a recent landmark ruling (*Dr. Jaya Thakur v. Union of India*), the Supreme Court has recognized menstrual health as a fundamental right under Article 21, transitioning it from a welfare initiative to a mandatory constitutional entitlement. By requiring the provision of free sanitary products and necessary infrastructure in all educational institutions, the Court has decisively affirmed that a girl's biological circumstances should not lead to systemic exclusion.

I. Key Highlights of the Supreme Court Judgment:

Constitutionalizing Menstrual Health:

The Court connected Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) with the Right to Life and Dignity (Article 21) as well as the Right to Education (Article 21A).

It observed that compelling girls to choose between dignity and education due to "menstrual poverty" constitutes a significant constitutional infringement.

Mandatory Free Products & Infrastructure:

All educational institutions (both public and private) are required to supply free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins to girls in Classes 6–12.

The State is obligated to provide functional, gender-segregated, and disability-friendly restrooms with a reliable water supply and safe disposal systems.

Establishment of MHM Corners:

Schools are now mandated to create designated Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) corners.

These corners must be equipped with emergency supplies, including spare innerwear, uniforms, and disposable bags to address menstruation-related emergencies.

Strict Accountability & Enforcement:

The Court has issued a 'continuing mandamus' to oversee nationwide compliance through District Education Officers.

The State will be responsible for government schools, while private institutions will face immediate derecognition for failing to comply.

Sensitization of Men and Boys:

Beyond infrastructure, the Court highlighted the psychological dimension, dedicating a section to "Men in Menstruation."

It instructed educational boards (NCERT/SCERT) to educate male teachers and students to mitigate harassment, stigma, and intrusive questioning of menstruating girls.



II. Present Challenges:

Severe Infrastructure Deficits:

In spite of the judicial order, numerous rural government schools continue to be devoid of essential running water and operational latrines.

Ensuring ongoing financial support for free sanitary pads, vending machines, and incinerators presents a significant challenge in the absence of dedicated budgetary provisions from state governments.

The "Out-of-School" Blind Spot:

The Court's education-focused directive unintentionally excludes millions of extremely vulnerable adolescent girls who have already exited the educational system.

Girls hailing from marginalized communities (Dalit, Adivasi, and nomadic tribes) frequently abandon formal education prematurely due to factors such as child marriage or economic hardship, thereby severing their access to these newly established facilities.

Deep-Rooted Social Stigma:

Merely improving infrastructure cannot eradicate patriarchal taboos; menstruation continues to be broadly regarded as "impure" in numerous households.

This cultural stigma limits women's freedom of movement, dietary options, and participation in religious activities, thereby undermining the overarching objective of bodily autonomy.

The Waste Management Crisis:

Providing millions of sanitary pads on a daily basis intensifies India's critical solid waste management crisis.

The improper disposal of non-biodegradable sanitary waste results in blocked municipal drains, soil microplastic contamination, and significant health risks for informal sanitation workers.

III. Way Forward Measures:

Expanding the PMBJP Network:

In order to assist women who are not enrolled in school, it is imperative for the government to swiftly enhance the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

Guaranteeing a consistent supply of ₹1 'Suvidha' sanitary pads through 25,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras will facilitate equitable access in even the most remote rural regions.

Empowering Local Governance:

State authorities ought to empower Gram Panchayats by linking the untied grants from the 16th Finance Commission directly to the maintenance of school sanitation.

Leveraging local Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for the production of biodegradable pads can not only enhance employment opportunities for rural women but also ensure a sustainable local supply chain.

Curriculum Overhaul for Sensitisation:

Health and reproductive education should be incorporated into the fundamental curriculum starting from the primary level, rather than being regarded as an optional or stigmatized topic.

Facilitating open discussions about menstruation among young boys represents the most effective long-term approach to eliminate harassment and stigma in classrooms.

Enforcing Sustainable Disposal:

The Ministry of Environment must rigorously implement the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, ensuring that schools are equipped with decentralized, environmentally friendly incinerators.

Encouraging the subsidized distribution of reusable options, such as menstrual cups, can significantly lessen the environmental impact of menstrual hygiene initiatives.

44. Unmasking Occupational Segregation: 84.5% of Waste-Pickers Belong to SC, ST, and OBC Communities

Context:

Recent data presented in Parliament by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment indicates that 84.5% of waste-pickers identified under the NAMASTE scheme are from SC, ST, and OBC communities. This striking figure officially validates the entrenched, caste-based occupational segregation that continues to exist within India's informal urban sanitation sector.

I. Key Highlights:

National Enumeration Data:

For the first time, the Union government has officially profiled and validated 152,000 informal waste-pickers across 35 States and Union Territories.

Among the total workers profiled, an astonishing 60.3% are from Scheduled Castes (SC), 13.7% from Other Backward Classes (OBC), and 10.5% from Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Workers from the General category represent only 10.7% at the national level.

Gender Profile of the Workforce:

The informal waste-picking sector exhibits nearly equal gender participation, with women accounting for 48.7% of the workforce and men for 51.3%. Transgender individuals were also officially documented and validated, comprising 0.007% of the enumerated workers.

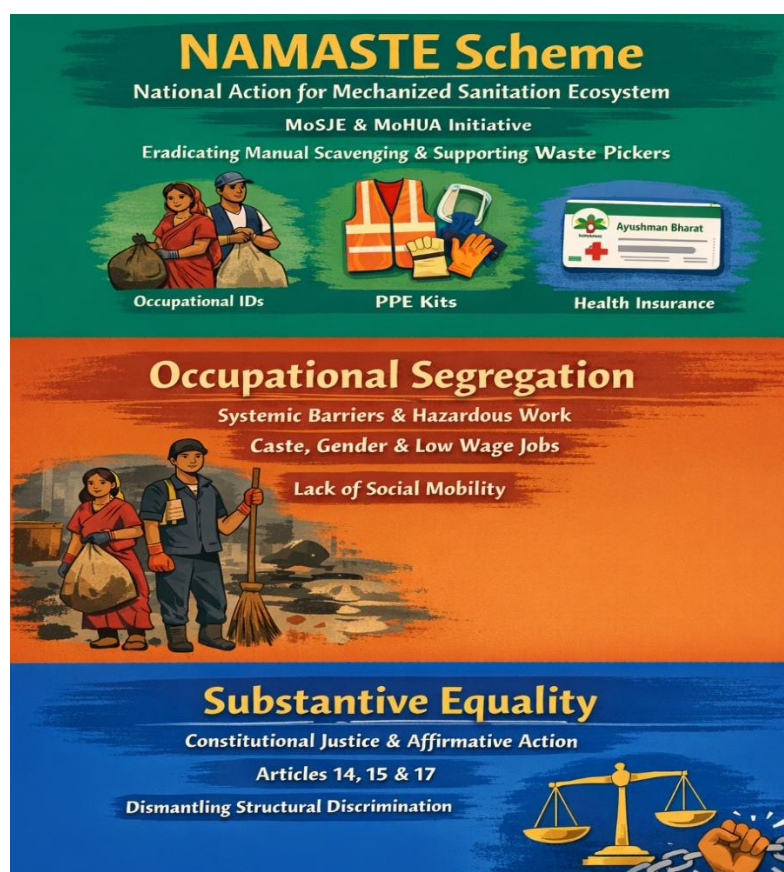
Regional Demographic Outliers:

While the national trend underscores significant marginalization, states such as Delhi, Goa, and West Bengal have shown notable statistical outliers. In these particular urban areas, waste-pickers from General category communities outnumber those from marginalized groups, indicating unique regional labor and migration dynamics.

Broader Sanitation Workforce Trends:

The data on waste-pickers closely aligns with recent reports from the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) concerning the formal sector.

The DoPT report indicated that over 66% of formal Group C sanitation workers (safai karmacharis) directly employed by the Union Government also belong to SC, ST, and OBC categories.



II. Present Challenges:

Exploitative Informal Economy:

The overwhelming majority of waste-pickers do not possess written contracts, guarantees of minimum wage, or fundamental legal protections as stipulated by existing labor regulations.

They are consistently compelled to sell the recyclables they collect to scrap dealers and intermediaries at extremely exploitative prices, thereby entrenching them in a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Severe Health and Occupational Hazards:

Operating without adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), these individuals are perpetually exposed to hazardous chemicals, unprocessed medical waste, and contamination from heavy metals.

This ongoing exposure significantly diminishes their life expectancy and escalates their out-of-pocket healthcare costs.

The Digital Divide in Welfare Access:

To access essential government benefits (such as ration cards, housing assistance, or the e-Shram portal), individuals must possess digital literacy, complete OTP verification, and provide formal documentation (including Aadhaar and birth certificates).

The absence of stable housing and dependence on shared mobile devices hinder many waste-pickers from successfully claiming the social security programs intended for their benefit.

Social Stigma and Institutional Mistrust:

Due to longstanding caste biases, waste-pickers often endure social exclusion and are perceived as "unclean."

They encounter frequent harassment, extortion from local officials, and eviction from urban slums, which further undermines their dignity in labor.

III. Way Forward Measures:**Accelerating Formalization through ULBs:**

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are required to significantly expedite the enumeration process by utilizing the newly introduced 'Waste Picker Enumeration App'.

The issuance of official occupational identity cards represents a crucial initial measure to avert police harassment and to recognize these workers as essential service providers.

Integrating Collectives into the Circular Economy:

Waste-picker Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and collectives ought to be formally incorporated into municipal Solid Waste Management (SWM) systems, as stipulated by the SWM Rules, 2016.

Empowering these collectives to take direct control of Dry Waste Collection Centers (DWCCs) will eliminate intermediaries and greatly enhance their profit margins.

Delivering Targeted Social Security:

The government is obligated to facilitate a smooth, single-window integration of current welfare programs for this particularly vulnerable population.

Prompt enrollment in the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) and the provision of subsidized, stable public housing are essential to fortify their climate and economic resilience.

Eradicating Caste-Labor Linkages:

Long-term policy initiatives must prioritize the education, digital literacy, and skill diversification of waste-pickers' children.

Dismantling the entrenched caste-occupation linkage necessitates proactive affirmative action and targeted scholarships to assist the next generation in transitioning to alternative, high-value employment opportunities.

45. A Chance for India to Polish the Kimberley Process: Redefining Global Diamond Governance

Context:

India has officially taken on the Chairmanship of the Kimberley Process (KP) for the year 2026. This leadership position offers a significant opportunity to update the framework established in 2003, expanding beyond limited definitions to tackle current ethical, technological, and human rights issues within the global diamond trade.

I. India's Strategic Position in the Global Diamond Trade:

Despite India's minimal production of rough diamonds, it holds a significant position in the global value chain, which provides it with substantial influence to advocate for reforms:

Premier Processing Hub: India stands as the largest center for cutting and polishing in the world, handling about 14 out of every 15 diamonds that are mined globally.

Major Importer: The country imports nearly 40% of the rough diamonds available worldwide.

Key Centers: The industry and its associated skillsets are predominantly located in Surat and Mumbai.

Export Dominance: Polished diamonds are re-exported to key consumer markets such as the USA, Hong Kong, China, Israel, and the UAE.

Essential Terminologies

Kimberley Process (KP)

A multilateral, tripartite initiative uniting governments, the international diamond industry, and civil society, established in 2003 to prevent the flow of "conflict diamonds".



Conflict Diamonds (Blood Diamonds)

Rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance armed conflicts aimed at undermining legitimate governments, as defined by the United Nations.



Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)

The core regulatory tool of the KP. Requires shipments of rough diamonds to be in tamper-proof containers, with a government-validated, conflict-free certificate.



Consensus-Based Decision Making

The operational model of the KP where decisions require the agreement of all participants, often leading to political deadlocks and vetoes.



II. Core Challenges Hampering the Current KP Framework:

Despite its initial achievements in mitigating wars financed by rebel groups, the KP framework encounters significant structural challenges in a swiftly evolving geopolitical context:

Narrow Definition of "Conflict Diamonds"

At present, it is confined solely to diamonds that fund rebel factions opposing recognized governments.

It overlooks contemporary ethical issues such as state-sponsored violence, human rights violations, human trafficking, and environmental harm in mining regions.

Procedural Rigidity and Deadlocks

The stringent consensus-based voting mechanism provides a veto power to each individual member.

This arrangement hinders substantial reform and renders it exceedingly challenging to impose penalties on non-compliant members.

Weak Enforcement Outcomes

Embargoes (like the one enacted against the Central African Republic in 2013) have occasionally shifted trade into informal sectors.

In the absence of economic assistance, outright prohibitions often exacerbate smuggling and violence instead of alleviating them.

Transparency and Accountability Gaps

There is a lack of public access to detailed compliance information and trade data.

Civil society organizations often express concerns about the sidelining of independent monitoring voices within the tripartite framework.

III. India's Reform Agenda as the 2026 Chair:

India's leadership presents an opportunity to enact practical, gradual modifications without undermining the essential structure:

Expanding the Mandate with Caution

Rather than imposing a rapid, politically sensitive redefinition of "conflict diamonds," India can initiate technical working groups.

These groups can investigate issues related to violence, human rights, and environmental hazards, fostering an evidence-based agreement for future considerations.

Technology-Driven Transparency

Encourage the shift from outdated paper-based systems to digital, tamper-resistant KP certificates.

Implement pilot programs utilizing blockchain technology for traceability, generating unalterable, time-stamped records that minimize fraud and streamline customs data sharing.

Capacity Building Instead of Coercion

Redirect the emphasis from punitive sanctions to constructive developmental initiatives.

Create regional technical centers in Central and Eastern Africa to offer IT, forensic, and certification training for artisanal miners.

Enhancing Institutional Accountability

Promote independent, third-party audits (peer reviews) among member states.

Advocate for the public release of comprehensive trade statistics to restore global trust.

IV. Significance for Global Governance & Diplomacy:

Advocating for the Global South: By harmonizing the economic priorities of African producer countries with the ethical expectations of global consumer markets, India strengthens its diplomatic credibility and asserts its leadership within the Global South.

Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals: Directing diamond revenues towards local health, education, and infrastructure effectively aligns the KP framework with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in relation to poverty alleviation and the promotion of decent work.

A Shift in Narrative: India's leadership has the potential to transform the KP from merely "preventing the trade of unethical diamonds" to proactively "facilitating responsible, sustainable, and inclusive commerce."

46. The Labour Codes Redefine Wages, Empower the Worker: A Paradigm Shift in India's Employment

Context:

On November 21, 2025, India will fully implement four new Labour Codes that amalgamate 29 laws from the colonial period into a cohesive framework. These reforms significantly alter the definition of statutory wages and broaden the scope of social security, with the objective of formalizing the labor force and promoting inclusive economic development.



I. Redefining Wages: The Push for Financial Resilience

Addressing the Allowance Loophole: In the past, employers designed salary structures where the basic pay constituted merely 30–35% of the overall compensation, thereby reducing social security contributions.

Compulsory Wage Minimum: The newly implemented 50% regulation compels organizations to elevate the basic wage portion.

Creation of Long-Term Assets: This reorganization inherently boosts mandatory contributions to the Provident Fund (PF), pension plans, and gratuity.

Improved Savings: It converts monthly salaries from tools for immediate expenditure into strong instruments for long-term financial security and retirement planning.

II. Empowering the Worker: Expanding the Social Net

Inclusion of the Unorganized Sector: For the first time, millions of gig, platform, and informal workers are now encompassed within a formal legal framework.

Aggregator Accountability: Digital platforms are required to contribute between 1% and 2% of their annual revenue to a specific social security fund designated for their gig workers.

Portability of Benefits: Social security benefits are now associated with Aadhaar through the e-Shram portal.

This facilitates seamless portability across different states, ensuring that migrant workers do not forfeit their benefits when relocating between regions.

Women in the Workforce: The codes stipulate equal remuneration for equal work and allow women to undertake night shifts, contingent upon the fulfillment of rigorous safety and consent protocols.

III. Dignity for Fixed-Term and Contract Workers:

Equity in Employment: Fixed-Term Employees (FTEs) possess a legal right to receive identical wages, leave entitlements, and healthcare benefits as their permanent counterparts engaged in comparable roles.

Expedited Gratuity: The criteria for gratuity eligibility has been reduced from five years to merely one year of uninterrupted service.

This structural adjustment guarantees that temporary workers do not leave the workforce without compensation.

IV. Macroeconomic Impact: Growth and Redistribution

Labor-Focused Wealth Allocation: By raising employer contributions for provident funds and gratuities, the regulations effectively redirect economic resources from corporate profits back to the workforce.

Consumption-Driven Economic Enhancement: Enhanced income security directly elevates the purchasing capacity of the labor force.

In contrast to corporate profits, wages for workers quickly circulate within the national economy, fostering extensive consumer spending.

V. Challenges and Roadblocks:

Increased Corporate Liabilities: Large corporations are experiencing a rise in compliance expenses and financial responsibilities as a result of elevated terminal benefits (gratuity and PF).

Trade Union Opposition: Prominent unions contend that the Industrial Relations Code facilitates the process of hiring and terminating employees.

The threshold for layoffs without prior governmental approval has been increased to 300 workers, resulting in nationwide protests.

Implementation Friction: Given that Labor is categorized under the Concurrent List, the differing rates of State-level rule notifications contribute to a complicated dual-compliance landscape.

Risk of FTE Misuse: There are concerns that employers may substitute permanent positions with fixed-term contracts to evade long-term employment obligations.

VI. The Way Forward: Navigating the Transition

Harmonizing Centre-State Regulations:

Establish a centralized mechanism akin to the GST Council for labor to guarantee consistent rule enforcement.

Provide both technical and financial assistance to States for the enhancement of their digital compliance systems.

Reviving Tripartite Dialogue: Proactively engage with trade unions and industry organizations by reinstating the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) to tackle concerns related to the "hire and fire" provisions.

Strengthening the Safety Net:

In order to balance the flexibility afforded to employers (the 300-worker retrenchment threshold), the government must enhance unemployment insurance programs.

Ensure that efficient grievance redressal systems are established prior to any mass layoffs taking place.

Rigorous Monitoring of FTEs: Labor inspectorates should perform regular audits to confirm that permanent positions are not being systematically transformed into Fixed-Term Employment (FTE) merely to evade structural liabilities.

Supporting MSMEs:

Implement phased timelines or financial subsidies for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

This approach will assist them in managing the initial financial impact of the 50% basic pay regulation without resorting to immediate job reductions.

Transparent Gig Economy Integration:

Develop dynamic, real-time registries that are directly linked to the e-Shram portal.

Ensure transparent audits of aggregators to guarantee that the 1-2% turnover contribution is directed to the appropriate social security funds without any leakage.

47. The Quiet Crisis of Adolescent Mental Health in India: A Silent Epidemic

Context:

The recent heartbreaking suicides of young girls in Ghaziabad underscore a critical, inadequately addressed public health crisis. According to NCRB statistics, there has been an alarming 65% increase in student suicides over the past ten years. The Economic Survey 2024-25 has clearly cautioned that the phenomenon of a "phone-based childhood" coupled with escalating mental distress poses a significant threat to India's demographic advantage.

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

-  **Article 21 (Right to Life):** Expanded by Supreme Court to include Right to Health, encompassing Mental Well-being.
-  **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Decriminalized Attempted Suicide (Sec. 115) & Guaranteed Right to Mental Healthcare.
-  **Manodarpan Initiative:** Psychosocial Support for Students, Teachers & Families.
-  **UMMEED Guidelines:** Identifying Vulnerable Students & Preventing Self-Harm.
-  **Tele-MANAS:** 24/7 Toll-Free Mental Health Helpline Across India.
-  **NIMHANS-2:** New Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences in Northern India (Union Budget 2026-27)

I. The Scale of the Crisis: A Statistical Reality

Rising Suicides: The most recent reports from the NCRB reveal that the rate of student suicides has surpassed the national average for overall suicides, with a student taking their own life nearly every hour.

High Prevalence: National surveys suggest that between 7% and 10% of adolescents in India experience diagnosable mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, and ADHD.

Gender Vulnerability: In contrast to trends observed in adults, female adolescents exhibit a higher incidence of suicide than their male counterparts in the same age bracket, often attributed to unique social pressures and a lack of emotional support.

Economic Impact: The Economic Survey for 2024-25 cautioned that poor mental health among the youth leads to significant productivity losses, which could hinder India's long-term economic development.

II. Core Drivers of Adolescent Distress:

The Digital Ecosystem & "Phone-Based Childhood"

Excessive screen time coupled with unregulated social media algorithms fosters a culture characterized by comparison and cyberbullying.

Digital overload undermines essential real-world interactions and sleep, thereby disrupting neurological development during the highly malleable adolescent years.

Hyper-Competitive Academic Culture

The stringent emphasis on examinations, coaching institutes, and peer rankings allows minimal space for emotional regulation.

The fear of unemployment, combined with parental expectations, significantly heightens performance anxiety.

Family Dynamics & Interpersonal Trauma

A disintegration of traditional family structures, an increase in nuclear families, and a reduction in quality time with parents diminish the primary emotional safety net.

Exposure to domestic stressors, neglect, or insufficient open communication propels adolescents towards isolation.

Poor Lifestyle Choices

The Economic Survey identified a direct link between high consumption of ultra-processed junk food, insufficient physical activity, and declining mental well-being.

III. Systemic Gaps and Challenges:

Severe Professional Shortage: India has fewer than 10,000 psychiatrists available for a staggering population of 1.4 billion, with only a tiny percentage focusing on child and adolescent psychiatry.

School-Level Negligence: Educational institutions predominantly emphasize academic performance over the emotional health of students.

There exists a significant deficit of qualified in-house counselors capable of recognizing early behavioral indicators (such as withdrawal or sudden impulsivity).

Deep-Rooted Stigma: The pursuit of psychiatric assistance is still perceived as a taboo or indicative of weakness, leading families to postpone intervention until the child is in a crisis situation.

Urban-Rural Divide: Although awareness is increasing in tier-1 cities, young people in rural and semi-urban regions are deprived of both awareness and access to fundamental mental health resources.

IV. The Way Forward: Comprehensive Interventions

Transforming the Education Ecosystem:

Establish regular, stigma-free emotional well-being assessments and mental health evaluations in every educational institution.

Equip educators with "Gatekeeper" training to recognize early indicators of distress without assuming the role of clinical therapists.

Digital Governance & Safe Spaces:

Enforce age-appropriate design regulations for social media platforms to curtail algorithmic traps and endless scrolling.

Encourage the development of digital literacy programs that instruct students on maintaining healthy screen time limits instead of resorting to punitive device confiscation.

Expanding Infrastructure (Hub and Spoke Model):

Utilize the recently launched NIMHANS-2 initiative and broaden the Tele-MANAS network to penetrate further into rural regions through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

Augment the number of funded residency positions specifically dedicated to Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Empowering the Family Unit:

Foster trauma-informed parenting seminars to assist parents in listening without bias rather than responding with criticism.

Encourage participation in outdoor activities and community sports to enhance offline social resilience and improve physical health.

48. Rethinking Tribal Women's Inheritance Rights: The Quest for Gender Justice Context:

The judgments delivered by the Supreme Court in 2025 regarding Ram Charan v. Sukhram and Nawang v. Bahadur have rekindled the national discourse surrounding the inheritance rights of tribal women. These decisions underscore the pressing necessity to harmonize constitutional principles of gender equality with the safeguarding of indigenous customary laws, thereby eliciting demands for legislative reform.

I. The Root of the Problem: A Legislative Vacuum

Statutory Exclusion: Due to the fact that tribal women are excluded from the protective provisions of the HSA 1956, they must depend solely on informal community customs.

Inherent Discrimination: A significant number of these customary laws restrict women from having full rights to ancestral land or property.

Communities frequently rationalize this exclusion as an essential strategy to safeguard tribal land from being acquired by non-tribals through marriage.

The Identity vs. Rights Dilemma: Traditionally, in order to obtain property rights via the legal system, tribal women were compelled to legally dissociate from their tribal identity.

This resulted in a distressing decision: to maintain cultural heritage or to achieve economic autonomy.



II. Judicial Interventions: The 2025 Turning Point

In the year 2025, two significant Supreme Court decisions emerged that not only clarified the legal framework but also highlighted a more profound legislative deficiency:

Ram Charan v. Sukhram (July 2025):

The Supreme Court determined that the exclusion of tribal daughters from inheritance, in the absence of a rigorously established custom, constitutes a violation of the Right to Equality.

This ruling shifted the burden of proof, placing the onus on those who deny a woman her inheritance to demonstrably establish a legitimate, longstanding custom that prohibits such inheritance.

Nawang v. Bahadur (October 2025):

The Court elucidated that the judiciary lacks the authority to impose the Hindu Succession Act (HSA) on Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the pursuit of gender justice.

It reaffirmed that the extension of statutory succession laws to tribal communities is exclusively within the jurisdiction of Parliament, thereby safeguarding tribal autonomy against judicial encroachment.

III. Constitutional Dimensions & Tensions

This matter exemplifies a fundamental constitutional conflict between Part III (Fundamental Rights) and the protective measures established for indigenous minorities:

Gender Equality versus Cultural Autonomy:

Article 14 & 15(1): Ensure equality under the law and categorically forbid discrimination on the basis of sex.

Article 29 & Fifth/Sixth Schedules: Require the safeguarding of the unique culture, language, and administrative independence of indigenous communities.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):

Article 38: Requires the state to eradicate disparities in status, facilities, and opportunities.

Article 46: Instructs the state to shield Scheduled Tribes (STs) from social injustice and exploitation, which inherently encompasses gender-based economic deprivation.

IV. The Economic and Social Impact:

Continuation of Poverty: In rural India, land serves as the principal economic resource. The denial of land rights significantly exacerbates the ongoing socio-economic marginalization experienced by tribal women across generations.

Absence of Empowerment: In the absence of property to serve as collateral, tribal women encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining formal credit, institutional assistance, and agricultural subsidies.

V. The Way Forward: Pragmatic Measures

To address the constitutional impasse between equality and autonomy, targeted legislative and social initiatives are essential:

Formulate a Special Tribal Succession Law:

Parliament ought to implement a tailored inheritance framework specifically designed for indigenous communities.

This legislation must ensure gender equality while incorporating stringent provisions that safeguard tribal land from being transferred to non-tribal entities.

Systematization of Customary Laws:

State authorities should promote tribal councils to officially record their unwritten legal traditions.

By emulating the example of Mizoram (which has codified its customary laws), progressive changes can be naturally fostered from within the community.

Participatory Legislative Process:

Any legal measures must entail comprehensive, grassroots engagement with tribal leaders, women's groups, and anthropologists.

This approach guarantees that reforms are not viewed as coercive cultural assimilation by the dominant society.

Education and Legal Support:

Create specialized legal aid centers in Scheduled Areas under the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

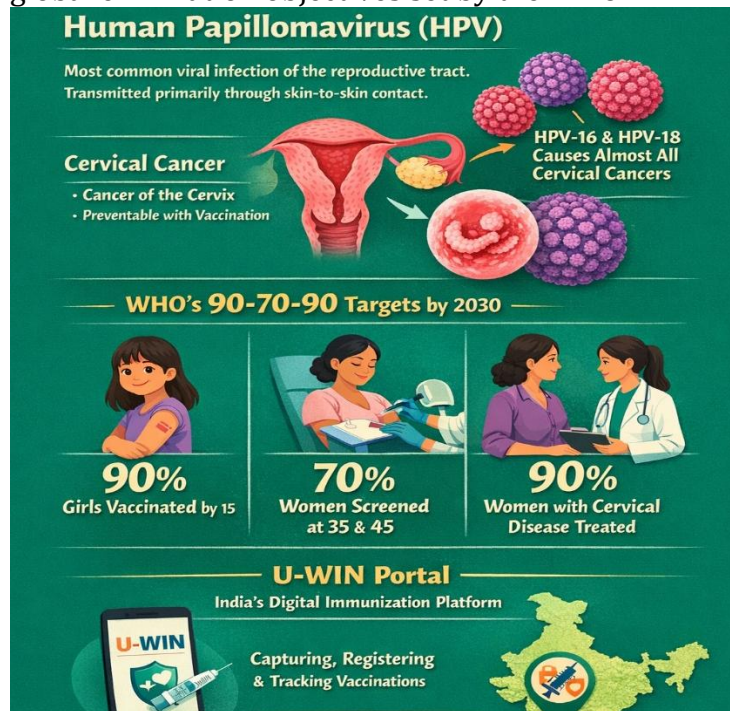
These centers must actively inform tribal women about their developing constitutional rights and offer representation in property-related disputes.

49. Centre Rolls Out Free HPV Vaccination Drive: A Historic Leap Towards Eliminating Cervical Cancer

Context:

Initiated on February 28, 2026, in Ajmer, India, the country's comprehensive Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination initiative offers complimentary vaccines to 1.15 crore

girls aged 14. This 90-day campaign, conducted in a mission-mode approach, represents a significant advancement in the fight against cervical cancer and aims to meet the global elimination objectives set by the WHO.



I. The Burden of Cervical Cancer in India:

High Mortality and Prevalence:

Cervical cancer ranks as the second most prevalent cancer among women in India.

It results in approximately 80,000 fatalities and 120,000 new diagnoses each year, representing about 25% of the worldwide deaths attributed to cervical cancer.

The Danger of Late Detection:

The HPV virus can develop insidiously over a span of 10 to 20 years without presenting any immediate symptoms.

Consequently, cases are frequently identified at advanced stages, which underscores the importance of early vaccination as the most effective public health approach.

II. Key Features of the 2026 Vaccination Drive:

Target Audience:

The initiative specifically focuses on girls who are precisely 14 years old (and have not yet reached 15 years).

Administering the vaccine prior to potential virus exposure provides the most robust and enduring immune response.

Mission Mode Implementation:

The initiative is functioning as a concentrated 90-day campaign at governmental health facilities, which include Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and district hospitals.

After the conclusion of this 90-day period, the HPV vaccine will be incorporated into the standard immunization schedule.

Digital Integration through U-WIN:

Registration of beneficiaries and the requirement for parental consent are entirely facilitated through the U-WIN digital platform.

This guarantees efficient tracking, follow-up procedures, and the provision of authentic e-vaccination certificates.

III. The Vaccine: Gardasil-4 & Scientific Efficacy

Quadrivalent Protection:

In India, a single dose of Gardasil-4 is being administered, obtained through a collaboration with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance.

This vaccine offers protection against four viral strains: HPV 16 and 18, which are responsible for cancer, as well as HPV 6 and 11, which lead to genital warts.

Proven Safety and Efficacy:

The single-dose regimen has received endorsement from the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) and the WHO, confirming that it is non-live and exceptionally safe.

Research indicates that it is 93–100% effective in preventing cervical cancer when given to young adolescents.

IV. Significance for Public Health & Governance:

Democratizing Healthcare Access:

In the private sector, the cost of HPV vaccines ranges from ₹3,000 to ₹10,000 for each dose.

Offering these vaccines at no charge guarantees fair healthcare access for rural, low-income, and marginalized communities.

Building Herd Immunity:

Widespread vaccination among girls aged 14 will greatly diminish the overall prevalence of the virus within the population.

This approach offers indirect protection to the larger community, encompassing unvaccinated individuals and males.

V. Challenges and The Way Forward:

Combating Misinformation and Stigma:

It is essential for the government to utilize frontline workers (ASHAs and ANMs) to effectively counteract myths surrounding reproductive health.

Effective communication is necessary to provide parents with reassurance regarding the vaccine's safety and its long-term advantages.

Addressing the Screening Gap:

Although the vaccine offers protection to the younger population, it does not address pre-existing infections in older women.

The vaccination initiative should be complemented by robust adult screening programs (such as Pap smears and HPV DNA tests) at primary healthcare facilities.

GEOGRAPHY, DISASTER MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENT

50. The Pennaiyar River Dispute: Resolving Inter-State Water Conflicts

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court instructed the Union Government to establish an Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal within a month. This directive seeks to address Tamil Nadu's enduring original lawsuit against Karnataka concerning the unilateral building of check dams along the Pennaiyar river.

Constitutional Framework

Article 262:

Empowers Parliament to adjudicate disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers or river valleys, explicitly allowing Parliament to bar the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court or any other court in such matters.

Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956:

Enacted under Article 262.

Section 4 mandates that if the Central Government is of the opinion that a water Central Government is of the opinion that a water dispute cannot be settled by negotiations, it must constitute a Water Disputes Tribunal.

Article 131 (Original Jurisdiction):

The Supreme Court's power to hear disputes directly between States or between the Centre and States.

Tamil Nadu initially filed its 2018 suit under this article.

Seventh Schedule Dynamics:

Water is primarily a State subject (Entry 17, State List),

but the Union has powers over the regulation and development of inter-state rivers if declared necessary by Parliament (Entry 56, Union List).

I. Geography of the Pennaiyar River:

Origin and Course:

The Pennaiyar River, also referred to as Dakshina Pinakini, Ponnaiyar, or Thenpennai, has its source in the Nandi Hills located in Karnataka.

It traverses eastward through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu before ultimately flowing into the Bay of Bengal.

Riparian Stakeholders: The river predominantly courses through Tamil Nadu, which encompasses approximately 77% of the basin, while its catchment area also extends to Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Major Tributaries: The river is fed by several significant tributaries, including Markandeyanadhi, Pambar, Vaniyar, and Kambainallur.

II. The Core of the Dispute:

The conflict primarily revolves around the utilization of water upstream and the historical agreements in place:

Tamil Nadu's Grievance: Tamil Nadu has raised objections to Karnataka's construction of new check dams and diversion structures on the Pennaiyar River and its tributary, the Markandeyanadhi.

The state contends that these constructions contravene the 1892 Madras-Mysore Agreement, which stipulates that the upper riparian state must obtain consent from the lower riparian state prior to obstructing the flow of water.

Karnataka's Stand: Karnataka defends its position by asserting that the 1892 agreement is an outdated colonial-era arrangement and that it possesses the right to erect structures on tributaries such as Markandeyanadhi to fulfill its developmental and drinking water requirements.

The state argues that the water being utilized falls within its legitimate surplus allocation.

III. The Supreme Court's 2026 Rationale:

Failure of Negotiations: The Court observed that various negotiation committees established by the Jal Shakti Ministry, including the most recent efforts involving all riparian states, were unable to achieve a consensus.

Mandatory Adjudication: The Bench, comprising Justices Vikram Nath and N.V. Anjaria, determined that once the statutory negotiation process fails under the ISRWD Act, it becomes the Centre's obligatory responsibility to establish a tribunal.

Technical Deferment: Instead of adjudicating on intricate hydrological data and historical treaties under Article 131, the Court opted to reserve these technical issues for consideration by the specialized tribunal.

IV. Governance & Federalism:

Cooperative Federalism vs. Regionalism: This conflict illustrates the friction between the developmental goals of an upper riparian State and the established water security entitlements of a lower riparian State.

The Role of Other Riparian States: While the primary legal contention exists between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, states such as Andhra Pradesh and UT Puducherry play vital roles in the negotiation committees. This highlights the necessity for river basins to be managed as cohesive ecological systems rather than as disjointed political entities.

Institutional Bottlenecks: The extended timeline (from the initiation of the lawsuit in 2018 to the establishment of the tribunal in 2026) indicates the inherent sluggishness of the negotiation processes dictated by the 1956 Act, underscoring the urgent requirement for a permanent, standing water tribunal.

Climate Change Factor: Altering precipitation patterns and rising urban water requirements (including the drinking water demands of Bengaluru and agricultural irrigation in Tamil Nadu) are intensifying these longstanding disputes.

51. Wetlands as a National Public Good: Moving Beyond "Wastelands"

Context:

India observed World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2026, with the theme "Wetlands and traditional knowledge." A significant editorial in The Hindu recently contended that acknowledging wetlands as a "national public good" is crucial for transitioning conservation efforts from fragmented beautification initiatives to comprehensive watershed governance, thereby guaranteeing water security and enhancing climate resilience.

Key Terminologies



Wetlands: Ecotones (transitional zones) where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and associated plant and animal life (e.g., lakes, mangroves, marshes, peatlands).



Public Good (Economic Definition): An asset whose benefits are non-excludable (no one can be prevented from benefiting) and non-rivalrous (one person's use does not diminish another's).



Ramsar Convention (1971): An international treaty for the conservation and "wise use" of wetlands. India recently added two new sites (Patna Bird Sanctuary in UP and Chhari-Dhand in Gujarat) in early 2026, bringing its total to 98 Ramsar Sites.



Statutory Basis in India: Governed primarily by the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, and supported by the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA).

I. The Central Thesis: Why Designate a "National Public Good"?

Addressing Market Inefficiencies: The extensive ecological benefits offered by wetlands, such as flood mitigation, groundwater replenishment, and carbon capture, are not easily quantifiable or tradable, leading to a failure of private markets in their conservation.

Collective Resilience: A single wetland can safeguard thousands from urban flooding while also treating municipal wastewater. For example, the East Kolkata Wetlands naturally process approximately 750 million liters of sewage each day, resulting in significant savings for the public treasury in water treatment expenses.

Beyond Land-Use Perspectives: Recognizing wetlands as public goods enhances their perception from simple "vacant land" or "wastelands" awaiting reclamation to essential national infrastructure, comparable to highways or power grids.

II. Ecological Value & Indigenous Wisdom:

Socio-Ecological Frameworks: Wetlands are interconnected systems, intricately linked to cultural heritage and the livelihoods of local communities.

Historical Water Governance: Indigenous knowledge has historically acknowledged the communal benefits of wetlands.

The cascading kulams (tanks) in Tamil Nadu and the ancient chain-link tank systems established during the Kakatiya dynasty in Telangana have effectively managed both floodwaters and periods of drought.

In Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh), wetlands remain vital to seasonal and traditional fishing economies.

In Kerala, 200-year-old shallow wells known as kenis continue to fulfill drinking water requirements and support local customs.

III. The Implementation Crisis: Major Threats

Despite a well-established policy framework, India has experienced a loss of nearly 40% of its natural wetlands over the past thirty years due to significant governance failures:

Urbanization and "Coastal Squeeze": Natural wetlands such as the Pallikaranai marsh (Chennai) and Kolleru Lake (Andhra Pradesh) are under severe threat from encroachment by real estate developments, road infrastructure, and aquaculture activities.

Hydrological Disruption: The building of dams, concrete embankments, and excessive extraction of groundwater disrupt the natural flow of freshwater and sediments essential for the maintenance of these ecosystems.

Pollution and Eutrophication: The discharge of untreated industrial waste and agricultural runoff leads to substantial algal blooms, which deplete oxygen levels and devastate native aquatic biodiversity.

Institutional Silos: State Wetland Authorities often face significant capacity limitations, lacking the necessary technical expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), hydrology, and legal enforcement.

IV. The Way Forward: Landscape-Scale Governance

Transition to Catchment-Scale Planning: Effective wetland conservation cannot be achieved through isolated "lake beautification" initiatives. These areas must be managed comprehensively as part of entire river basins, incorporating urban development, agriculture, and water management sectors.

Strict Notification and Ground-Truthing: The success of the 2017 Rules hinges on the prompt legal demarcation of wetland boundaries. Maps should be made publicly available to deter covert land conversions.

Community Stewardship: Policy approaches must evolve away from exclusionary protection models. By empowering local communities and incorporating their traditional ecological knowledge into contemporary management strategies, sustainable and livelihood-compatible conservation can be achieved.

Treating Wastewater: Urban and peri-urban wetlands should only accept treated inflows. Although wetlands serve as natural filtration systems, they cannot be excessively relied upon as substitutes for effective Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs).

52. 'Turtle Trails' vs. Conservation: The Ecological Debate Over Budget 2026's Tourism Push

Context:

The Union Budget for 2026-27 has suggested the establishment of "turtle trails" along the coastal regions of Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala to enhance eco-tourism.

Nevertheless, marine conservationists have voiced significant concerns, cautioning that the implementation of tourism infrastructure at vital nesting locations may critically interfere with the delicate breeding patterns of endangered sea turtles.

I. What are the Proposed "Turtle Trails"?

Proclaimed by the Finance Minister as an element of a wider initiative to promote adventure and eco-tourism (which includes mountain and bird-watching trails), the proposal outlines:

Guided Pathways: Establishing controlled, ecologically sustainable routes in proximity to significant sea turtle nesting sites.

Economic Integration: Connecting wildlife conservation efforts with the enhancement of local livelihoods via community-oriented tourism and guided activities.

Awareness Generation: Informing the public about marine biodiversity by providing opportunities to observe the nesting process.

Olive Ridley Sea Turtles

- Status: Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List
- Protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- "Arribada" - Mass Nesting "Arrival by Sea"



II. Why Conservationists are Highly Apprehensive?

Notwithstanding the government's designation of "sustainable," wildlife researchers and advocates contend that mass nesting sites should be regarded as strictly enforced "no-go" areas.

The Impact of Artificial Light and Noise

Turtles exhibit a strong phototactic response (sensitivity to light). The presence of artificial lighting from tourist establishments, mobile devices, or flash photography discourages expectant females from approaching the shoreline.

Moreover, artificial illumination completely disorients newly hatched turtles, leading them to crawl towards land rather than the ocean, which results in fatalities due to dehydration or predation.

Interference with the "Arribada"

Mass nesting represents a delicate and infrequent biological event that necessitates complete tranquility.

The presence of humans, even when regulated, modifies the natural conditions of the beach, which may compel turtles to forsake their customary nesting sites.

Misguided Financial Allocations

Experts assert that financial resources should be allocated towards habitat restoration instead of the expansion of tourism.

Local rehabilitation centers are currently facing challenges in providing sustenance for rehabilitated turtles (due to the escalating costs of sardines) and are lacking essential veterinary funding.

The Myth of "Ecotourism"

Traditionally, eco-tourism in India has frequently transformed into unregulated commercial tourism.

Activists point to the case of Chilika Lake, where numerous unregulated mechanized boats frequently approach endangered Irrawaddy dolphins too closely, inflicting significant stress upon them.

III. Core Threats to Sea Turtles (Beyond Tourism):

To comprehend the conservationists' appeal for prioritizing protection over tourism, it is essential to acknowledge the current threats faced by turtles:

Bycatch Mortality: Accidental entanglement in gill nets and mechanized trawl nets continues to be the leading cause of mortality.

Numerous trawlers still operate unlawfully, lacking the required Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs).

Coastal Squeeze: Intense port development, artificial lighting from coastal highways, and coastal erosion are diminishing the available nesting habitats.

Poaching: Although it has decreased, the illegal harvesting of turtle eggs and meat persists in unmonitored coastal areas.

IV. The Way Forward: Science-Based Conservation

If the government moves forward with the 'turtle trails' initiative, it is essential that it undergoes a significant restructuring to place the species above the spectacle:

Strict Zonation and Off-Site Tourism:

Core arribada sites (such as Gahirmatha) must be entirely shielded from tourist access.

Tourism should be confined to off-site interpretation centers, digital VR experiences, and strictly designated observation zones that utilize specialized red-light infrastructure (which does not confuse turtles).

Strengthening Enforcement Ecosystems:

Budget allocations must urgently provide funding for speed boats for forest departments to monitor and combat illegal mechanized fishing during mating seasons.

It is imperative to mandate and subsidize the installation of TEDs for all local fishermen.

Direct Funding to Community Volunteers:

In Kerala and Karnataka, turtle conservation is heavily dependent on underfunded local volunteers who manage hatcheries and safeguard eggs from feral dogs.

The tourism revenue from the Budget should be directly allocated to formally employ these traditional coastal communities as "Turtle Guardians."

Mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA):

Prior to the establishment of any physical "trail" infrastructure, a thorough, independent EIA must be performed to guarantee no disruption to the coastal geomorphology.

53. The Fading of India's Environmental Jurisprudence: The Aravalli Crisis and Judicial Course Correction

Context:

Recent debates regarding the restrictive redefinition of the Aravalli Hills and the weakening of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) have ignited significant discussions about the deterioration of environmental law in India. Nevertheless, important judicial actions taken in early 2026—including a suspension of mining activities and the cessation of Haryana's large Zoo Safari project—indicate a revitalized effort to reconcile ecological preservation with developmental needs.

Precautionary Principle

If an action has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or environment, the burden of proof is on those taking the action, even in the absence of absolute scientific certainty.



Public Trust Doctrine

Natural resources (Air, Water, Forests) are held by the State as trustee for the public and cannot be privatised or commercially exploited.



Post-Facto Clearances

Granting environmental approvals to projects after they have already started operating illegally.



Constitutional Safeguards



- Article 21: Right to Life –
“Right to a clean & healthy environment.”
- Article 48A (DPSP): –
“State shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.”
- Article 51A(g): –
“It is the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment.”

I. The Ecological Shield: Why the Aravallis Matter

The Aravalli Range is recognized as one of the oldest fold mountain systems globally, extending approximately 700 km from Gujarat, traversing through Rajasthan and Haryana, and concluding in Delhi.

The Desertification Barrier: This range functions as an essential climatic barrier, inhibiting the eastward spread of the Thar Desert into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains.

Hydrological Lifeline: The fractured geological formations of the Aravallis act as significant groundwater recharge areas, fulfilling the water requirements of the densely populated National Capital Region (NCR).

Biodiversity Hotspot: This area serves as an essential wildlife corridor that sustains leopards, hyenas, and unique plant species, functioning as the "green lungs" of North-Western India.

II. The 2025 Dilution: A Shift Towards Procedural Minimalism

Editorials in The Hindu and various reports from prominent newspapers have recently brought to light a troubling trend in which India's judiciary and executive seem to favor swift infrastructure development at the expense of ecological responsibility:

The "100-Metre" Definition Controversy (Nov 2025): The Supreme Court initially endorsed a definition proposed by a government committee that designated only landforms that rise 100 metres or more above local relief as "Aravalli Hills."

The Flaw: This arbitrary administrative criterion disregarded ecological continuity. Consequently, it effectively removed environmental protections from nearly 90% of the area (including foothills, low ridges, and connecting valleys), thereby exposing these regions to unregulated sand and stone extraction.

Weakening the EIA Framework: The overturning of the significant Vanashakti vs Union of India ruling permitted retrospective (post-facto) environmental clearances, significantly diminishing the deterrent effect against illegal corporate mining.

III. The 2026 Pushback: A Judicial Course Correction

In response to significant public protests from conservationists and environmental scientists, the Supreme Court implemented decisive corrective actions in January and February 2026:

Suspension of the Erroneous Definition: A newly constituted Supreme Court bench, under the leadership of CJI Surya Kant, suspended the November 2025 ruling that had accepted the 100-metre definition.

The Court mandated the formation of a High-Powered Expert Committee, consisting of independent ecologists and scientists, to reassess the actual geographical and ecological scope of the ranges.

Cessation of the Haryana Zoo Safari (February 2026): The Haryana government proposed an extensive 3,300-acre jungle safari initiative in the ecologically sensitive Gurugram-Nuh region.

The Supreme Court categorically declined to approve the Detailed Project Report (DPR), asserting, "We will not permit anyone to disturb the Aravallis." The Court decreed that no tourism or infrastructure projects may advance until the expert committee completes a comprehensive, scientifically substantiated definition of the mountain range.

Enforcing Sustainable Mining Strategies: According to recent notifications from the Press Information Bureau (PIB), the Court has mandated the development of a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) that explicitly forbids extraction activities in core inviolate areas, tiger corridors, and groundwater recharge zones.

IV. Systemic Challenges in Environmental Governance:

Regulatory Capture: Major mining and real estate companies often circumvent environmental hearings, perceiving compliance as nothing more than a routine administrative task.

Fragmented Approach: State governments, such as those in Haryana and Rajasthan, frequently regard the Aravallis in a fragmented manner for the purpose of revenue generation, neglecting the fact that the ecosystem operates as a cohesive, inter-state climatic stabilizer.

Illusion of Compensatory Afforestation: Granting permission for the destruction of intricate, ancient ecosystems, such as the Aravallis or coastal mangroves, under the pretense that new trees will be planted in different locations is ecologically unsustainable.

V. Way Forward: Measures for Ecological Course Correction

To guarantee the enduring preservation of the Aravalli range and enhance India's environmental legal framework, the following actions are imperative:

Ecological Demarcation: Formulate a legally enforceable, scientifically grounded definition of the Aravallis that encompasses foothills, low ridges, and interconnecting valleys, while discarding arbitrary metrics based on elevation.

Inter-State Coordination: Establish an Inter-State Aravalli Management Board (including Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi) to implement a cohesive conservation strategy, thereby eliminating fragmented exploitation at the state level.

Strict EIA Enforcement: Eliminate the option for post-facto environmental clearances and rigorously apply the Precautionary Principle prior to the approval of any mining or real estate initiatives.

Inviolate Zones Protection: Enforce comprehensive Management Plans for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) that permanently designate critical wildlife corridors and groundwater recharge areas as strict "no-go" zones.

In-Situ Restoration: Redirect policy emphasis from the misleading notion of "compensatory afforestation" on alternative lands to the proactive, localized ecological restoration of degraded habitats within the Aravalli region.

54. Intent and Outcome: Bridging the Gap in India's Climate Budget 2026-27

Context:

The Union Budget for 2026-27 increases funding for climate initiatives, particularly highlighting the importance of industrial decarbonisation and decentralized solar energy. Nevertheless, environmental economists point out a continuous disparity between India's lofty climate goals and the substantial financial resources necessary to meet net-zero objectives.

I. The Core Strategy of Budget 2026-27:

A Prudent Strategy: The climate budget embodies a multifaceted yet prudent approach, steering clear of broad reforms and instead opting for focused interventions in specific sectors.

Key Sectors of Focus: The budget zeroes in on heavy industries such as cement, steel, aluminium, and fertilizers, along with decentralized solar power, solar irrigation, green hydrogen, and nuclear energy.

Transition from Pilot to Deployment: Experts contend that the budget allocations suggest India remains in a phase of experimentation and demonstration concerning advanced technologies.

This implies that the nation is not yet prepared to initiate immediate, large-scale industrial deployment.



II. The CCUS Push & Export Competitiveness:

Major Allocation: The most significant climate initiative in Budget 2026-27 is a five-year allocation of ₹20,000 crore specifically aimed at CCUS technologies.

Technological Complexities: Although CCUS is essential for sectors that are difficult to decarbonize, international examples from Norway and Canada illustrate that the scaling of this technology is still prohibitively costly and inconsistent.

The CBAM Threat: The forthcoming CBAM from the EU will impose substantial carbon taxes on high-emission imports originating from developing countries.

Strategic Shift: The decarbonization of industrial production has evolved from being merely a climate necessity for India.

It has now become a crucial economic imperative for sustaining export competitiveness, particularly in the steel and aluminium industries.

III. Boosting Decentralised Renewable Energy:

Rooftop Solar Expansion: The PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana has experienced a significant increase in funding, rising to ₹22,000 crore in 2026-27, compared to the revised estimates of ₹17,000 crore.

Multiple Benefits: Decentralized solar energy systems offer numerous advantages, including alleviating land acquisition pressures.

They also help to reduce transmission losses and decrease energy costs for households.

Execution Hurdles: In spite of the financial boost, the initiative encounters challenges in execution.

These challenges primarily arise from insufficient collaboration with power distribution companies (discoms) and obstacles to securing upfront financing for consumers.

Agricultural Solarization: Funding for the PM-KUSUM scheme has been maintained at ₹5,000 crore, bolstered by stronger-than-expected uptake in rural regions.

IV. Nuclear Energy and Green Hydrogen:

Customs Duty Waivers: In an effort to promote nuclear energy, the government has prolonged the exemption of basic customs duty on the importation of nuclear plant equipment until the year 2035.

Nuclear Challenges: In spite of the tax incentives, nuclear power continues to be extremely capital-intensive, grappling with lengthy construction periods and considerable financing risks.

Private Sector Hesitancy: Although recent legislative amendments allow for private involvement in nuclear energy, there remains a notable reluctance from private investors.

This hesitation is primarily attributed to stringent national security regulations and substantial liability concerns.

Green Hydrogen Gap: Even with ongoing policy and financial backing, green hydrogen is still experiencing relatively low levels of actual expenditure.

This situation underscores a continuous disparity between policy aspirations and practical implementation.

55. 'Hop-on, Hop-off': The Illusion of Progress in Global Climate Governance Context:

In spite of thirty years of negotiations led by the United Nations, the governance of global climate issues has transformed into a voluntary "hop-on, hop-off" framework. With greenhouse gas emissions reaching unprecedented levels, recent assessments

(notably COP30) highlight a significant and expanding disparity between diplomatic statements and genuine, enforceable climate measures.

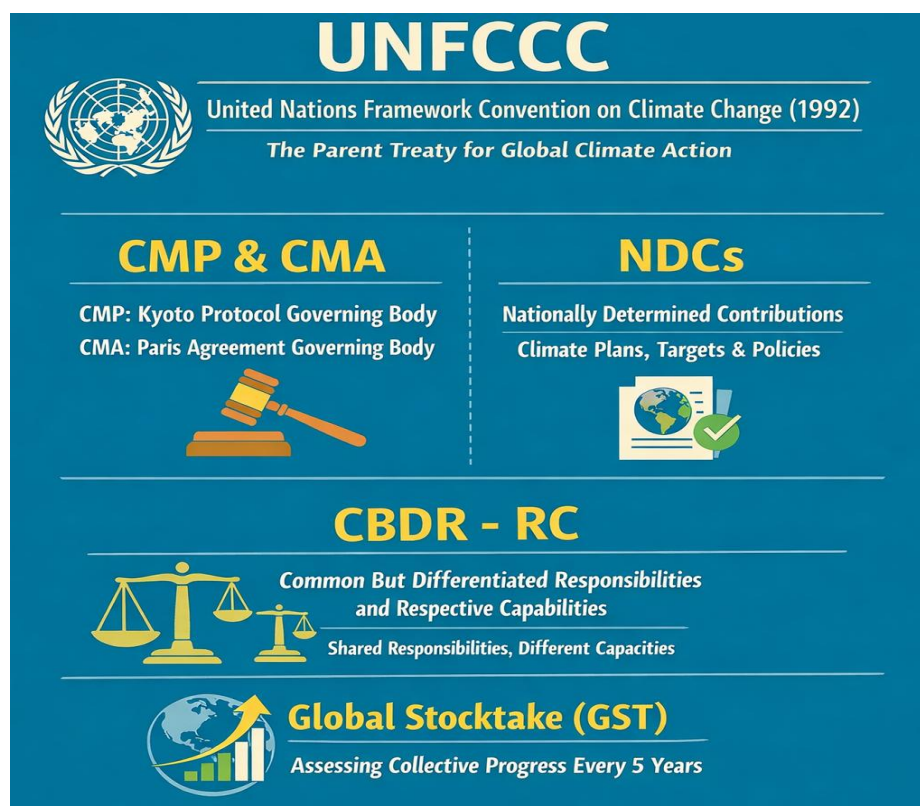
I. The 'Hop-On, Hop-Off' Metaphor Explained:

Former bureaucrats and environmental specialists often liken the existing climate framework to "hop-on, hop-off" tourist buses.

Prioritizing Convenience over Commitment: Nations eagerly "hop on" to endorse ambitious agreements during prominent global summits.

They just as swiftly "hop off" (retract, weaken targets, or disregard implementation) when domestic political or economic circumstances render those commitments impractical.

Perpetual Motion without a Destination: The system is ensnared in procedural multilateralism. It perpetually traverses meetings, frameworks, and evaluations, yet entirely lacks a compulsory, enforceable endpoint for emission reductions.



II. The Triad of Inaction: Politics, Economics, and Society

The failure of climate governance is fundamentally rooted in conflicting priorities across three key areas:

Political Short-Termism:

Achieving climate stability necessitates long-term planning over decades, which is fundamentally at odds with the short-term (4–5 year) electoral cycles.

Politicians tend to focus on managing public expectations and delaying expensive transitions to evade backlash from voters.

Economic Opportunism:

Markets are structured to favor immediate, short-term gains.

Corporations and financial entities take advantage of postponed regulations, favoring growth driven by fossil fuels over the imperative of long-term ecological sustainability.

Societal Disengagement:

The general populace is largely absorbed with pressing immediate needs such as inflation, food security, and housing.

Climate change is often perceived as a distant concern until it becomes a local catastrophe, resulting in a lack of sustained public pressure to inspire political bravery.

III. Shortfalls of Recent Summits (The COP30 Reality)

Recent conferences have faced criticism for emphasizing diplomatic performances at the expense of adhering to planetary limits:

The Emissions Reality: The most recent UNEP Emissions Gap Report indicates that global greenhouse gas emissions have surged to a record high of 57.4 GtCO₂e. Current trends suggest that the 1.5°C limit is likely to be exceeded in the early 2030s.

Voluntary Illusions: Conferences predominantly depend on voluntary commitments instead of enforceable obligations to reduce fossil fuel usage.

The Finance Deficit:

Developing countries are estimated to need between \$2.4 and \$3 trillion each year for both mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Present financial flows are below \$400 billion, often exaggerated through reclassified aid or debt-laden accounting practices.

Weak Adaptation & Loss/Damage: Commitments to enhance adaptation financing frequently lack specific baselines or clearly defined funding sources. Although the Loss and Damage fund has been established, its financial backing remains woefully inadequate for nations that are most at risk.

IV. Systemic Flaws in the UNFCCC:

Consensus-Based Vetoes: The rigid consensus decision-making framework implies that the dissent of just one nation (typically a significant fossil fuel producer) can obstruct or dilute ambitious global objectives.

Weaponizing Uncertainty: Although the scientific consensus (as established by the IPCC) is unequivocal concerning future risk scenarios, political entities intentionally exploit remaining "uncertainty" to rationalize postponements and evade responsibility.

V. The Way Forward: Reforming Climate Governance

To avert irreversible ecological tipping points, a comprehensive reform of the governance framework is essential:

Transition to Legally Binding Commitments: Shift from the solely voluntary NDC framework to legally binding sectoral targets that include rigorous, verifiable enforcement mechanisms.

Revise Decision-Making Processes: Depart from the requirement of absolute consensus and adopt "qualified majority voting" in UN climate negotiations to avoid stalemates caused by a minority of dissenting countries.

Ensure Accountable Climate Finance: Create predictable, time-sensitive, and grant-based (non-debt creating) funding mechanisms for the Global South, with strict adherence to the CBDR principle.

Integrate Trade with Climate Initiatives: Utilize mechanisms such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAMs) judiciously, ensuring they penalize high emissions while not disproportionately affecting developing nations.

Align Climate Action with Development Goals: Directly connect climate initiatives with immediate developmental objectives (like job creation and poverty alleviation) to enhance political feasibility and foster grassroots involvement.

56. The Dal Lake Dilemma: Shifting from Relocation to In-Situ Conservation

Context:

Recently, the government of Jammu & Kashmir has officially abandoned its 17-year-old Dal Lake resettlement project, which had a budget of ₹416.72 crore, due to poor progress. Shifting away from mass eviction, the administration has embraced an in-situ conservation approach, opting to enhance 58 current settlements within the lake into sustainable 'eco-hamlets'.



I. Reasons for the Failure of the 2009 Resettlement Initiative:

Initiated in 2009, the initial plan sought to address lake pollution by permanently relocating around 9,000 families residing by the lake. Nevertheless, it encountered significant administrative and geographical challenges:

Disappointing Progress Rate: Over a span of 17 years, the initiative managed to achieve only 27% of its goal, successfully rehabilitating a mere 1,808 families.

Inadequate Relocation Site: Families were relocated to the Rakh-e-Arth colony in Bemina.

This location was a low-lying, flood-prone marshland that necessitated extensive and costly earth-filling to render it livable.

Insufficient Basic Infrastructure: Despite a budget exceeding ₹416 crore, the new colony was devoid of sufficient drainage, educational, and healthcare facilities.

Socio-Economic Disruption: The relocation entirely disconnected the Hanji community from their traditional, water-dependent livelihoods, resulting in significant socio-cultural resistance and increased poverty.

II. Fundamental Ecological Pressures Impacting Dal Lake:

Although the resettlement initiative was unsuccessful, the ecological crisis threatening the lake continues to escalate:

Diminishing Surface Area: Satellite imagery indicates that the lake's clean water surface has significantly decreased due to illegal earth-filling and encroachments.

Untreated Sewage Discharge: Substantial volumes of untreated wastewater from nearby hotels, houseboats, and urban catchment areas are discharged directly into the lake basins.

Obstructed Water Circulation: Unplanned internal structures and excessive siltation have obstructed natural water pathways, transforming sections of the lake into stagnant pools.

Decline of Native Biodiversity: High levels of nutrient loading have led to rampant weed growth, which is actively suffocating native aquatic plants and animals.

III. The Paradigm Shift: In-Situ Conservation

Recognizing previous shortcomings, the government has significantly revised its conservation approach, shifting from eviction to an inclusive ecological framework:

Acknowledging Dwellers as Stakeholders: The updated policy now recognizes the lake dwellers as an "essential component of the lake ecosystem" instead of viewing them as unlawful encroachers.

Establishing 'Eco-Hamlets': Fifty-eight current hamlets within the lake will be methodically transformed into contemporary eco-villages without displacing their inhabitants.

A pilot initiative at Kachri Mohalla has already been successfully completed.

The IIT Roorkee DPR: A new ₹212.38-crore Detailed Project Report has been prepared under the Prime Minister's Development Package.

Key Interventions: The report emphasizes the installation of modular Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) directly within the lake hamlets.

It also gives priority to scientific dredging and the restoration of internal channels to reinstate natural water flushing.

IV. The Way Forward:

Strict Limits on Carrying Capacity: Although residents are permitted to reside, the LCMA is required to scientifically establish and rigorously implement a limit on the number of structures and houseboats that the lake can support.

Enhancement of Livelihoods: Offer environmentally sustainable livelihood options, including training local youth in scientific methods of weed removal and the management of sustainable eco-tourism.

Thorough Monitoring of STPs: The effectiveness of the "Eco-Hamlet" model is entirely dependent on the ongoing, seamless functioning of the proposed modular STPs to guarantee zero liquid discharge into the lake.

57. Project Cheetah Milestone: Five Cubs Born to Namibian Cheetah at Kuno National Park

Context:

Recently, the Namibian cheetah named 'Aasha' gave birth to five cubs at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. This event signifies the eighth successful cheetah litter recorded in India, thereby increasing the total cheetah population in the country to 35, which comprises 24 surviving cubs born in India.

I. Background: Project Cheetah

Historical Extinction: The Asiatic Cheetah was officially recognized as extinct in India in 1952, primarily due to factors such as sport hunting, habitat fragmentation, and a diminished prey base.

The Translocation Initiative: Initiated on September 17, 2022, Project Cheetah represents the first-ever inter-continental translocation initiative for large wild carnivores.

Phased Introductions:

Phase 1 (Sep 2022): A total of eight cheetahs were airlifted from Namibia and subsequently released into Kuno National Park (KNP).

Phase 2 (Feb 2023): An additional twelve cheetahs were imported from South Africa.

Recent Expansions (Feb 2026): In order to accommodate the expanding population, a new group of cheetahs from Botswana has been introduced into quarantine enclosures, while alternative habitats such as Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary are being actively populated.

Statutory & Constitutional Framework

Conservation Status: IUCN Red List: Vulnerable (African Cheetah) Critically Endangered (Asiatic Cheetah)	CITES: Appendix I (Strictly prohibits international commercial trade)
--	--

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I (Absolute protection & highest penalties for violations)

Nodal Authorities:
National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) & Wildlife Institute of India (WII) under MoEFCC

African Cheetah **Asiatic Cheetah**

Constitutional Basis: Article 48A: "The State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country."	Article 51A (g): "It is the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife."
---	---

II. Ecological Significance of the Reintroduction:

Restoring Apex Predators:

Cheetahs serve as apex predators within grassland and scrubland ecosystems.

They play a crucial role in regulating herbivore populations, which helps to prevent overgrazing and ensures the stability of food webs.

Umbrella Species Concept:

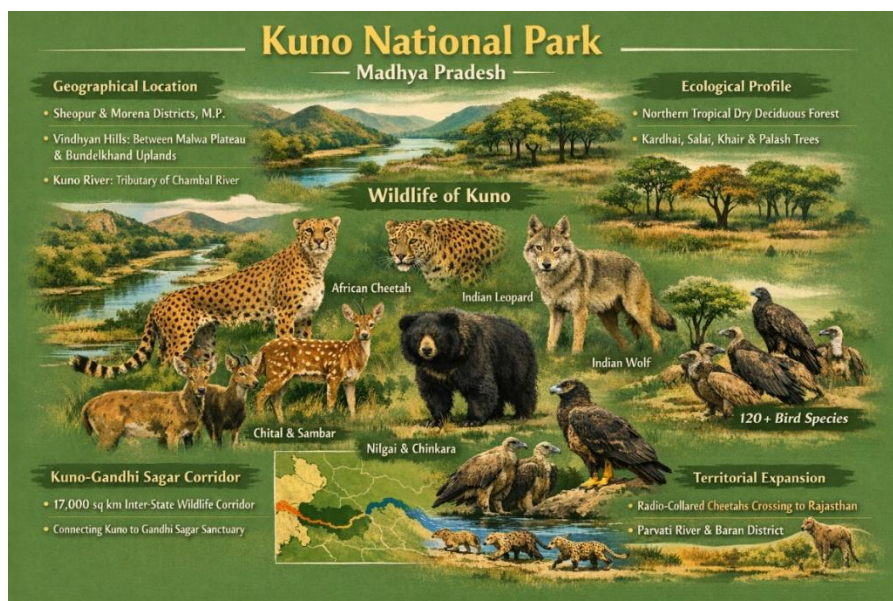
The conservation of cheetahs necessitates the protection of their extensive dry grassland habitat.

This approach offers a protective "umbrella" for other endangered native species, including the Indian Wolf and the Great Indian Bustard.

Socio-Economic Benefits:

The presence of this charismatic big cat enhances eco-tourism.

This, in turn, creates sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities and promotes conservation efforts led by the community.



III. Challenges in the Translocation Journey:

Climatic and Biological Adaptation: The shift from the Southern Hemisphere has modified the biological rhythms of cheetahs.

Numerous individuals developed dense winter fur during the humid Indian monsoon, resulting in deadly maggot infestations and septicaemia in 2023.

Space and Territoriality: Kuno National Park exhibits a high population density of leopards, which increases the likelihood of inter-species conflicts.

Cheetahs necessitate extensive, uninterrupted landscapes to securely establish their home ranges.

Adaptive Release Strategy: In response to the initial adult fatalities, the Cheetah Project Steering Committee implemented a stringent phased release protocol.

Current releases into the wild now prioritize male coalitions first, followed by solitary females, and finally mothers accompanied by cubs.

IV. Way Forward & Adaptive Management:

Habitat Expansion: Accelerating the readiness of secondary habitats, including the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, is essential to mitigate overcrowding at KNP.

Evidence-Based Monitoring: Implementing round-the-clock, non-intrusive surveillance through the use of radio collars and the deployment of specialized veterinary teams to monitor health indicators remotely.

Prey Base Augmentation: Persistently fostering a strong and varied prey population (such as Chital) throughout all designated habitats to meet the nutritional requirements of the growing, naturally reproducing wild population.

58. Delhi's War on Waste: MCD Unveils 15-Point Action Plan for SWM Rules 2026

Context:

Recently, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) unveiled a 15-point action plan aimed at facilitating a smooth transition to the newly established Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2026. This framework places significant emphasis on four-way source segregation and the rejuvenation of zero-waste colonies throughout the 12 zones of Delhi.

I. Key Highlights of the MCD's 15-Point Action Plan:

The action plan emphasizes the importance of decentralized waste management and aims to alleviate the pressure on Delhi's overcrowded legacy landfills.

Four-Way Source Segregation:

The initiative requires the rigorous categorization of waste at the household level into four distinct types: wet, dry, sanitary, and special care waste. Zonal Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to create ward-specific strategies to implement this in stages.

Revival of Zero-Waste Colonies:

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) intends to rejuvenate current zero-waste initiatives and aims to establish two to five new zero-waste colonies each month.

These colonies will be equipped with on-site processing facilities, including organic waste converters and composting machines.

Infrastructure & Micro Recovery Facilities (MRFs):

Local authorities will manage the collection and transportation of waste directly to MRFs.

Outdated or neglected waste collection sites (dhalaos) will be transformed into contemporary recovery facilities.

Integration of the Informal Sector:

Informal waste collectors will be incorporated into the official municipal system.

They will receive regular training, safety equipment, and financial rewards.

Strict Landfill Restrictions:

According to the new guidelines, the disposal of mixed waste is strictly forbidden.

Landfills will only accept non-recyclable, non-energy recoverable, and inert waste.



II. Transitioning to the SWM Rules 2026:

Issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2026 will officially supersede the previous 2016 framework beginning in April 2026.

Shift in Paradigm: The 2026 regulations transition from a focus on simple "collection and disposal" to an emphasis on "recovery and circular economy."

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Imposes greater accountability on large waste producers and packaging manufacturers to reclaim post-consumer waste.

III. Persisting Challenges in Delhi's Waste Management:

Behavioral Apathy: Achieving complete door-to-door four-way segregation is challenging due to insufficient civic awareness and public hesitance.

Processing Deficit: Although Delhi produces more than 11,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste each day, there exists a significant disparity between the volume of waste generated and the actual processing capabilities.

This discrepancy in processing results in ongoing dumping at the already overloaded landfill sites of Ghazipur, Bhalswa, and Okhla.

Inadequate Enforcement: Previous regulations (such as SWM 2016 and the Plastic Waste Management Rules) have been hindered by ineffective enforcement and a lack of punitive measures against non-compliant bulk waste generators.

IV. Way Forward:

Behavioral Nudges & IEC: Implementing proactive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) initiatives prior to imposing penalties on citizens for failing to segregate waste.

Technological Integration: Employing GPS tracking systems for waste collection vehicles along with real-time dashboard oversight to deter illegal dumping activities.

Capacity Augmentation: Accelerating the development of planned Waste-to-Energy (WtE) and Bio-CNG facilities to address the existing processing shortfall.

59. Agrarian Innovation: New Kashmir Wheat Varieties to Stabilize the Rice-Wheat Cropping Cycle

Context:

Recently, researchers at SKUAST-Kashmir have unveiled early-maturing wheat varieties, namely Shalimar Wheat-3 (SW-3) and Shalimar Wheat-4 (SW-4), aimed at enhancing local agricultural cycles. This significant advancement safeguards the integrity of the essential rice-wheat rotation in the Kashmir valley.

I. The Crop Cycle Challenge in Kashmir:

The Rice-Wheat Rotation: In the region of Kashmir, the agricultural system is significantly reliant on the sequential planting of wheat followed by rice.

The Sowing and Harvesting Conflict: Wheat is generally sown in the month of October and necessitates harvesting by the onset of early summer.

Paddy (rice), which is the primary crop, requires that fields be entirely cleared for transplantation by May or June.

The Problem with Older Varieties: Conventional wheat varieties, frequently obtained from subtropical plains, exhibit late maturation (from late June to July) in the cooler climate of Kashmir.

This results in a postponement of paddy transplantation, which consequently leads to diminished rice yields and compels farmers to forgo the double-cropping rotation entirely.



II. Key Features of the New Varieties (SW-3 and SW-4):

Developed by the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST-K), these varieties provide customized solutions for agriculture in mid-altitude regions.

Accelerated Maturity: SW-4: Reaches maturity by the final week of May.

SW-3: Reaches maturity by the initial week of June, aligning seamlessly with the conventional paddy transplantation period.

Dual Utility (Grain and Fodder): These crops yield high-quality grain suitable for human consumption.

Additionally, they produce significant straw, which is essential as winter fodder for livestock in severe, cold areas such as Gurez.

Biofortification and Yield: SW-3 is biofortified, containing more than 40 ppm of iron and zinc, in addition to a protein content of 12%.

Both varieties present a high yield potential of up to 38 quintals per hectare.

Disease Resistance: They demonstrate robust genetic resistance to Yellow Rust, a fungal disease that leads to considerable stunting and crop loss in cooler climates.

III. Socio-Economic and Security Dimensions:

Ensuring Farmer Livelihoods: By enabling farmers to effectively cultivate two primary crops within a single year, these varieties enhance land utilization and increase farm revenue.

Promoting Regional Food Security: Stabilizing the rice-wheat cycle diminishes the Union Territory's reliance on food grains sourced from adjacent states.

Empowering Tribal Communities: Seed distribution initiatives have been specifically aimed at remote tribal regions along the Line of Control (LoC), including the Gurez valley.

This fosters inclusive agricultural development and lessens external seed reliance in geographically isolated regions.

Cropping Season	Sowing & Harvesting	Key Characteristics	Examples
-----------------	---------------------	---------------------	----------

Rabi (Winter)	Sown: Oct-Nov Harvest: Mar-June	Requires cool climate for growth and warm climate for seed maturation.	Wheat, Barley, Mustard, Gram
Kharif (Monsoon)	Sown: June-July Harvest: Sep-Oct	Requires high temperature and heavy rainfall/humidity.	Paddy (Rice), Maize, Cotton

IV. Way Forward:

Seed Multiplication: State agriculture departments must establish decentralized seed banks to scale up the production of SW-3 and SW-4 seeds for wider distribution.

Extension Services: Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) need to conduct aggressive frontline demonstrations to build farmer confidence in transitioning away from traditional, late-maturing varieties.

Continuous R&D: Sustained investment is required to develop further climate-resilient strains that can withstand the increasingly erratic weather patterns induced by climate change.

60. Ecological Indicator: Eurasian Diving Duck in Kaziranga Flags Climate Change Concerns

Context:

Recently, during the 7th Waterbird Census, the rare Eurasian diving duck, referred to locally as the 'Smew,' was observed for the first time in Kaziranga National Park. This occurrence not only underscores the health of the region's wetlands but also raises concerns among ornithologists, who caution that it indicates climate-induced shifts in the migratory patterns of birds.

I. Profile of the 'Smew' (Eurasian Diving Duck):

Scientific Name & Family: *Mergellus albellus* (Family: Anatidae).

Physical Characteristics: This species is a small, visually captivating diving duck. Males are characterized by a striking black-masked white body, whereas females exhibit mottled brown feathers with gentler facial markings.

Habitat and Distribution: Breeding Grounds: This species primarily breeds in the frigid, tree-fringed freshwater lakes of the Eurasian taiga (Northern Europe and Siberia).

Winter Migration: During harsh winters, it generally migrates to somewhat milder areas in Europe and East Asia.

Status in India: It is an exceedingly rare winter visitor to India.

Previous sporadic sightings have been confined to northern and central wetlands, including the Haiderpur Wetland in Uttar Pradesh.

II. Findings of the 7th Kaziranga Waterbird Census (2026)

The Sighting Location: The Smew was notably sighted at the Rowmari-Donduwa beels (wetlands) situated in the Laokhowa buffer zone of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

Overall Bird Count: The census documented over 1.05 lakh individual waterbirds from 107 species across 166 wetlands.

There was a slight decrease in the total numbers compared to 2025, which officials attribute to changes in hydrology and habitat deterioration.

Dominant Species: The most prevalent species recorded during this survey were the Bar-headed Goose, Northern Pintail, and Lesser Whistling Duck.

Important Environmental Terminologies

Vagrant Species:

A bird or animal found entirely outside its normal migration range or natural habitat, often pushed by extreme weather or climate shifts.



Statutory & Constitutional Basis:

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:**
Protecting migratory bird habitats & declaring IBAs as National Parks & Sanctuaries.
- **Article 51A (g):** Fundamental duty of every citizen to protect & improve the natural environment.

Indicator Species:

Species whose presence, absence, or abundance reflects a specific environmental condition.

e.g., "The Smew indicates fish-rich, healthy water bodies."



Global Conventions

Bonn Convention (CMS):

The UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



India:

Signatory to legally protect migratory birds & their habitats across the Central Asian Flyway.



III. Why is this Sighting a Climate Change Concern?

Altered Migratory Routes: The migration of birds adheres to highly defined, seasonal patterns that have evolved over thousands of years.

When a species is found far beyond its usual geographic territory, it signifies significant ecological distress or alterations in environmental conditions.

Impact of Global Warming: Increasing global temperatures modify precipitation patterns, wind dynamics, and snowfall amounts in the Arctic and European taiga.

These changes disrupt established breeding habitats and food supplies, compelling birds to forsake their traditional "sky highways" in search of new wintering sites.

Threat to Refueling Stops: Long-distance migratory birds depend significantly on wetlands as crucial refueling stations for rest and energy replenishment.

Should climate change and industrial pollution compromise these stopover locations, entire migratory systems may face collapse.

IV. Way Forward & Adaptive Measures:

Holistic Wetland Management: Transitioning from simply enumerating bird populations to prioritizing the hydrological restoration of both perennial and seasonal beels (floodplain lakes) within the Brahmaputra basin.

Strengthening Anti-Poaching: Improving ground surveillance measures to safeguard these vital refuelling sites from illegal hunting, encroachment, and agricultural runoff.

Global Collaboration: Leveraging data derived from these biological indicators to bolster international climate policy and enhance transboundary conservation initiatives in accordance with the Ramsar Convention.

61. India's Wetland Wealth: Patna Bird Sanctuary and Chhari-Dhand Gain Ramsar Status

Context:

Ahead of World Wetlands Day 2026, the Union Environment Ministry announced the addition of Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat) to the Ramsar list. This elevates India's total Ramsar sites to 98, reflecting a 276% expansion since 2014 and underscoring the nation's strong commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Constitutional, Statutory & Institutional Framework

The Ramsar Convention (1971):

An international, intergovernmental treaty signed in Ramsar, Iran, dedicated to the conservation and "wise use" of wetlands.

India ratified the convention and became a Contracting Party on February 1, 1982.

Constitutional Mandate:

- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the country's wildlife.

Statutory Framework:

Regulated domestically under the *Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017* (notified under the *Environment Protection Act, 1986*).

Emphasizes the "wise use" principle and

Decentralizes wetland management to State Wetland Authorities.

1. Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh): A Freshwater Refuge



Geographical Location: Nestled within the Jalesar subdivision of Etah district, Uttar Pradesh, this sanctuary covers slightly more than 1 square kilometer (approximately 108 hectares), making it the smallest bird sanctuary in the state.

Ecological Profile: This sanctuary features a vibrant freshwater wetland ecosystem, consisting of lentic (still water) lakes, marshes, and woodlands, all encircled by agricultural areas.

The prevalent aquatic flora includes water hyacinth and Potamogeton species, which serve as vital feeding habitats.

Avian Biodiversity: It plays a significant role as a wintering site along the Central Asian Flyway.

The sanctuary is home to more than 300 species, hosting over 300,000 birds, including the Rosy Pelican, Eurasian Spoonbill, Northern Pintail, and Lesser Whistling Duck.

It is globally acknowledged as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International.

2. Chhari-Dhand Wetland Reserve (Gujarat): An Oasis in the Desert



Geographical Location: Situated in the Kutch district of Gujarat, this reserve lies at the boundary of the arid Banni grasslands and the marshy salt flats of the Rann of Kutch.

In the local Kutchi dialect, 'Chhari' translates to 'salty,' while 'Dhand' means 'shallow wetland.'

Ecological Profile: This reserve is characterized as a distinctive seasonal saline desert wetland, which can expand to 80 square kilometers during the monsoon season, nourished by rivers flowing northward and runoff from adjacent hills.

Fauna & Migratory Hub: It serves as a key stopover for migratory birds entering the Indian subcontinent through the western route.

Avifauna: The reserve supports endangered species such as the Dalmatian Pelican, Indian Skimmer, Black-necked Stork, and the vulnerable Common Pochard, in addition to thousands of flamingos and cranes.

Terrestrial Wildlife: The adjacent drylands offer essential habitats for desert-adapted wildlife, including chinkara, caracal, Indian wolves, and desert foxes.

62. Beyond Display: Revamping Ex-Situ Conservation under the Central Zoo Authority

Context:

Recently, the MoEFCC chaired the 43rd and 44th meetings of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) alongside its 34th Foundation Day. The deliberations focused on transitioning Indian zoos from mere menageries into premier centers for ex-situ conservation, scientific research, and environmental education.

I. Key Policy Decisions from the recent Meetings:

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE):

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has mandated the completion of the second cycle of MEE for all large and medium-sized zoos by the conclusion of May 2026.

MEE represents an evidence-based, independent evaluation aimed at upholding the highest international standards in animal welfare and enclosure design.

Financial and Social Integration:

A dedicated sub-committee has been established to leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to address financial deficiencies in contemporary zoo management.

Additionally, the CZA has resolved to seek proactive recommendations from Members of Parliament (MPs) to enhance recognized zoos situated within their respective constituencies.

Youth Engagement & Awareness:

Recognizing that the younger generation is increasingly immersed in digital environments, the CZA has highlighted the importance of organized school visits and interactive annual calendars.

The clear objective is to re-establish a connection between urban residents and the natural environment, fostering empathy towards wildlife.

II. The Paradigm Shift: National Zoo Policy (1998)

From Entertainment to Conservation: The conventional notion of zoos as mere "animal display centers" for human enjoyment has been completely abandoned.

Primary Objective: The policy formally asserts that the main function of an Indian zoo is ex-situ conservation (safeguarding endangered species beyond their natural environments).

Educational Duty: Zoos are required to act as living laboratories for veterinary medicine, animal nutrition, and public education regarding the importance of preserving ecological balance.



III. Emerging Challenges in Zoo Management:

Zoonotic Disease Threats: The ongoing danger posed by pathogens such as Avian Influenza and Feline Panleukopenia necessitates stringent bio-security protocols and the immediate implementation of the "One Health" strategy—acknowledging the interrelated health of animals, humans, and ecosystems.

Inbreeding Depression: Captive populations that are isolated frequently experience a decline in genetic diversity.

This situation calls for scientifically managed animal exchange initiatives across state lines, which will ensure a strong genetic pool among major facilities (for instance, facilitating coordination between the Nehru Zoological Park and the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park).

Financial Constraints: The upkeep of large enclosures that replicate natural environments and the provision of specialized veterinary services are extremely costly, often exceeding the typical allocations of state budgets.

IV. Way Forward:

Technological Integration: Embracing contemporary digital tracking, remote health surveillance, and sophisticated reproductive technologies (such as artificial insemination and cryopreservation) for the conservation of endangered species.

In-situ Linkages: Ex-situ conservation efforts in zoos should not operate in isolation; they must ultimately contribute to in-situ conservation initiatives. Robust, captive-bred animal populations should be adequately prepared for rewilding and subsequent release into safeguarded national parks.

63. Green Highways: NHAI Pioneers India's First 'Bee Corridors' for Pollinator Conservation

Context:

Recently, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) launched a first-of-its-kind initiative to develop dedicated 'Bee Corridors' along National Highways. This marks a

strategic policy shift from ornamental roadside landscaping to ecologically driven green corridors to protect declining pollinator populations.

I. What does the 'Bee Corridor' Initiative entail?

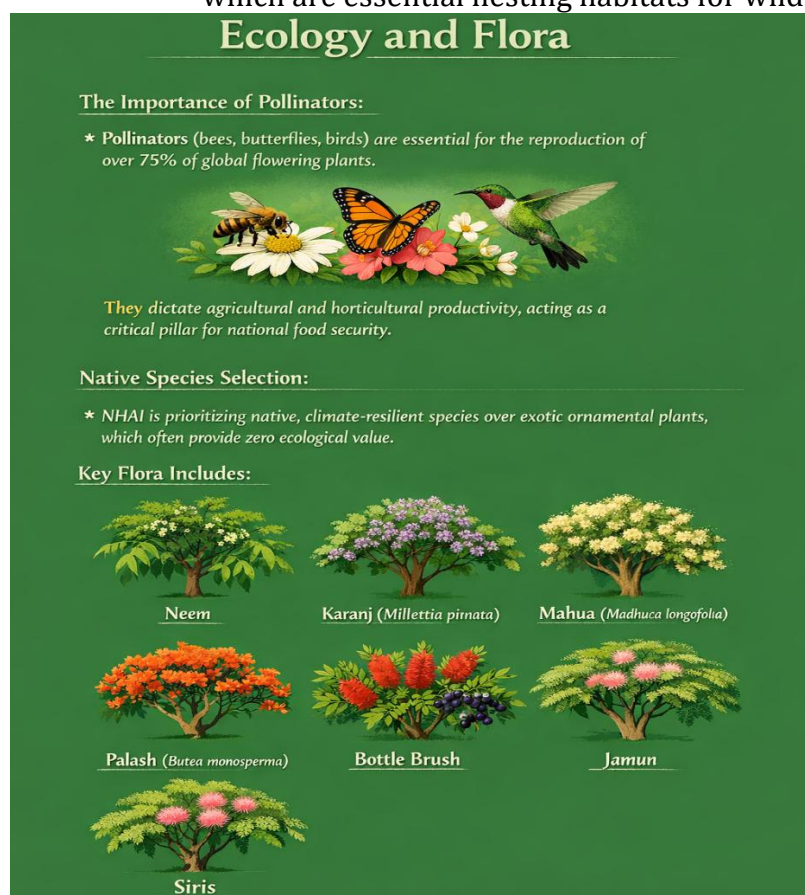
Ecological Plantations: This initiative focuses on establishing continuous linear stretches of vegetation that are conducive to bee populations along highway networks.

Year-Round Sustenance: The corridors will incorporate a carefully selected variety of trees, shrubs, herbs, and grasses that are rich in nectar and pollen.

The selection of species is designed to ensure a staggered flowering cycle, thereby providing a nearly continuous bloom throughout various seasons.

Rewilding the Highways: Rather than maintaining manicured lawns, this initiative promotes the natural blooming of native flowering weeds.

Additionally, it requires the preservation of dead wood and hollow trunks, which are essential nesting habitats for wild bee species.



II. Strategy for Implementation and Objectives:

Strategic Spacing: Clusters of flowering plants will be strategically positioned at intervals ranging from 500 meters to 1 kilometer.

This specific spacing aligns with the natural foraging range (flight distance) of both honeybees and wild bees.

Target for 2026-27: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) aims to plant approximately 4 million trees along national highways.

About 60% of these plantings will specifically be part of the 'Bee Corridor' initiative.

By the end of this financial year, at least three dedicated and fully operational pollinator corridors will be established by field offices.

III. Governance and Constitutional Dimensions:

Sustainable Infrastructure: This policy is in alignment with the overarching governance objective of establishing Climate-Resilient Infrastructure, effectively bridging the divide between swift road development and the conservation of biodiversity.

Constitutional Backing:

Article 48A (DPSP): Mandates the State to safeguard and enhance the environment while protecting forests and wildlife.

Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties): Imposes a duty on citizens and state entities to preserve and improve the natural environment, thereby fostering ecological balance.

IV. Socio-Economic and Environmental Impact:

Mitigating Ecological Stress: The construction of highways has historically resulted in the fragmentation of habitats.

These continuous corridors serve as ecological "bridges," facilitating the reconnection of fragmented landscapes and averting inbreeding among isolated insect populations.

Boosting Agrarian Economies: Robust bee populations located near rural highways will naturally enhance pollination in adjacent agricultural lands.

This improvement leads to increased crop yields for local farmers without the need for chemical interventions.

Cost-Effective Maintenance: Indigenous Indian plant species are particularly well-suited to local agro-climatic conditions.

They necessitate considerably less water and chemical fertilizers in comparison to non-native roadside ornamentals, thereby alleviating the long-term financial burden on the exchequer.

64. Fortifying Public Trust: Insights from the International Conference on Dam Safety 2026

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti concluded the International Conference on Dam Safety (ICDS) in Bengaluru. Organized under the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP), the summit prioritized climate resilience, technological integration, and strict regulatory governance to secure India's aging water infrastructure.

Statutory & Institutional Architecture

With India ranking third globally in the number of large dams, a robust legal architecture is non-negotiable for public safety.

The Dam Safety Act, 2021:

Moved dam management from state-level ambiguity to a legally binding national framework.

National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS)



Frames uniform safety policies & protocols

National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)



Regulatory body,
Resolves inter-state disputes,
Enforces compliance

State Level Bodies



SCDS & SDSA for local monitoring

Constitutional Angle



Water is a State Subject (Entry 17 of the State List)

→ Act invoked Entry 56 of Union List

→ For regulation of inter-state rivers & valleys

DRIP



Dam Rehabilitation & Improvement Project

World Bank-Assisted Initiative

→ Phases II & III: Rehabilitation of Hundreds of Dams

I. Key Highlights from ICDS 2026:

Multidimensional Governance:

The conference transformed the discussion surrounding dam safety from standard engineering inspections to a more holistic approach involving comprehensive, multidimensional governance.

Deliberations placed significant emphasis on risk-informed decision-making, climate-adaptive reservoir management, and the necessity for institutional accountability.

Tackling Dam Distress:

Sessions that examined historical dam failures underscored that structural distress frequently arises from neglected maintenance and insufficient sediment management practices.

Experts stressed the critical importance of strictly following original construction standards and developing effective Emergency Action Plans (EAPs).

Global Collaboration: The summit served as a platform for knowledge exchange, uniting the World Bank, the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD), and regulatory bodies to discuss and share proven solutions for structural rehabilitation.

II. Technological Innovations & Digital Launches:

In order to connect intricate regulatory data with immediate field applications, a number of digital platforms have been launched:

DAMCHAT:

An AI-driven digital knowledge platform created by the International Centre of Excellence for Dams (ICED) at IIT Roorkee.

This platform offers dam owners and engineers immediate, AI-enhanced access to regulatory frameworks and technical guidelines.

Jal Shakti Data Management Platform: This platform was developed by the National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC) to facilitate the management of essential water resources and infrastructure data across the country.

Standardized Flood Estimation: Recently, new technical manuals on Design Flood Estimation have been published to unify calculations for mini and micro catchments.

This is essential for producing comprehensive flood hydrographs, performing precise Dam Break Analyses, and delineating downstream inundation areas.

III. Emerging Threats to Reservoir Integrity:

Climate Variability: The rising occurrence of severe hydrological phenomena, including cloudbursts and flash floods, poses a risk of surpassing the flood capacity originally designed for older infrastructures.

Ageing Infrastructure: A considerable proportion of India's major dams have surpassed 50 years of age, rendering them susceptible to material deterioration, concrete spalling, and structural wear.

Sediment Accumulation: Excessive sedimentation from upstream catchments significantly diminishes the "live storage" capacity of reservoirs.

This situation not only jeopardizes water and energy security but also heightens structural stress during intense monsoon inflows.

IV. The Way Forward:

Coordinated Operations: The implementation of integrated management for both upstream and downstream reservoirs is crucial. This approach guarantees that emergency water discharges from one dam do not trigger a series of disasters for communities located downstream.

"Monument of Public Trust": As highlighted by ministers during the conference, it is essential to regard dams as assets held in public trust. It is imperative to prioritize funding for their systematic operation and maintenance, as neglecting maintenance significantly escalates lifecycle costs and associated risks.

Advanced Monitoring Systems: There is a pressing need to rapidly enhance the deployment of validated real-time data sensors, conduct drone-based structural health evaluations, and utilize digital twins for the establishment of early warning systems.

DEFENSE & INTERNAL SECURITY

65. Strategic Realignment: Increased Defence Capital Outlay and the Urgent Need for Process Reform

Context:

In the Union Budget for 2026-27, India's defence budget experienced a significant increase of 15%, reaching ₹7.85 lakh crore and surpassing the 2% of GDP mark. Although the substantial growth in capital expenditure highlights the focus on military modernization, experts warn that unless persistent procurement issues are addressed, the increased funding will not effectively enhance strategic capabilities.

I. Key Highlights of Defence Budget 2026-27:

Financial Milestone: The Ministry of Defence has been allocated ₹7.85 lakh crore, representing 14.67% of the overall Central Government expenditure.

Capital Outlay Surge: There has been a notable increase in capital expenditure, which has risen by more than 22%, now making up approximately 28% of the total defence budget.

Rebalancing the Ledger: This considerable rise addresses years of structural imbalance, during which revenue expenses related to manpower (such as salaries and pensions) predominated the budget.

Push for Indigenisation: About 75% of the capital acquisition budget is specifically earmarked for domestic defence industries, reinforcing the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

Constitutional & Policy Framework

Dimension Relevant Provisions & Frameworks

Constitutional Basis

- **Schedule VII, Union List (Entry 1):** The Defense of India and every part thereof, including preparation for defense, is exclusively a central subject.
- **Article 266:** Mandates that all revenues go into the Consolidated Fund of India. Unspent defense funds naturally lapse at year-end unless a statutory non-lapsable fund is explicitly created by Parliament.

Statutory/Policy Basis

- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** The overarching manual governing the capital procurement of defense equipment. It aggressively prioritizes the "Buy (Indian-IDDMM)" category to promote indigenous design, development, and manufacturing.

II. Drivers Behind the Increased Capital Spending:

Modernization Necessity: The Indian Air Force and Army have been granted significant increases (exceeding 30%) to swiftly acquire advanced systems, heavy machinery, and next-generation armaments.

Geopolitical Challenges: Ongoing two-front border issues and a swiftly declining global security landscape require the immediate replenishment of weapons.

Technological Advancement: The military is redirecting its attention towards integrating disruptive deep technologies, such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, autonomous drones, and space-based resources.

III. Persisting Bottlenecks: Why We Must 'Fix the Process'

Bureaucratic Delays & The L1 Rule:

The stringent Lowest-Bidder (L1) procurement policy disproportionately benefits established industrial corporations.

This hinders nimble MSMEs and deep-tech innovators who are unable to endure prolonged gestation periods without guaranteed demand.

Underutilization of Funds:

Persistent bureaucratic delays in significant acquisition initiatives frequently result in unspent funds.

For instance, the Ministry of Defence had to return ₹12,500 crore of its capital allocation unspent during the FY2024–25 cycle.

Absence of a Dedicated Fund:

The government has yet to activate a Non-Lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund.

As a result, unspent capital allocations lapse at the conclusion of the fiscal year, thereby compromising long-term defence planning in favor of short-term fiscal expediency.

Fragmented R&D:

India's total Research & Development expenditure remains alarmingly low at 0.66% of GDP (in contrast to Japan's 3.7%).

Although DRDO's budget has risen to ₹29,100 crore, defence research continues to be largely isolated with minimal integration from the private sector.

IV. Defence Spending as an Economic Multiplier:

Beyond 'Guns vs Butter': An increase in defense capital expenditure serves as a significant driver for national progress, in line with the aspiration of a \$30-trillion Viksit Bharat economy.

Substantial Job Creation: Targeted investments, especially in domestic shipbuilding and aerospace, yield considerable multiplier effects.

The shipbuilding industry alone produces 6.5 times the jobs compared to other traditional manufacturing sectors.

Export Surge: Enhanced domestic manufacturing has positioned India as a rising exporter in the aerospace and defense sectors.

Defense exports have escalated from just ₹1,000 crore in 2014 to more than ₹23,000 crore today.

V. Way Forward:

Establish the Modernisation Fund: It is imperative for Parliament to promptly activate a Non-Lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund to guarantee consistent funding for multi-year capital acquisitions.

Overhaul Procurement Norms: Transition from the outdated L1 criterion to a "Value for Money" framework. The government should ensure reliable demand and confirmed volumes to stimulate deep-tech start-ups.

Foster Civil-Military R&D Fusion: There should be a proactive mandate for joint ventures among DRDO, academic institutions, and the private sector to create essential components such as compound semiconductors and neuromorphic chips.

66. Mega Defence Boost: DAC Approves 114 Rafales for IAF and Six P-8I Aircraft for Navy

Context:

Recently, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) granted the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for military equipment valued at ₹3.6 lakh crore. This significant approval encompasses 114 Rafale fighter jets for the Indian Air Force and six more P-8I maritime patrol aircraft for the Indian Navy, aimed at addressing essential operational capability deficiencies.

I. The 114 Rafale (MRFA) Project for the IAF:

Deal Structure: The acquisition of 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) is anticipated to be carried out under a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement with France, with an estimated cost of approximately ₹3.25 lakh crore.

Make in India Push: Approximately 18 to 20 jets will be procured in a 'fly-away' state to address immediate operational needs.

The remaining 90+ fighters will be produced domestically by Dassault Aviation in partnership with Indian firms, aiming for 50-60% indigenous content.

Operational Necessity:

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is presently facing a reduced strength of about 29-30 fighter squadrons, compared to a sanctioned strength of 42.

The introduction of these 4.5-generation jets—equipped with state-of-the-art SCALP cruise missiles and Meteor air-to-air missiles—will greatly enhance India's air superiority and deep-strike deterrence.

DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)	The highest decision-making body in the Ministry of Defence for deciding on new capital acquisitions. Chaired by the Union Minister of Defence.
Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)	The crucial first formal step in the defence procurement process under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020. Formally acknowledges that the military requires the specific equipment.
Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)	Following the AoN, the proposal undergoes rigorous cost negotiations before seeking final financial clearance from this apex committee, chaired by the Prime Minister.

II. Six Additional P-8I Poseidon Aircraft for the Indian Navy:

Strategic Role: The P-8I is a Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-Submarine Warfare (LRMR-ASW) aircraft produced by Boeing, a company based in the United States.

Capabilities & Features:

This aircraft serves as a significant force multiplier, outfitted with sophisticated radars, AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, and Mk-54 lightweight torpedoes.

It is equipped with a Magnetic Anomaly Detector (MAD) specifically designed to meet Indian needs for tracking adversarial submarines in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Fleet Augmentation: The Indian Navy currently operates 12 P-8I aircraft. The introduction of these six additional platforms will increase the fleet size to 18, thereby enhancing India's maritime domain awareness in response to growing regional naval threats.

III. Other Key Clearances by the DAC:

AS-HAPS: Authorization for an Air-Ship Based High Altitude Pseudo Satellite (AS-HAPS) aimed at continuous Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) as well as electronic intelligence collection.

Marine Power Generators: Acquisition of 4 MW Marine Gas Turbine-based Electric Power Generators to lessen reliance on international manufacturers for naval power systems categorized under 'Make-I'.

Indian Coast Guard Upgrades: Acquisition of Electro-Optical/Infra-Red (EO/IR) systems for its Dornier aircraft fleet to improve coastal security and surveillance.

67. Maritime Blind Spots: Security Agencies Crack Down on Illegal Satellite Phones in Indian Waters

Context:

Recently, security agencies have identified an increase in the illicit use of portable satellite communication devices by crew members of vessels operating in Indian waters. In response to this situation, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) has released a draft order suggesting stringent penalties in accordance with the most recent telecommunication and shipping regulations, characterizing the matter as a significant threat to national security.

Legal / Constitutional Framework

Constitutional Mandate

Article 297:

- Vests all lands, minerals, and things of value underlying the territorial waters or the EEZ exclusively in the Union. This gives the Central Government sovereign jurisdiction to enforce security laws at sea.

Indian Telecommunications Act, 2023

- Replaced the colonial-era Telegraph Act.

Section 31 grants the government expansive powers to penalize the unauthorized possession, operation, or provision of telecommunication equipment/spectrum.

Merchant Shipping Act, 2025

- The updated maritime code allows authorities to detain non-compliant vessels, confiscate illegal equipment, and impose hefty fines or imprisonment on the offending crew.

I. The Trigger: What Sparked the Recent Alert?

Undeclared Devices: Security agencies have documented numerous cases of both foreign and Indian seafarers transporting undeclared portable satellite equipment, which is a clear breach of maritime regulations.

Emergence of Hybrid Tech (Zoleo): Authorities have particularly pointed out the increasing utilization of Zoleo satellite devices.

These devices are not the conventional bulky satellite phones; rather, they are compact hubs that link to regular smartphones through Bluetooth.

They utilize the Iridium satellite network to transmit text messages and emails from remote oceanic regions that are entirely devoid of cellular coverage.

II. Why is this a National Security Threat?

The 'Surveillance Vacuum': In contrast to conventional mobile networks that direct calls through local telecom towers, satellite phones establish communication directly with Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites.

Due to the absence of established 'gateways' or ground earth stations for Iridium and Thuraya within Indian territory, their encrypted communications circumvent domestic telecom operators.

Inability to Intercept: As a result, Indian intelligence agencies are unable to actively monitor, intercept, or trace these communications.

This results in a significant "blind spot" in India's coastal security framework.

The 26/11 Precedent: Following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, India has upheld a zero-tolerance stance towards untraceable satellite communications, as the attackers notably utilized Thuraya satellite phones to orchestrate the maritime infiltration and the ensuing siege.

III. Regulatory Framework & DGS Directives:

The Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) exerts strict control over the communication technologies permitted to enter the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and its territorial waters.

The GMDSS Exception: According to a directive issued in July 2023, the DGS allows the use of Iridium-based devices solely if they are permanently integrated into the ship's official Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

This usage is exclusively limited to the transmission of distress SOS signals or essential safety communications.

Complete Ban on Thuraya: The deployment of Thuraya satellite equipment is entirely prohibited throughout all Indian land and maritime regions.

The 'Custody and Seal' Protocol: Any personal satellite device (not included in the ship's GMDSS) that crew members carry must be declared in the Pre-Arrival Notification of Security (PANS).

Upon entering Indian waters, the device is required to be turned off, surrendered to the Ship's Master (Captain), and secured under customs seal until the vessel departs.

IV. Way Forward to Plug the Gaps:

Technological Sovereignty: In order to reconcile the demands of contemporary connectivity with security considerations, the government is required to expedite the establishment of domestic satellite communication gateways (similar to the partnership between IN-SPACE and private Indian technology companies) to facilitate lawful interception.

Automated Manifest Checks: Authorities responsible for port state control must adopt AI-enhanced cross-referencing of vessel manifests to identify undeclared electronic cargo prior to a ship's arrival within the 12-nautical-mile territorial boundary.

Awareness vs. Enforcement: Although rigorous penal measures are essential for intentional smuggling, the Ministry of Shipping should actively engage with international maritime unions to inform foreign crews, thereby averting inadvertent breaches caused by a lack of understanding of India's specific security regulations.

68. Doctrinal Shift: India Unveils 'PRAHAAR' - Its First National Counter-Terrorism Policy

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) introduced 'PRAHAAR', which is India's inaugural comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy. This doctrine signifies a strategic transition from a reactive security approach to a proactive, intelligence-driven framework aimed at neutralizing hybrid terror threats.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA):

The primary anti-terror law empowering agencies to designate individuals and organizations as terrorists.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008:

Empowers the NIA as the central nodal agency to investigate pan-India terror offenses.

Human Rights Compliance:

Operations must adhere to the *Protection of Human Rights Act (1993)* and constitutional guarantees under Article 21 (*Right to Life and Personal Liberty*).

Global Commitments:

The policy aligns with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Utilizes Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) and Extradition Treaties for global evidence sharing and deporting fugitives.

I. The 'PRAHAAR' Framework: Seven Core Pillars

The acronym PRAHAAR represents the seven essential pillars of India's new counter-terrorism doctrine, shifting from solely kinetic military responses to a comprehensive national security strategy.

Prevention: Implementing proactive, intelligence-led strategies (such as the Multi-Agency Centre) to prevent terrorist attacks and safeguard citizens.

Responses: Guaranteeing prompt and appropriate kinetic and legal actions against any threats to national security.

Aggregating Capacities: Advocating for a 'whole-of-government' strategy to enhance and coordinate the efforts of central and state law enforcement agencies.

Human Rights: Ensuring that all counter-terrorism initiatives strictly adhere to the 'Rule of Law' and uphold fundamental rights.

Attenuating Radicalisation: Tackling the underlying socio-economic and psychological factors that foster extremism and violent radicalization.

Aligning Global Efforts: Influencing international initiatives through diplomacy to eliminate safe havens, funding, and arms for terrorist organizations.

Recovery and Resilience: Embracing a 'whole-of-society' approach to facilitate swift physical and psychological recovery following an incident.

II. Evolving Threat Matrix Acknowledged by the Policy:

The doctrine formally acknowledges that contemporary terrorism has evolved beyond traditional cross-border infiltrations into a highly intricate, hybrid warfare landscape.

The Crime-Terror Nexus: Terrorist groups are increasingly delegating logistics, funding, and local recruitment to organized crime syndicates and drug cartels.

Digital & Financial Anonymity: Extremists significantly utilize the dark web, encrypted messaging applications, and cryptocurrency wallets.

This enables them to conduct anonymous operations, spread propaganda, and facilitate untraceable financing for terrorism.

CBRNED Vulnerabilities: The policy underscores the critical challenge of preventing terrorists from obtaining Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, and Digital (CBRNED) materials.

Unmanned Systems: The militarization of drones and robotics by both state and non-state actors presents serious threats to essential infrastructure across air, land, and maritime domains.

III. Key Strategic Interventions & Institutional Measures:

Standardizing State Capabilities: The MHA requires the establishment of consistent Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS) throughout all states and Union Territories.

This guarantees uniformity across the nation in terms of training, resources, and investigative techniques.

Graded Response to Radicalization: The policy presents a sophisticated, multi-faceted de-radicalization framework that includes NGOs and community leaders.

It advocates for rehabilitation and socio-economic support for minor instances of radicalized youth, while imposing strict legal measures for hardcore ideologues.

Strengthening Prosecution: In order to address low conviction rates, legal professionals will now be required to participate in terror investigations at every phase.

This engagement will commence from the filing of the FIR and continue through to the ultimate prosecution in court.

Tackling Prison Radicalization: Specific guidelines have been established to effectively separate at-risk inmates from hardcore terrorists to avert jailhouse radicalization.

IV. Way Forward for Effective Implementation:

Technological Advancement: Law enforcement agencies are required to incorporate big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning to identify suspicious financial and behavioral trends prior to the occurrence of an attack.

Strengthening Cyber Deterrence: Given that nation-states and hackers persistently target critical sectors in India (such as power, aviation, and atomic energy), it is imperative to establish a strong offensive and defensive cyber-security framework.

Global Comprehensive Agreement: India should leverage this doctrinal clarity to expedite its diplomatic efforts for the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) within the United Nations.

69. Maritime Shield: Indian Navy Inducts 'Dolphin Hunter' INS Anjadip to Boost Coastal Defense

Context:

Recently, the Indian Navy officially commissioned INS Anjadip, the fourth Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), at Chennai Port. Dubbed the 'Dolphin Hunter,' this domestically constructed warship significantly improves India's capacity to detect and eliminate subsurface threats in shallow coastal waters.

I. Profile of INS Anjadip:

Project Execution: Constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata, through a public-private partnership with L&T Shipbuilding located in Kattupalli.

It features over 80% indigenous content, which aligns perfectly with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and minimizes reliance on imports for defense electronics.

Physical Dimensions: The vessel measures approximately 77 meters in length and has a displacement of 1,400 tonnes.

It necessitates a shallow draft of merely 2.7 meters, enabling safe and smooth navigation close to the coastline.

Propulsion System: The vessel is equipped with three marine diesel engines that are paired with sophisticated water-jet propulsion systems.

This configuration enables it to achieve a maximum speed of 25 knots while offering remarkable agility and maneuverability in restricted littoral waters.

Project ASW-SWC & Historical Nomenclature

Project ASW-SWC:

- 16 Shallow Water Crafts to Replace Abhay-Class Corvettes
- 8 by GRSE & 8 by Cochin Shipyard

Earlier Commissioned Vessels:

- INS Arnala
- INS Androth

The Name "Anjadip":

- Named after Anjadip Island off the Coast of Karwar, Karnataka
- Site of Operation Chutney (1961)
- Liberation of Goa from Portuguese Rule

Reincarnation of a Legacy:

- INS Anjadip (Petya-Class Corvette)
- Honoring the Original INS Anjadip (Decommissioned in 2003)

PROUDLY CARRYING FORWARD THE NAME AND HERITAGE

The infographic features several images: an ASW-SWC Corvette, an earlier commissioned vessel, a historical illustration of Anjadip Island with a lighthouse, and the current INS Anjadip (Petya-Class) with the number 133 on its hull. A small inset image shows a ship during Operation Chutney in 1961.

II. Tactical Capabilities & Weaponry:

The 'Dolphin Hunter': The main function of INS Anjadip is to accurately detect, track, and swiftly neutralize enemy submarines that operate in shallow coastal regions.

Advanced Sensor Suite: It is outfitted with the indigenous 'Abhay' Hull-Mounted Sonar and Low-Frequency Variable Depth Sonars, which are essential for deep subsurface monitoring.

It incorporates a sophisticated, integrated Combat Management System designed to efficiently coordinate attacks.

Lethal Armament: The vessel is equipped with cutting-edge lightweight torpedoes and indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) rockets.

Additionally, it is armed with a 30mm Naval Surface Gun and heavy machine guns for engagements on the surface.

Secondary Roles: In addition to its primary function of submarine hunting, the vessel is also capable of performing Low-Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), comprehensive coastal surveillance, search and rescue (SAR) missions, and offensive mine-laying operations.

III. Strategic Significance for India:

Addressing Coastal Vulnerabilities: Large blue-water destroyers and frigates are unable to function effectively in shallow coastal waters because of depth limitations.

INS Anjadip addresses this significant issue, preventing hostile submarines from stealthily nearing strategic ports, offshore oil platforms, or vital Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).

Force Enhancer: By assuming localized coastal defense responsibilities along the Eastern Seaboard (particularly in the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry naval region), it allows larger capital ships to be allocated for deep-ocean missions in the broader Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

70. Aatmanirbharta in Arms: Decoding the Draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) unveiled the draft 'Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026' intended to supersede the current DAP 2020 framework. The policy is designed to advance force modernization, promote joint operations, and enhance indigenous manufacturing by emphasizing the acceleration and expansion of military procurement.

I. The Core Philosophy of DAP 2026:

Strategic Alignment:

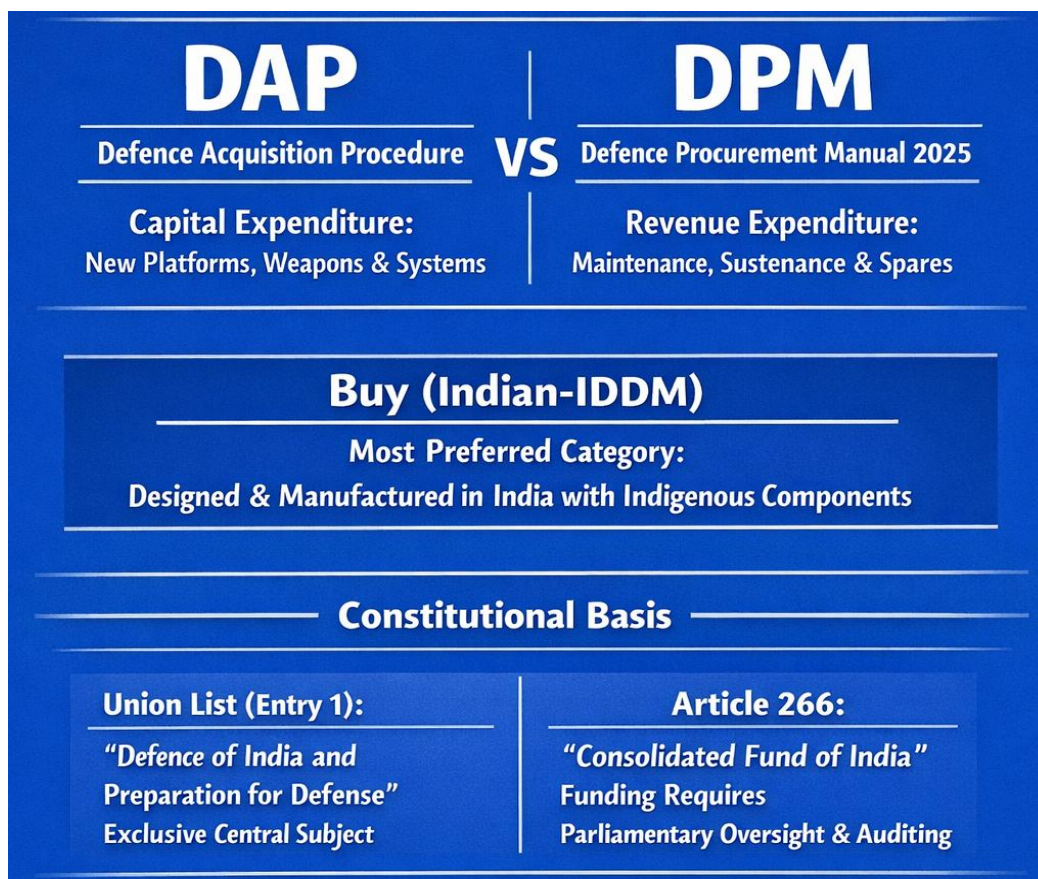
The proposal aligns military acquisitions with the swiftly changing geo-strategic environment and the demands of contemporary warfare.

It integrates national security and technological advancement into a cohesive framework to bolster the vision of Viksit Bharat-2047.

Import Substitution:

The policy imposes stringent limitations on defense imports.

Foreign procurement will be allowed solely for military equipment that is critically essential and not available domestically.



II. Key Reforms and Proposals in the Draft:

The IDDM Imperative:

At the heart of the draft lies a formalized preference for the 'Buy (Indian-IDDM)' category.

This emphasizes a strong commitment to products that are Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured, advocating for practical evaluations of Indigenous Content (IC).

Agile Acquisition for Modern Tech:

In order to keep up with the swiftly evolving technology landscape, the draft presents specialized procedures for the expedited acquisition of equipment characterized by short technological lifecycles.

It encourages the practice of "spiral designing" (iterative development) and permits the utilization of contemporary technology prior to making commitments to large-scale procurement.

Democratizing the Defense Sector:

The updated DAP suggests relaxing financial and historical experience requirements.

This facilitates broader participation, enabling MSMEs and deep-tech startups to vie alongside established defense industry leaders.

Procedural Overhaul:

The authority for decision-making will be further decentralized to promote faster acquisition cycles.

Moreover, field trials and Quality Assurance (QA) protocols are undergoing revisions to eliminate bureaucratic delays.

IPR and Digitization:

There is a significant emphasis on proactive digitization and automation throughout the entire acquisition supply chain.

Importantly, the framework offers incentives for innovation and requires the preservation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) within India.

III. Significance for India's Defense Ecosystem:

Addressing Obsolescence:

In the past, extended trial periods resulted in equipment frequently becoming outdated by the time it was delivered to the troops.

More rapid technology acquisition cycles guarantee that the military consistently utilizes state-of-the-art capabilities.

Enhancing the Export Engine:

By encouraging local design initiatives and easing entry requirements, the draft bolsters the private defense sector.

Increasing domestic production is the essential initial move in shifting India from being a net arms importer to a significant defense exporter internationally.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

71. Commercializing the Cosmos: Will NSIL Bridge the Funding Gap for India's Space Ambitions?

Context:

The Union Budget for the fiscal year 2026-27 has designated around ₹13,705 crore for the Department of Space. Although this represents a consistent yet modest increase, the government has firmly redirected the responsibility of revenue generation to ISRO's commercial subsidiary, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), in order to support India's growing presence in space.

I. Decoding the Space Budget 2026-27:

Steady, Not Aggressive Growth:

The budget experienced a slight increase of just over 2% compared to the initial estimates from the previous year.

Nonetheless, it represents a more substantial 10% rise in relation to the actual revised expenditures of the last fiscal year.

Focus on Core Technology:

A significant portion of the budget (exceeding ₹10,300 crore) is allocated exclusively to space technology and capital investments.

This indicates a renewed emphasis on hardware development for forthcoming, capital-intensive missions such as Gaganyaan (human spaceflight), Chandrayaan-4, and the Venus orbiter (Shukrayaan).

II. The Strategic Shift to NSIL:

Minimal Direct Financial Assistance: Notably, NSIL has received a nominal direct budgetary allocation of only ₹1 lakh from the central government.

Dependence on IEBR: Conversely, NSIL's Internal and Extra Budgetary Resources (IEBR) are anticipated to increase significantly to exceed ₹1,400 crore.

This reflects a distinct policy change: the government envisions NSIL achieving financial independence and generating substantial revenue on its own.

Opportunities for Revenue Generation: NSIL is charged with leveraging ISRO's extensive legacy.

It will secure funding through commercial satellite launch services, leasing transponder capacities, and transferring established space technologies to the private sector.



NSIL (NewSpace India Limited)

A wholly-owned Government of India CPSE established in 2019. Commercial arm of ISRO, focused on scaling up industry participation and marketing space products globally.



IN-SPACE

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre.

Single-window regulator and promoter, Authorizing private entities to use ISRO facilities and conduct space activities.



IEBR (Internal and Extra Budgetary Resources)

Funds raised by Public Sector Undertakings through Internal Profits or External Borrowings, rather than relying on Union Budget's tax revenues.



III. Why Rely on the Commercial Arm? (The Rationale)

Liberating ISRO:

By delegating operational and commercial launches (such as regular PSLV flights) to NSIL and private consortiums, ISRO can concentrate solely on fundamental research.

This enables India's leading space agency to allocate its workforce and budget towards deep-space exploration and enhanced strategic capabilities.

Nurturing the Private Ecosystem:

NSIL serves as the central agency to establish a high-technology manufacturing base in India.

It empowers private enterprises to evolve from being simple parts suppliers to comprehensive system integrators (for instance, the HAL-L&T consortium constructing PSLVs).

IV. Challenges in the Commercial Space Race:

Global Pricing Wars:

NSIL encounters intense rivalry in the global commercial launch sector. It must contend with competitively priced, fully reusable launch systems from major players such as SpaceX.

Scaling Domestic Capacity:

The Indian private industry is still in its early phases concerning comprehensive end-to-end space manufacturing.

Maintaining rigorous aerospace-grade quality control while increasing the mass production of launch vehicles continues to be a considerable challenge.

V. Way Forward:

Supporting Startups: The government and NSIL should serve as primary customers for Indian space startups.

Acquiring their services and equipment will guarantee their financial sustainability and build confidence among private equity investors.

Utilization of Venture Capital: In order to expand India's space economy from its present value of \$8 billion to \$44 billion, it is essential to swiftly and effectively operationalize the ₹1,000-crore venture capital fund designated for space startups.

72. Global Security Crossroads: A Turning Point for Nuclear Deterrence

Context:

The recent expiration of the New START treaty marks the collapse of the last major U.S.-Russia arms control pact. Coupled with internal fractures within NATO and shifting arsenals globally, the foundational logic of Cold War-era nuclear deterrence is undergoing a massive, unpredictable transformation.



I. The Dismantling of Global Arms Control Frameworks:

The Conclusion of New START: This treaty limited both the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads each. Its expiration results in the absence of legal constraints on superpower arsenals for the first time in several decades.

Resurgence of the Arms Race: Rather than pursuing reductions, major powers are actively enhancing and modernizing their military capabilities.

United States & Russia: Both nations possess over 5,000 total warheads and are vigorously upgrading their delivery systems.

China's Unprecedented Growth: Beijing has transitioned from a 'minimum deterrence' strategy, reportedly increasing its warhead count by approximately 100 annually since 2023, bringing its total to over 600.

United Kingdom: Has reversed its previous decision from 2006 regarding reductions and has raised its stockpile limit to 225 warheads.

II. The Development of Deterrence Theory:

Uncertainty vs. Certainty:

During the Cold War, deterrence was heavily based on the 'certainty' of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), supported by extensive, continuously tested arsenals.

In contrast, newer nuclear states (such as India, Pakistan, and Israel) have traditionally depended on 'uncertainty' and strategic ambiguity.

The Persistent Nuclear Taboo: Despite the expansion of large arsenals and the creation of smaller, 'usable' tactical nuclear weapons, the psychological barrier to nuclear use has remained unbroken since 1945.

III. Lessons from the Ukraine Conflict:

The Constraints of Nuclear Coercion: Russia's ongoing nuclear threats before and during the invasion did not quickly force Ukraine to surrender nor did they entirely prevent Western conventional assistance.

Conventional Certainty: This conflict demonstrates that successful deterrence frequently arises from reliable and strong conventional retaliation instead of ambiguous nuclear threats.

The Non-Nuclear Resistance: Ukraine's capacity to effectively resist a nuclear-armed superpower contests the longstanding belief that having nuclear weapons ensures military triumph or ultimate coercive power.

IV. The Crisis of Trust in NATO's Nuclear Umbrella:

Fractured Alliances: Geopolitical tensions, including U.S. pressure regarding Greenland, alongside transactional diplomacy, have significantly undermined Europe's confidence in the U.S. as a dependable security guarantor.

Europe's Strategic Dilemma: For the first time since World War II, Europe is engaging in open discussions about a security framework that does not solely depend on the American nuclear umbrella.

Alternative Frameworks: There are emerging conversations about achieving "Strategic Autonomy," which may involve leveraging the combined nuclear capabilities of France and the UK, or forming ad-hoc "Coalitions of the Willing" that concentrate on conventional defense.

V. Way Forward:

New Multilateral Frameworks: In a multipolar nuclear landscape, bilateral treaties have become outdated. Future arms control agreements must incorporate China and consider the rise of new technologies such as hypersonic glide vehicles and AI-driven command systems.

Re-evaluating Defense Postures: Countries need to emphasize strong conventional military forces and cyber defense, understanding that nuclear weapons serve as a political instrument of last resort rather than a viable option for warfare.

73. Redefining Innovation: Centre Unveils Official Eligibility Criteria for 'Deep Tech' Start-ups

Context:

Recently, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) officially notified the eligibility criteria for 'deep tech' start-ups. This crucial policy shift extends their recognition period and turnover limits, enabling access to patient capital from the ₹1 lakh crore Research and Development Innovation (RDI) Fund.

Patient Capital for Deep Tech

Long-term capital wherein the investor is willing to make a financial investment in a business with no expectation of turning a quick profit.

Lifeblood of deep tech sectors like Quantum Computing, Biotechnology, and Semiconductor Fabrication.



Statutory Basis:

Backed by Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023
(Repealed the older SERB Act)

Constitutional Dimensions:

Article 51A(h) – Fundamental Duties:

To develop scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry & reform



Article 39(b) & (c) – Directive Principles:



Equitable distribution of resources

Prevent concentration of wealth for the common good



I. The Official Definition: What Qualifies as 'Deep Tech'?

As per the DPIIT gazette notification, a start-up cannot merely utilize existing digital platforms to be classified as "deep tech." It is required to adhere to rigorous, science-based standards:

Core Mandate: The organization must develop a solution grounded exclusively in new knowledge or advancements within scientific and engineering disciplines.

R&D Intensity: The vast majority of the company's financial resources must be allocated to Research and Development (R&D) initiatives.

Intellectual Property (IP): The firm must possess, or be actively engaged in the creation of, significant novel intellectual property and must provide clear evidence of steps taken towards its commercialization.

Operational Characteristics: The business model must inherently encompass substantial scientific uncertainty, prolonged development periods, and considerable capital and infrastructure demands.

II. Revised Thresholds and Relaxations:

Acknowledging that deep tech ventures take much longer to yield commercial returns than traditional software or e-commerce startups, the government has overhauled the eligibility limits.

Parameter	Regular Start-up	Deep Tech Start-up
Maximum Age (from incorporation)	10 Years	20 Years
Annual Turnover Limit	₹200 Crore	₹300 Crore

Strict Investment Prohibitions: To ensure funds are strictly utilized for innovation, deep tech startups are explicitly prohibited from investing in non-core activities.

This includes real estate, speculative assets, or shares and securities, unless these are fundamentally tied to their knowledge production.

III. Institutional Framework and Funding Mechanisms:

The Certification Authority: Companies are required to submit a formal application to the DPIIT in order to obtain certification under this new category.

The ultimate decision is made by an Inter-Ministerial Board of Certification, which comprises representatives from the DPIIT, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF): The ANRF serves as the steward of the ₹1 lakh crore RDI Fund.

A considerable portion of this fund will be allocated through secondary managers to support deep tech startups.

Concessional Finance: Qualified deep tech companies can secure long-term financing at significantly reduced interest rates ranging from 2-4%, with repayment periods extending up to 15 years.

IV. Strategic Significance for India:

Addressing the Innovation Imbalance: According to the Principal Scientific Advisor, out of approximately 100,000 DPIIT-recognized startups in India, merely 10% are classified as deep tech. This policy aims to rectify that structural shortcoming.

Fostering Strategic Independence: Developing domestic expertise in dual-use technologies (such as advanced materials, artificial intelligence, and space technology) diminishes India's dependence on foreign intellectual property, thereby enhancing national security and supporting the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

74. Digital Accountability: Centre Mandates Labelling for Photorealistic AI Content

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified critical amendments to the IT Rules, mandating prominent labels for photorealistic AI content. Effective February 20, 2026, the new framework slashes the takedown timeline for malicious deepfakes and illegal synthetic media to just 2-3 hours.

I. The Amendment: Key Provisions & Regulatory Shifts

Defining Synthetic Content: The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026, officially characterizes "Synthetically Generated Information" (SGI) as audio, visual, or audio-visual data that is artificially or algorithmically produced or modified to convincingly resemble authentic content.

Prominent Labelling vs. Fixed Watermarks: In a departure from a previous draft proposal from October 2025 that mandated a strict 10% watermark, the newly issued rules now require platforms to "prominently" label content generated by AI.

This requirement ensures that users can differentiate between genuine and synthetic media without compromising the visual integrity of authentic content.

Traceability and Metadata: Platforms are obligated to ensure that AI-generated content includes embedded, non-removable metadata or unique identifiers that allow for accurate tracing of its source.

Exceptions for Everyday Tech: The regulations offer a practical exemption for standard smartphone camera enhancements, basic color adjustments, and noise reduction, as long as these modifications do not change the fundamental meaning or identity of the image.

Framework Statutory Basis
Information Technology Act, 2000: Governs the overarching digital space.
Section 79: Grants conditional immunity to intermediaries as long as they observe mandated “due diligence.”
Penal Framework
Harmful Synthetic Content (e.g., CSAM, forged records, malicious impersonation) invites prosecution under:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)• POCSO Act• Explosive Substances Act
Constitutional Angle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article 21 (Right to Privacy): Protects citizens against non-consensual identity manipulation & reputational harm caused by deepfakes.• Article 19(2): Justifies these rules as reasonable restrictions on free speech in the interest of public order, decency, and morality.

II. Tightening the Noose: Drastic Reduction in Takedown Timelines

The 3-Hour Rule: Social media platforms are now required to remove content classified as illegal by a court or relevant government authority within a reduced timeframe of 3 hours, down from the previous 36 hours.

The 2-Hour Rule for Sensitive Content: In cases of serious infractions—such as non-consensual deepfakes, nudity, or child sexual abuse material (CSAM)—platforms are mandated to carry out content removals within a strict 2-hour period.

User Complaint Deadlines: The timeframe for addressing general user complaints (such as defamation or misinformation) has been reduced from two weeks to one week.

III. Platform Accountability vs. Safe Harbour:

Proactive Verification: Platforms, particularly major intermediaries with more than 5 million users, can no longer depend solely on user self-declaration. They are required to implement automated AI-detection tools to verify the authenticity of uploads prior to publication.

User Warnings: Intermediaries must inform their users at least once every three months regarding the legal consequences of uploading harmful deepfakes and non-consensual content.

Preserving Safe Harbour: The government has clarified that as long as platforms adhere strictly to these expedited takedown and labeling requirements, they will maintain their 'safe harbour' protection from legal liability.

IV. Strategic Significance and the Way Forward:

Safeguarding Democratic Integrity: As India ranks among the largest social media markets worldwide, it is essential to combat deepfakes to avert AI-fueled misinformation from swaying public perception and undermining electoral integrity.





Reducing Targeted Harassment: The rigorous 2-hour takedown policy effectively tackles the misuse of AI against women and public figures, thereby reducing reputational harm and psychological distress.

Alignment with Global Governance: This initiative positions India in line with international regulatory movements, embodying the principles of the EU's Digital Services Act, while establishing a unique co-regulatory framework that harmonizes innovation with the safety of digital citizens.

75. The Geopolitical Rupture: Navigating the Approaching AI Surge and Its Global Consequences

Context:

The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs), has accelerated beyond mere technological innovation to become a primary driver of global geopolitical rupture. As highlighted during the recent World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026, AI is fundamentally reshaping diplomatic statecraft, economic competitiveness, and modern warfare.

 <h3>Sovereign AI</h3> <p>A nation's capability to independently control its AI infrastructure, data centers, and LLMs without relying on foreign corporate entities.</p>	 <h3>Asymmetric Warfare</h3> <p>Armed conflict between belligerents of vastly unequal military strength, where the weaker force uses unconventional AI tools (like drone swarms) to exploit the larger force's vulnerabilities.</p>
 <h3>Article 21 (Right to Privacy)</h3> <p>The constitutional safeguard that must be fiercely protected against mass AI surveillance, deepfakes, and algorithmic profiling.</p>	 <h3>Article 51 (Directive Principles)</h3> <p>Directs the State to promote international peace and security. Basis for India's diplomatic push for global treaties regulating autonomous cyber and kinetic weapons.</p>

I. The Impending AI Surge: A Transformational Shift

Beyond the Industrial Revolution: In contrast to previous technological advancements that mechanized manual labor, the present AI surge is focused on automating cognitive functions, intricate reasoning, and advanced decision-making.

The US-China Competition: The advancement of sophisticated generative AI has emerged as the focal point of great-power rivalry.

Leadership in AI architecture directly correlates with dominance over valuable supply chains, semiconductor networks, and international regulatory frameworks.

The Drive for Sovereign AI: Countries are increasingly acknowledging the strategic risks associated with dependence on foreign, proprietary technology ecosystems. As a result, there is a significant worldwide initiative to develop independent "Sovereign AI stacks" that are closely aligned with local regulations, cultural principles, and national security needs.

II. The Worldwide Implications: Militarization of Technology

The most significant and immediate effects of the AI surge are manifesting in the defense and international security sectors.

Emergence of Autonomous Warfare: Contemporary conflicts are swiftly transitioning from human-operated, manned systems to semi-autonomous and fully autonomous technologies.

AI facilitates real-time battlefield analysis, smart navigation, and the coordinated deployment of drone swarms.

Asymmetric Power Dynamics: AI fundamentally transforms conventional military paradigms.

Smaller forces or non-state entities equipped with relatively low-cost AI-driven technologies can effectively confront traditional, well-funded military forces.

The Risk of Escalation: The use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) reduces the necessity for direct human involvement.

This significantly shortens crisis response times, increasing the likelihood of unintended escalation or algorithmic errors that exceed human oversight.

III. Disruption in Governance, Economy, and Judicial Systems:

Algorithmic Public Administration: Governments are utilizing AI for predictive policing, resource distribution, and the oversight of intelligence flows.

Although this approach is highly effective, it significantly enhances state surveillance capabilities and raises ongoing concerns regarding digital authoritarianism.

Judicial Vulnerabilities: The incorporation of AI into legal research and electronic courts presents a significant risk of AI "hallucinations."

The presence of fabricated citations or biased algorithmic decisions can greatly erode institutional trust and the integrity of the rule of law.

Capital vs. Labour: As noted in recent Economic Surveys, the extensive adoption of AI in the services sector poses a risk of favoring capital over labor, thereby creating a structural threat to employment if the transition is not managed with care.

IV. The Way Forward: Governance Over Dystopia

Ensuring 'Human-in-the-Loop': It is essential to set stringent ethical limits that require human supervision in all high-risk AI implementations, particularly in relation to lethal military technologies and judicial sentencing.

Global Regulatory Frameworks: The global community urgently requires a multilateral arms control agreement for AI—similar to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—to avert an uncontrolled arms race in autonomous weaponry.


Steering Towards Shared Prosperity: Governments and technology companies must deliberately find a balance between the investment in capital and labor, ensuring that the allure of AI does not result in widespread unemployment, but instead serves as a catalyst for human advancement.

76. Sovereign Trust Over Private Asset: Supreme Court Rules Telcos Do Not Own Spectrum

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) do not own spectrum, declaring it a scarce natural resource held by the Union in trust for the public. Consequently, spectrum cannot be listed as a corporate asset during insolvency or liquidation proceedings.


Public Trust Doctrine



A legal principle stating that certain natural resources (like air, water, and spectrum) are preserved for public use.

The government owns them strictly as a trustee for the citizens, not as an absolute owner.


Constitutional Basis



Article 39(b) (DPSP)

Mandates the State to direct its policy towards securing that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good.

Statutory Supremacy



The SC observed:

“Telecommunications operates under a highly specialized regime governed by the DoT and TRAI.

Allowing the IBC to restructure the usage and transfer of spectrum would cause unintended “statutory disharmony.”

I. Background of the Legal Dispute:

The Basis of the Case: The ruling originates from a series of appeals lodged by the State Bank of India (SBI) and other creditors against a 2021 order from the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

The NCLAT mandated that insolvent Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), such as Aircel Limited and Dishnet Wireless, must settle their statutory obligations to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) prior to selling or transferring spectrum in accordance with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

The Creditors' Argument: The banks contended that the rights to spectrum licensing were classified as "intangible assets" in the financial records of the telecom companies.

Consequently, they asserted that these rights ought to be monetized to recoup substantial corporate debts throughout the insolvency resolution process.

The Judicial Panel: A Supreme Court panel consisting of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Atul Chandurkar categorically dismissed the creditors' claims.

II. Key Highlights of the Supreme Court Verdict:

No Proprietary Interest: The court clarified that simply granting a telecom licence does not equate to transferring ownership of a finite natural resource.

It only provides a "limited, conditional, and revocable privilege" to utilize the spectrum, contingent upon stringent statutory requirements and the overarching public interest.

Accounting vs. Legal Title: The bench observed that listing spectrum as an intangible asset in financial statements does not serve as definitive evidence of ownership.

It merely indicates the company's authority over future economic advantages derived from the licence.

Exclusion from the IBC Framework:

The IBC explicitly excludes assets for which a corporate debtor lacks ownership rights.

Given that TSPs do not possess the spectrum, it cannot be included in the liquidation pool to satisfy corporate creditors.

Nature of Telecom Dues: The court made an important distinction concerning DoT dues (Licence Fees and Spectrum Usage Charges).

These do not qualify as commercial "operational debts."

They represent regulatory obligations stemming from the issuance of a sovereign privilege.

Sovereign Licensor vs. Commercial Creditor: The relationship between the Union government and the TSP is strictly that of a sovereign licensor and licensee, rather than a commercial creditor-debtor relationship.

III. What are the Essential Terminologies?

Radio Spectrum: This refers to a spectrum of electromagnetic frequencies utilized for communication services such as mobile networks, radio, and satellite broadcasting. It is an invisible, limited, and sovereign natural resource.

Operational Debt (under IBC): This pertains to a claim related to the supply of goods or services, employment, or statutory dues owed to the government.

By excluding telecom dues from this definition, the Supreme Court has averted the evasion of regulatory oversight via bankruptcy courts.

IV. Wider Consequences of the Ruling:

Setback for Lenders: This represents a significant setback for financial institutions and banks. They can no longer depend on the inflated valuation of a bankrupt telecommunications company's spectrum to recover their Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).

Victory for Sovereign Control: It decisively reaffirms the Union government's complete authority over national resources. It guarantees that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) can reclaim and re-auction spectrum in the event of a telco default, rather than allowing it to be lost to corporate liquidation.

Preventing Hoarding: The ruling guarantees that spectrum does not remain ensnared in lengthy, years-long insolvency disputes.

It enables the government to promptly re-allocate unused frequencies, thereby ensuring continuous public utility and technological advancement.

77. Governance 2.0: Bridging the Divide with an 'Indian Scientific Service'

Context:

Recently, specialists have revitalized the initiative to create an All-India 'Indian Scientific Service' (ISS) to reform the administrative structure established post-Independence in India. This proposal seeks to formally incorporate specialized scientific knowledge into everyday governance, thereby closing the significant divide between generalist administrators and subject matter experts.

I. The 'Administrator-Scientist' Paradox:

The Generalist Legacy: Historically, India's governance framework was established around generalist administrators, such as the IAS, to maintain broad stability during the early years of nation-building.

The Changing Governance Landscape: In contemporary times, the focus of policymaking has transitioned towards highly specialized sectors.

Complex challenges, including climate change, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nuclear safety, necessitate profound, specialized scientific expertise rather than mere administrative coordination.

The Institutional Mismatch: At present, scientists entering government roles are compelled to function under civil service regulations that are solely intended for general administration.

This inflexible hierarchical structure hinders the open inquiry, peer-review culture, and objective risk communication that authentic scientific endeavors require.

II. Consequences of the Current Framework:

Reactive Policy Making: In India, scientific contributions are predominantly employed as immediate, reactive measures during national emergencies (such as pandemics or environmental catastrophes).

These contributions are seldom integrated into a framework that fosters long-term, proactive, and ongoing policy formulation.

Lack of Institutional Authority: Even within technically intricate fields, the knowledge of government scientists frequently lacks formal influence in decision-making processes, relegating their function to a purely advisory or 'ornamental' role.

Suppression of Technical Dissent: Adhering to established conduct regulations (like the CCS Conduct Rules, 1964) may unintentionally penalize scientists for officially documenting ecological alerts or technological constraints if such findings are at odds with existing political agendas.

Constitutional Basis

Article 312 (All-India Services): Empowers the Parliament to create one or more new All-India Services if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution supported by at least two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Fundamental Duties

Article 51A(h): Mandates it as a fundamental duty of every citizen to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Institutional Context

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF): Established under the ANRF Act 2023, this body boosts R&D funding.

However, it does not embed scientists into government administration.

The ISS is the necessary administrative counterpart to the ANRF.

III. The Blueprint for an Indian Scientific Service (ISS):

The ISS is envisioned as a permanent, All-India scientific cadre that collaborates with, rather than replaces, the current civil services.

Specialized Recruitment: The selection process would transition from conventional general aptitude tests.

It would entail comprehensive national-level assessments coupled with peer reviews of advanced scientific research qualifications.

Direct Integration: ISS officers would be seamlessly integrated into ministries, regulatory agencies, and diplomatic missions to promote evidence-based decision-making at the highest echelons.

Dedicated Service Rules: This cadre would operate under distinct service regulations specifically designed to uphold scientific integrity.

This framework guarantees that scientists can openly document risk evaluations and data-driven realities without encountering bureaucratic or political obstacles.

IV. Proposed Cadres within the ISS:

To address specific sectoral needs without creating jurisdictional overlaps, the ISS could be divided into specialized divisions:

Indian Climate and Atmospheric Service

Indian Marine and Ocean Services

Indian Regulatory Science Service (for AI, deep-tech, and bio-ethics)

Indian Public Health and Biomedical Service

V. Way Forward and Global Best Practices:

Learning from Advanced Democracies: Countries like the USA, Japan, France, and the UK (with its dedicated Government Office for Science) already utilize distinct scientific cadres that provide tailored career paths and professional protections.

Fostering 'Scientist-Diplomats': An established ISS would equip India to negotiate complex international treaties—such as global semiconductor supply chain agreements or climate emission protocols—with granular technical authority.

The Next Administrative Evolution: Just as the Indian Civil Service transformed post-Independence to meet the needs of a new republic, creating the ISS is a

forward-looking reform. It is essential to align India's governance with its ambition of becoming a technology-driven, developed nation by 2047.

78. Orbital Footprints: ISRO Rocket Debris Found Washed Ashore in the Maldives

Context:

Recently, substantial pieces of rocket debris featuring the ISRO logo and India's National Emblem were found on a deserted island close to L. Kunahandhoo in the Maldives. This debris, recognized as a payload fairing, is thought to have come from ISRO's LVM3-M6 commercial mission that was launched in December 2025.

I. The Incident and Technical Identification:

The Discovery:

A local fisherman came across curved white panels constructed from a lightweight composite material, which bore scorch marks indicative of atmospheric re-entry.

The markings prominently featured the ISRO logo situated beneath the State Emblem of India, with dates suggesting an origin in late 2025.

The Suspected Mission:

Aerospace trackers have associated the debris with the LVM3-M6 / BlueBird Block-2 mission.

This mission was a dedicated commercial endeavor launched on December 19, 2025, which carried a substantial communication satellite for the US-based company AST SpaceMobile.

Oceanic Drift:

It is standard practice for space agencies to discard rocket stages over specific oceanic areas (splashdown zones) to reduce risks to human populations.

Nevertheless, strong surface currents in the Indian Ocean sometimes transport these buoyant composite materials several miles away to the shores of neighboring island nations such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

II. Understanding the Hardware: Payload Fairing (PLF)

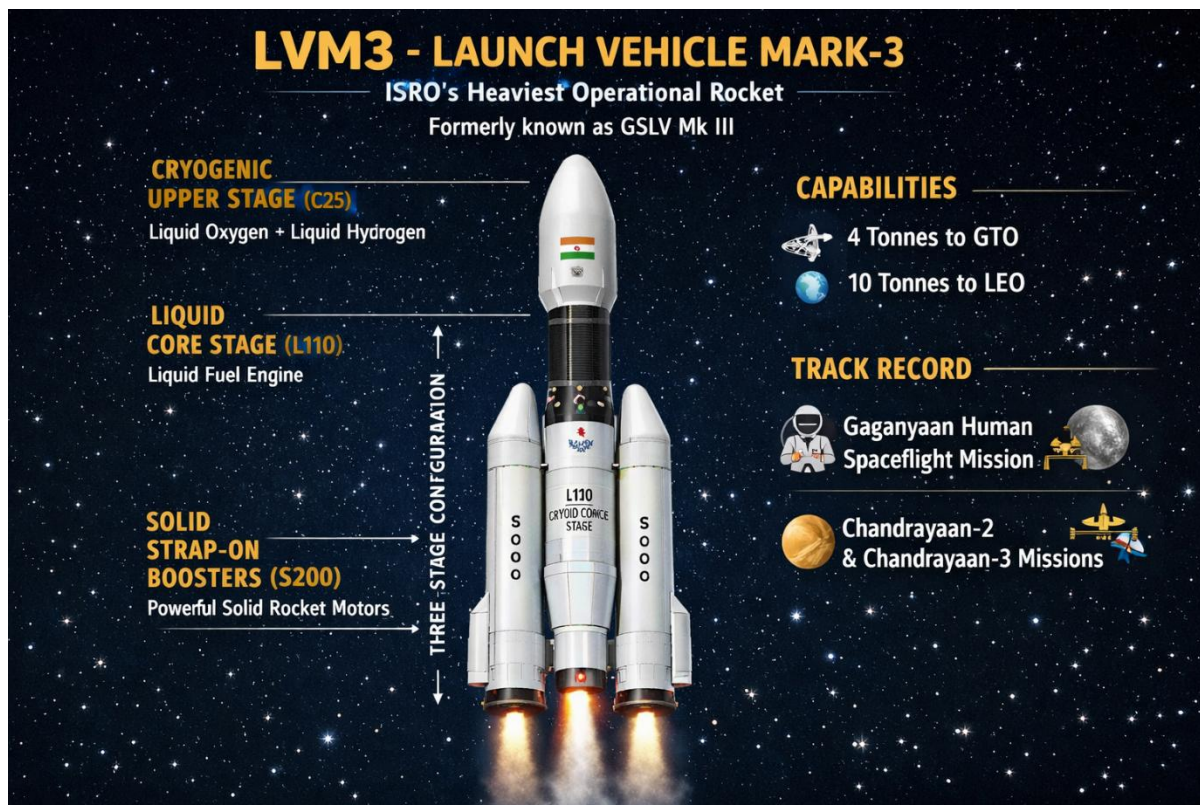
What is it? The payload fairing serves as the protective nose cone located at the very front of a launch vehicle.

Function: Its purpose is to act as a shield, safeguarding the satellite (payload) from extreme aerodynamic heat, acoustic vibrations, and atmospheric pressure during the rocket's ascent through the Earth's dense lower atmosphere.

Deployment: After the rocket has cleared the atmosphere and reached the vacuum of space, the fairing is rendered unnecessary. It separates into two halves and is discarded to eliminate excess weight, enabling the rocket to attain orbital velocity more efficiently.

Treaty / Convention	Relevance to Space Debris
Outer Space Treaty (1967)	The foundational treaty of space law. It establishes that a "launching State" retains jurisdiction, control, and absolute responsibility over its space objects, even if they return to Earth or land in another nation's territory.
Liability Convention (1972)	Expands on the Outer Space Treaty. It mandates that a launching State is absolutely liable to pay compensation for any damage caused by its space object on the surface of the Earth or to aircraft in

	flight.
UNCLOS (1982)	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea governs maritime zones. Debris drifting into the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) or territorial waters of nations like the Maldives raises concerns over coastal regulation zones and marine environmental protection.



III. Strategic and Diplomatic Way Forward:

Bilateral Coordination: Although the debris in the Maldives did not pose any threat to life or property, such occurrences highlight the need for strong, pre-existing bilateral communication channels. Neighboring nations should be proactively informed about splashdown areas and debris paths.

Debris Tracking: As India vigorously broadens its commercial launch capabilities (via NSIL), ISRO is required to improve its post-launch surveillance systems to effectively monitor re-entry equipment.

Sustainable Practices: Worldwide, space agencies are increasingly investigating "demisable" materials for payload fairings—substances engineered to completely incinerate and disintegrate during atmospheric re-entry, thereby preventing any maritime pollution.

79. The Global AI Impact Summit 2026: Shaping the Future of Intelligence

Context:

Held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi in February 2026, the Global AI Impact Summit brought together more than 50,000 delegates and leaders from around the globe. The summit concluded with the landmark 'New Delhi Declaration,' solidifying India's position as the leading advocate for the Global South in the democratization of artificial intelligence.

I. The New Delhi Declaration & A 'Third Way' for Governance:

Historic Consensus: A total of 85 countries and 3 international organizations (which later expanded to 92 entities) endorsed the New Delhi Declaration, a non-binding global framework that directs the deployment of AI.

The 'Third Way': India has effectively advocated for a distinctive governance model that steers clear of the extreme, unregulated innovation characteristic of the West, as well as the stringent, state-controlled frameworks typical of authoritarian regimes.

This strategy regards AI as a Digital Public Good (DPG), safeguarding technological sovereignty while promoting open-source innovation.

Key Takeaways: The declaration is founded on seven 'Chakras' (pillars).

It places significant emphasis on the democratization of AI resources, the establishment of secure AI ecosystems, and the development of resilient AI infrastructures for developing nations.

II. AI for People: Applying Technology for Social Good

Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya: Rooted in the principle of "Welfare for all, Happiness for all," the summit highlighted that AI should enhance human capabilities instead of displacing jobs.

India's M.A.N.A.V. Vision: The Prime Minister presented this framework: Moral and Ethical Systems, Accountable Governance, Nurturing Innovation, Adaptable Workforces, and Value-driven technology.

The primary emphasis is on utilizing AI for grassroots initiatives in healthcare, precision agriculture, and multi-lingual public service delivery.

Bridging the Divide: Initiatives such as the 'Charter for Democratic Diffusion of AI' were introduced to avert the concentration of AI computing power and advanced GPUs within a limited number of tech monopolies.

III. The Creativity Conundrum: Restoring Balance to Copyright

Will AI Diminish Creativity? The swift emergence of Generative AI has ignited worldwide concerns regarding the depreciation of human artistry and the unauthorized collection of copyrighted content for training Large Language Models (LLMs).

India's Moment: The summit acted as a vital forum to discuss a balanced intellectual property (IP) framework.

Conversations centered on creating a structure that rewards original creators while preventing excessively restrictive licensing that could hinder AI research and development.

Traceability and Transparency: A strong agreement was reached on the pressing necessity for machine-readable opt-out options for content creators and obligatory watermarking for synthetically produced media.

IV. Military AI: The Urgency of Global Guardrails

The New Arms Race: The summit underscored the significant geopolitical dangers associated with the militarization of AI, especially concerning the creation of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

Asymmetric Threats: AI-powered drone swarms and algorithmic warfare significantly shorten human response times, heightening the risk of unintended escalation and potential conflict flashpoints.

Call for Treaties: Delegates emphasized the critical need for a multilateral arms control agreement for AI—akin to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—to guarantee a stringent "human-in-the-loop" protocol for all combat decisions.

V. The Road Ahead: Transferring Responsibility to Geneva

Institutional Continuity: Swiss President Guy Parmelin has officially declared that Geneva, Switzerland, will be the venue for the upcoming AI Impact Summit scheduled for the first half of 2027.

Focus on International Law: The 2027 Geneva summit is designed to shift the conversation from voluntary ethical guidelines to legally enforceable multilateral norms that are grounded in human rights and international law.

Beyond 2027: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been designated as the host for the 2028 summit, demonstrating a collective commitment to ensuring that emerging economies remain actively engaged in global AI diplomacy.

80. Driving the Clean Transition: India's Energy Shift Through the Green Ammonia Route

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) officially announced India's inaugural Green Ammonia Standards to govern emission limits. Simultaneously, Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh was designated as the 'Green Hydrogen Valley of India,' featuring a \$10-billion mega green ammonia export terminal.

I. The Policy Push: Green Ammonia Standards 2026

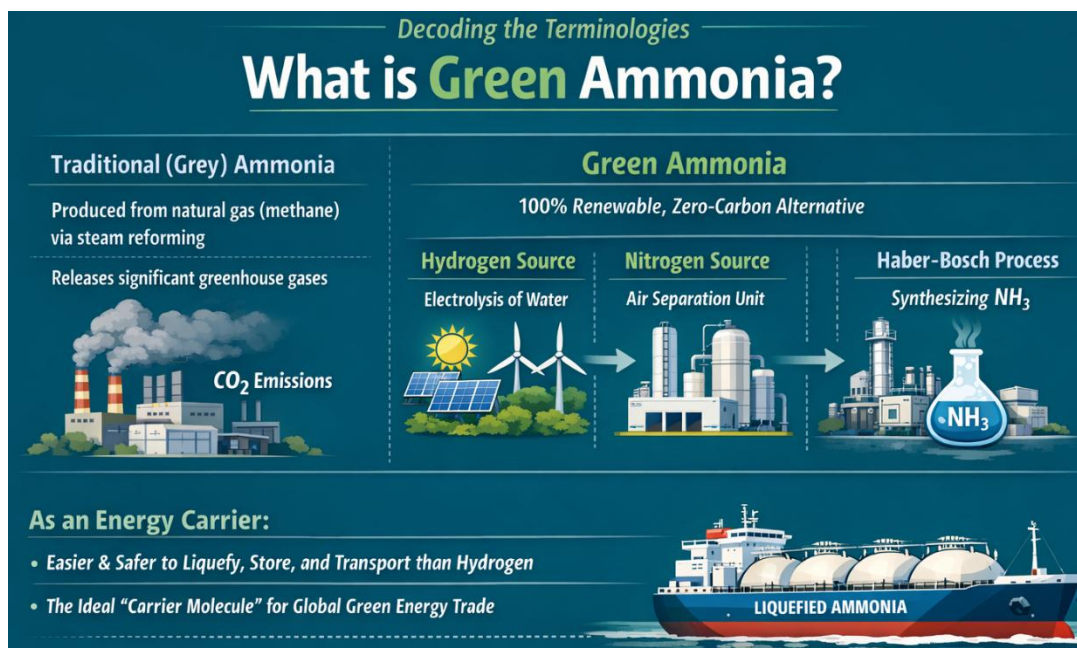
To expedite the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) and enhance investor confidence, the MNRE established stringent regulatory standards on February 27, 2026.

The Emission Threshold: For ammonia to be officially recognized as 'Green,' it must not exceed a total non-biogenic greenhouse gas emission of 0.38 kg CO₂ equivalent per kg of ammonia.

Comprehensive Tracking: This assessment is based on an average calculated over a 12-month timeframe.

It encompasses emissions throughout the entire value chain: from hydrogen production to ammonia synthesis, purification, compression, and on-site storage.

Grid Banking: The policy permits producers to utilize renewable electricity that is banked with the grid or stored in energy storage systems, thereby offering operational flexibility.



II. Kakinada: The 'Green Hydrogen Valley of India'

In early 2026, Andhra Pradesh achieved a significant milestone with the establishment of the AM Green complex in Kakinada.

Investment Scale: A substantial investment of \$10 billion is being utilized through the brownfield conversion of an existing fertilizer facility.

Production Goals: The project aims for a production capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA), with the initial 0.5 MTPA phase expected to commence operations by mid-2027.

Global Export Center: This initiative will enable India's first substantial green energy exports to developed nations, specifically focusing on Germany, Singapore, and Japan.

Ecosystem Integration: The project incorporates 7.5 GW of solar and wind energy capacity, 2 GW of continuous power through pumped hydro storage, and a specialized electrolyzer manufacturing unit.

III. Strategic importance:

Fiscal Savings (Fertilizer Subsidy): India's fertilizer subsidy often exceeds ₹1 trillion, primarily due to the high costs associated with Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports.

Shifting to domestic green ammonia for urea production will significantly reduce import expenses and fiscal deficits.

Decarbonizing 'Hard-to-Abate' Sectors: Green ammonia serves as an effective clean fuel for the global maritime shipping sector and heavy manufacturing industries.

Geopolitical Leverage: Transitioning from being an energy importer to an energy exporter strengthens India's strategic independence and fosters closer relationships with energy-dependent European and Asian markets.

IV. Persisting Challenges & The Way Forward:

High Production Costs: The current price of green hydrogen ranges from \$3 to \$5.5 per kilogram. In order to compete effectively with fossil-based grey ammonia, there needs to be a significant reduction in the costs associated with both electrolyzers and renewable energy sources.

Infrastructure Deficit: The establishment of dedicated green corridors, deep-water export terminals, and specialized cryogenic storage facilities necessitates substantial and ongoing capital investment.

Transmission Hurdles: Although the Centre has eliminated Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) fees for green initiatives, state-level distribution companies, such as TNPDC, are expressing concerns regarding the financial implications for local consumers.

Way Forward: It is imperative for the government to expedite the ₹2,000-crore incentive schemes for electrolyzer manufacturing and to encourage solar-wind hybrid projects to guarantee affordable, continuous green electricity for ammonia synthesis.

81. Orbiting Uncertainty: High-Level Committee to Probe Repeated PSLV Failures

Context:

Recently, the government established a national-level expert committee to examine the systemic and organizational challenges that have led to the repeated failures of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). This investigation comes in the wake of the consecutive losses of the PSLV-C61 and PSLV-C62 missions, representing a pivotal moment for India's space ecosystem.

I. The Trigger: Twin Setbacks for India's Workhorse

PSLV-C61 (May 2025): The mission failed to place the earth observation satellite EOS-09 into orbit due to an anomaly and pressure drop in the rocket's third stage.

PSLV-C62 (January 2026): The rocket failed to deliver the strategic hyperspectral satellite EOS-N1 (Avnesha) and 15 other foreign and domestic satellites.

Flight Path Deviation: In the C62 mission, the rocket experienced severe disturbances and flight path deviation near the end of the third-stage burn.

The PS3 Anomaly: Both failures share a near-identical pattern linked to the third stage (PS3) solid motor, suggesting a systemic manufacturing or quality control defect rather than an isolated technical glitch.

II. A Paradigm Shift: The Mandate of the Expert Committee

Moving Beyond Internal Reviews: Historically, ISRO relies on internal Failure Analysis Committees (FACs) to fix technical issues. The non-publication of the recent FAC reports raised transparency concerns, prompting this independent probe.

Leadership and Composition: The new external committee is co-chaired by K. VijayRaghavan (former Principal Scientific Adviser) and S. Somanath (former ISRO Chairman).

Probing Systemic Flaws: The committee will rigorously audit broad organizational processes, including procurement, vendor oversight, quality control, and component assembly.

Fixing Accountability: With private consortiums increasingly involved in building the PSLV, the probe will establish clear accountability frameworks across both public and private partners.

Understanding the PSLV

ISRO's Expendable Medium-Lift Launch Vehicle
with Over 90% Success Rate

PS4: Fourth Stage

Liquid Twin Engines
Final Orbital Injection

PS3: Third Stage

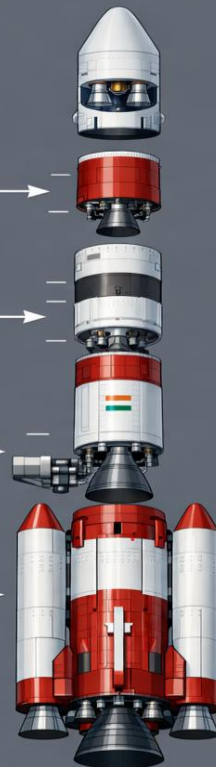
Solid Rocket Motor
Stage Under Investigation

PS2: Second Stage

Vikas Engine
Liquid Rocket Engine

PS1: First Stage

Solid Rocket Motor + Strap-On Boosters
Massive Liftoff Thrust



III. Strategic and Commercial Implications:

Strategic Blind Spots: The loss of advanced Earth Observation Satellites (EOS-09 and EOS-N1) temporarily disrupts India's space-based intelligence, which is highly critical for border surveillance and disaster management.

Threat to Commercial Credibility: ISRO's commercial arm, NSIL, aggressively markets the PSLV globally. Repeated failures threaten India's share in the highly competitive global small-satellite launch market.

Rising Insurance Premiums: Successive mission failures could lead to a sudden spike in space insurance costs for future PSLV launches, eroding ISRO's hard-earned cost-competitiveness.

IV. Way Forward:

Institutional Transparency: ISRO must time-bound the release of the committee's unclassified findings to reassure international clients, private startups, and domestic stakeholders.

Stringent Quality Assurance (QA): As ISRO transitions routine rocket manufacturing to the private industry, it must enforce uncompromising QA standards and independent audits across the entire supply chain.

Alternative Launch Capabilities: Accelerating the frequency and reliability of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is crucial to diversify launch options and reduce the operational burden on the PSLV fleet.

82. Orbiting Development: The Role of Space-Based Systems in India's National Growth

Context:

Recently, the Department of Space emphasized the significant incorporation of ISRO's space-based systems throughout various sectors of national development. From

agriculture to disaster management, satellite data has emerged as the technological foundation of India's premier socio-economic initiatives, closely aligning with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

I. Transforming Agriculture & Rural Development:

Satellite earth observation is revolutionizing precision agriculture and rural infrastructure monitoring.

Crop Mapping & Insurance: ISRO provides all-India mapping for major Kharif crops (rice, wheat, jute) and conducts national-level yield estimations.

This data is operationally utilized under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to accurately assess crop damage and process insurance claims at the unit level.

Rural Infrastructure & Employment: Yuktdhara Portal: A geospatial planning portal used extensively by Rural Development Departments to scientifically plan and monitor MGNREGA works.

Satellite imagery is also deployed to track road network progress under the PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana) and monitor housing assets under PMAY-Urban.

Water & Irrigation Security: High-resolution data is used to monitor interventions funded under the WDC-PMKSY 2.0 (Watershed Development Component), ensuring optimal utilization of micro-irrigation funds.

II. Disaster Management & Climate Monitoring:

India's space infrastructure acts as a critical early-warning shield against climate-induced extremities.

Flood & Landslide Early Warning: ISRO operates flood early warning systems for the Brahmaputra, Godavari, and Tapi basins, disseminating data to the NDMA and SDMAs.

The integration of AI with the Light Detection Sensor Network (LDSN) enables lightning now casting and satellite-integrated landslide alerts.

Global Leadership: India successfully concluded its leadership tenure of the International Charter 'Space and Major Disasters' (April–September 2025).

Under its tenure, ISRO executed 39 activations for global disaster management and extended space-based alerts to developing nations.

Climate & Emission Tracking: Satellites actively monitor NO₂ concentrations over thermal power plants (crucial for tracking Delhi's air pollution) and generate a Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory for land-use changes.

This data directly feeds into the MoEF&CC's National Communications (NATCOM) reporting under the UNFCCC.

III. Oceanography and Strategic Security:

Marine Forecasting: Data from the Oceansat series is integrated at INCOIS (Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services) to provide Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories and ocean state forecasting.

Naval Integration: The Indian Navy actively assimilates ISRO's satellite data for generating maritime weather outlooks.

ISRO developed a dedicated web portal, MOSDAC-IN, to ensure the Navy has uninterrupted access to secure meteorological data.

Polar Expeditions: Sea Ice Advisories guide the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in charting safe navigation routes for Indian scientific expeditions to Antarctica.

HISTORY & CULTURE

83. Unearthing Apathy: Scepticism in Rakhigarhi Over the New Heritage Development Plan

Context:

In the Union Budget 2026-27, the government proposed developing 15 archaeological sites, including Rakhigarhi, into "experiential cultural destinations." However, locals expressed deep skepticism, citing the lack of tangible on-ground progress since a similar 'iconic site' announcement was made back in 2020.

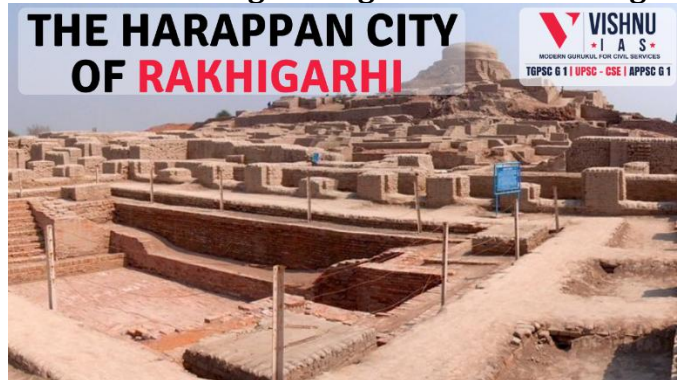
I. The Core Issue: Why the Disappointment?

Unfulfilled Promises: Despite being declared one of the five 'Iconic Sites' in the 2020-21 Budget, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has executed minimal developmental work over the last five years.

Funding Bottlenecks: ASI officials conceded that no separate, dedicated budget was released by the Central government following the initial 2020 announcement.

State vs. Centre Efforts: While the Haryana government recently inaugurated a Harappan Knowledge Centre and announced a ₹500 crore developmental push, core archaeological preservation by central agencies remains painfully slow.

II. Understanding Rakhigarhi: Historical Significance



VISHNU
IAS
MODERN EDUCATION FOR CIVIL SERVICES
TGpsc G 1 | UPSC - CSE | APPSC G 1

SHNU
A S ★

Geographical Location: Located in the Hisar district of Haryana, situated in the ancient Ghaggar-Hakra (Sarasvati) river plain.

The Largest IVC Site: Spanning over 550 hectares across 11 identified mounds, Rakhigarhi officially surpassed Mohenjo-Daro to become the largest known city of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) globally.

Continuous Habitation: Excavations reveal a continuous occupational timeline.

It spans the Early (Pre-Harappan), Mature, and Late phases of the Harappan culture (spanning roughly 6000 BCE to 1900 BCE).

III. Key Archaeological Discoveries:

Urban Town Planning: Excavations revealed a meticulously planned city with 1.92-meter-wide paved roads, sophisticated covered drainage networks, and burnt-brick residential structures.

Industrial & Trade Hub: The discovery of a gold foundry, thousands of unpolished semi-precious stones, and lapidary tools confirms its status as a major manufacturing center.

Steatite seals, terracotta bangles, and copper fish hooks highlight a booming trade economy.

The DNA Breakthrough: A genetic study of a 4,600-year-old female skeleton from Mound 7 fundamentally altered South Asian historical understanding.

The DNA analysis revealed a distinct indigenous origin, actively negating the theory that the Harappans possessed Steppe pastoral or ancient Iranian farmer ancestry.

84. Etched in Stone: Tamil-Brahmi Inscriptions in Egypt Reveal Ancient Indo-Roman Links

Context:

Recently, researchers revealed the discovery of approximately 30 ancient Indian inscriptions, predominantly in Tamil-Brahmi, inside the royal tombs of Egypt's Valley of the Kings. Dating back to the 1st–3rd centuries CE, these findings rewrite ancient maritime history by proving Indian merchants traveled deep into the Egyptian interior.

Tamil Brahmi inscriptions discovered in Egypt shed light on ancient trade links

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

A path-breaking finding has shed new light on trade links between ancient Tamilagam, other parts of India, and the Roman Empire. Two researchers have identified close to 30 inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit and Sanskrit at tombs in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. These inscriptions are said to belong to the period between the 1st and 3rd Centuries CE.

The inscriptions were identified during a study in 2024 and 2025 by Charlotte Schmid, Professor at the French School of Asian Studies (EFEO) in Paris, and Ingo Strauch, Professor at the



A Tamil Brahmi inscription with the name *Cikai Korran* in one of the tombs at the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The team documented them across six tombs in the Theban Necropolis. They followed in the footsteps of French scholar Jules Baillet, who surveyed the Valley of the Kings in

1926 and published more than 2,000 Greek graffiti marks.

Presenting their findings in a paper titled "From the Valley of the Kings to India: Indian Inscriptions in Egypt" at the ongoing Inter-

national Conference on Tamil Epigraphy, the scholars said the individuals who made these inscriptions came from the north-western, western and southern regions of the Indian subcontinent, with those from the latter forming the majority.

Visitors had left brief inscriptions and graffiti by carving their names on the walls of corridors and rooms, marking their presence in the tombs, the researchers said, adding that these sets of inscriptions appear inside the tombs alongside larger bodies of graffiti in other languages, primarily Greek.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

I. The Path-Breaking Discovery:

The Inscriptions: Documented across six rock-cut tombs in the Theban Necropolis, the findings include around 20 inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi.

The remaining inscriptions are in Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Gandhari-Kharoshthi, pointing to the presence of traders from western and north-western India.

The 'Tourist' Traders: The graffiti closely mimics the contemporary Mediterranean custom of Greek tourists leaving commemorative marks.

A prominent inscription reads "Cikai Korran vara kanta" (Cikai Korran came and saw).

Another distinct engraving reads "Kopan varata kantan" (Kopan came and saw).

Repeated Presence: The specific name 'Cikai Korran' was etched eight times across five different tombs.

This frequency indicates a prolonged stay in Egypt and a deliberate effort to leave a lasting cultural footprint far from home.

II. Decoding the Etymology & Sangam Connections:

Cikai Korran: The prefix 'Cikai' is linguistically linked to the Sanskrit śikhā (meaning a tuft or crown).

The suffix 'Korran' derives from the Tamil root korram (meaning victory or slaying). This is closely associated with the Chera warrior goddess Korravai and was often used as a title for kings or leaders.

Corroborative Evidence: The name 'Korran' was previously discovered on a pottery sherd in 1995 at Berenike, an ancient Egyptian Red Sea port.

Furthermore, the name appears extensively in the Sangam corpus, including references to the Chera king Pittankorran in the classical text Purananooru.

III. Historical Significance: Redefining Ancient Globalization

Beyond Coastal Docks: Earlier evidence of Indo-Roman trade was mostly confined to port settlements like Berenike or Myos Hormos.

This discovery proves that Tamil merchants were not merely transient sailors but affluent travelers who undertook inland tourism to visit monumental heritage sites.

Two-Way Trade Confirmation: While Greco-Roman texts (like the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and accounts by Pliny the Elder) extensively document Romans visiting India, this provides concrete epigraphic proof of a robust, two-way cultural exchange.

Flourishing Merchant Guilds: The presence of these inscriptions confirms that the Indian Ocean trade network was a highly organized system of early globalization, with South India acting as a powerful commercial hub.

IV. Static Linkages: Epigraphy and Geography

Tamil-Brahmi Script: An early regional adaptation of the Brahmi script used to write Old Tamil.

It was widely prevalent between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Key domestic sites yielding these inscriptions include Mangulam, Pugalur, and Kodumanal.

The Valley of the Kings: A major archaeological site located on the west bank of the Nile River near modern-day Luxor (ancient Thebes).

It served as the hidden, rock-cut burial ground for Pharaohs of Egypt's New Kingdom (approx. 1539–1077 BCE) to protect royal mummies from tomb robbers. It is a recognized UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sangam-Era Maritime Routes: Ancient Indian merchants mastered the use of monsoon winds to navigate the Arabian Sea.

They exported spices, pearls, and textiles from prominent Tamil ports like Muziris (Muchiri), Korkai, and Kaveripattinam directly to the Red Sea, draining Roman gold into the subcontinent.

85. The Last War of Independence: The 1946 RIN Revolt and Solidarity Amid Polarisation

Context:

February 18, 2026, marks the 80th anniversary of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny. Often reduced to a disciplinary footnote, this armed uprising was a catalytic anti-colonial movement that showcased rare cross-communal solidarity on the eve of India's independence.

I. Background and Triggers of the Uprising:

The Flashpoint (Feb 18, 1946): Ratings (non-commissioned sailors) at HMIS Talwar in Bombay went on a hunger strike under the rallying cry of "No Food, No Work".

Immediate Causes:

Racial Discrimination: Indian sailors faced routine racial abuse from British officers, most notably the openly racist Commander Arthur Frederick King.

Poor Service Conditions: Ratings protested against unhygienic living conditions, unpalatable food, and a stark pay gap compared to their white counterparts.

The Political Spark: The arrest of a rating, B.C. Dutt, for scrawling "Quit India" and "Jai Hind" on the ship's walls escalated service grievances into a full-blown political rebellion.

II. Scale and Spread of the Revolt:

Geographical Reach: What started in Bombay docks quickly engulfed the entire Indian coastline.

It spread to 78 ships and 20 shore establishments across Karachi, Calcutta, Madras, Cochin, and the Andaman Islands.

Mass Participation: Over 20,000 naval ratings participated in the mutiny.

They physically took over ships and turned their onboard guns toward British bases to deter military retaliation.

Institutional Spillover: The mutiny inspired sympathetic strikes within the Royal Indian Air Force and elements of the British Indian Army (such as the Gurkhas in Karachi).

This completely exposed the crumbling loyalty of the imperial armed forces.

III. Solidarity Amid Sharpening Polarisation:

Secular Class Unity: The revolt occurred against the backdrop of the failed 1945 Shimla Conference and rapidly rising communal tensions.

Yet, it demonstrated remarkable, spontaneous Hindu-Muslim-Sikh solidarity.

The 'Three Flags' Symbolism: To project a united anti-imperial front, revolting ships and protesting crowds famously hoisted three flags tied together.

These were the Congress Tricolour, the Muslim League Crescent, and the Communist Party's Red Flag.

Mass Civil Support: The uprising immediately transcended the military boundaries.

Mill workers, students, and common citizens in Bombay observed general strikes, erected barricades, and fought pitched street battles against British troops, resulting in over 200 civilian deaths.

IV. The Political Response and Surrender:

Lack of Political Backing: The mainstream leadership of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League condemned the armed insurrection.

Only the Communist Party of India (CPI) officially supported the general strikes and the sailors' demands.

Fears of Indiscipline: Leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and M.A. Jinnah actively urged the sailors to surrender.

They feared that endorsing an armed rebellion would lead to a total breakdown of military discipline in the soon-to-be independent nations.

The Surrender: Under immense political pressure and facing overwhelming British naval reinforcements, the mutineers laid down their arms.

The Naval Central Strike Committee formally surrendered on February 23, 1946.

86. Symphony in Stone: Unearthing the Architectural Splendour of the Hoysalas Context:

Recently, a renewed archaeological and heritage documentation drive brought the "silent splendour" of the Hoysala dynasty back into the national spotlight. This initiative

builds upon the recent UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition awarded to the 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas', reinforcing their unparalleled legacy in Indian art.



Photo courtesy: The 12th-century Halebidu Kalyana is among the finest examples of Hoysala water architecture. Built below ground level with steps descending on all four sides, it includes 12 shrines with shrines and 14 carvings, symbolically linked to the earth and the 27 constellations.

Unearthing the silent splendour of Hoysalas

I. The Hoysala Dynasty: Historical Footprint

Origins and Zenith: Emerging from the Malnad region of Karnataka, the Hoysalas ruled a vast empire between the 10th and 14th centuries CE.

Political Evolution: Initially serving as feudatories to the Western Chalukyas, they established themselves as an independent powerhouse.

Key Rulers: King Vishnuvardhana (who successfully broke away from Chalukyan subordination).

Veera Ballala II (who expanded the empire across the Deccan).

Capitals: Their initial capital was located at Belur, which was later shifted to Halebidu (historically known as Dorasamudra).

II. The 'Sacred Ensembles': Key Architectural Marvels

The UNESCO tag specifically encompasses three spectacular temple complexes managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI):

Chennakeshava Temple (Belur): Commissioned by King Vishnuvardhana in 1117 CE. It was built to commemorate his decisive military victory over the Cholas at the Battle of Talakad.

Hoysaleswara Temple (Halebidu): Constructed in 1121 CE, it is the largest Shiva temple built by the Hoysalas.

It is celebrated for its Dvikuta (twin-shrine) layout and over 240 wall sculptures running along its exterior.

Keshava Temple (Somanathapura): Built around 1268 CE by a commander of King Narasimha III.

It is a brilliant example of a Trikuta (three-shrined) temple, representing the absolute climax of Hoysala artistic maturity.

III. Defining Features of Hoysala Architecture:

The Vesara Style: The Hoysalas perfected the Vesara (hybrid) style, masterfully blending the Dravida (South Indian) Vimana elements with the Nagara (North Indian) curvilinear forms.

Stellate Ground Plan: Temples are constructed on a highly complex, star-shaped raised platform known as the Jagati.

This platform provides structural stability and serves as the path for Pradakshina (circumambulation).

Material Innovation: Builders moved away from hard sandstones to use Chloritic Schist (soft soapstone).

This soft stone allowed artisans to execute micro-carvings resembling intricate jewelry, which naturally hardened over time upon exposure to the air.

Signature Sculptures: The presence of Madanikas or Salabhanjikas (bracket figures of dancing women) beneath the eaves, displaying extreme anatomical fluidity and ornamentation.

87. Spiritual Footprints: Mapping the Tirthankar (Jain) Tourism Circuit

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Tourism confirmed in the Rajya Sabha the successful completion of the 'Tirthankar (Jain) Circuit' project in Bihar. While legacy projects are complete, the Ministry's focus has now structurally shifted from thematic circuits to holistic destination development under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0).

I. The Tirthankar Circuit Initiative:

The Thematic Vision:

The Tirthankar Circuit was one of the core thematic routes identified under the original Swadesh Darshan Scheme (launched in 2014-15).

It was specifically designed to trace the spiritual journeys and geographical footprint of Jain Tirthankaras across India.

The Completed Corridor:

The central government sanctioned ₹33.96 Crore for the integrated development of a dedicated Jain corridor in Bihar.

This physically completed route connects the historical nodes of Vaishali-Arrah-Masad-Patna-Rajgir-Pawapuri-Champapuri.

II. Decoding the History: The Bihar Jain Corridor

Vaishali (Kundagrama): Located in the ancient Vajji confederacy, it holds supreme historical importance as the birthplace of Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th and last Tirthankara.

Rajgir (Rajagriha): The ancient capital of the Magadha empire surrounded by five hills.

Lord Mahavira spent 14 Chaturmas (rainy season retreats) here, and the Vipulachal Hill is traditionally believed to be the site of his first sermon (Divya Dhvani).

Pawapuri (Apapapuri): A deeply venerated site marking the exact place of Lord Mahavira's Nirvana (salvation from the cycle of birth and death) in 527 BCE.

The iconic marble Jal Mandir sits gracefully in the center of a lotus pond here.

Champapuri: The ancient capital of the Anga Mahajanapada (near modern Bhagalpur).

It is the only place in Jain cosmology where all five Panch Kalyanakas (auspicious life events—conception, birth, renunciation, enlightenment, and salvation) of the 12th Tirthankara, Lord Vasupujya, took place.

TIRTHANKARA

‘Ford-maker.’ Supreme spiritual teacher who has conquered the cycle of death and rebirth (*samsara*) and made a path for others to follow.

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

A Central Sector Scheme
(100% funded by the Union Government)
managed by the Ministry of Tourism
to develop world-class tourism infrastructure.

III. Shift in National Tourism Policy (SD 2.0):

From Circuits to Destinations: Swadesh Darshan 2.0 completely revamps the earlier thematic circuit approach (like the Ramayana or Tirthankar circuits).

It now prioritizes "Destination Development," ensuring that a single location receives comprehensive infrastructure, skill development, and sustainability upgrades.

Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD): To foster competitive federalism, 38 new projects have been sanctioned under CBDD.

States must compete for funds by submitting holistic models for eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, and heritage conservation.

88. Fading Footprints: Centre Delists 18 Monuments from Protected List

Context:

Recently, the Central Government has officially removed 18 historical monuments from its list of 'Protected Monuments'. As stated by the Ministry of Culture, these structures were assessed and determined to have "lost their national significance" in accordance with the AMASR Act.

I. What Does 'Delisting' Mean?

Loss of Central Protection: Once a monument is delisted, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is no longer responsible for its conservation, maintenance, or security.

Lifting of Construction Bans: The strict restrictions of the AMASR Act—which impose a 100-metre 'prohibited zone' and a 200-metre 'regulated zone' around the monument—are immediately lifted, opening the adjacent land for urbanization and civic development.

Current Status: Despite the delisting, the Ministry has formally clarified to the Rajya Sabha that no protected monument is currently "missing" or untraceable.

II. Historical Context of Key Delisted Monuments:

The delisted list is highly concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana.

Nicholson Statue (Delhi): Located outside Kashmiri Gate, this was dedicated to Brigadier-General John Nicholson, a prominent and brutal British East India Company officer who played a decisive role in the Siege of Delhi during the Revolt of 1857.

Kos Minars (Haryana):

Two of these milestones (located in Gurugram and Karnal) have been removed from the list.

Historical Linkage: Kos Minars were medieval milestones introduced by the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Suri (and later expanded by the Mughals) to

measure distances and facilitate communication along the imperial highways, most notably the Grand Trunk Road.

Colonial Cemeteries (UP & Delhi): Several colonial-era burial sites, including the Bara Khamba Cemetery in Delhi and Gunner Burkill's Tomb in Jhansi, have been delisted. Many of these have long been lost to rapid urban encroachment.

Ancient & Medieval Ruins: Includes a 12th-century temple in Baran (Rajasthan), the Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi, and remnants of 1000 CE Linga temples in Mirzapur.

The AMASR Act, 1958

Criteria for Protection

Under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958, a monument must be of **historical, archaeological, or artistic interest** and have been in existence for **not less than 100 years** to be declared of "national importance."

Section 35 of AMASR Act

This specific section grants the **Central Government** the statutory power to issue a **notification in the Official Gazette to delist any monument** if it determines that the site has completely lost its physical or historical prominence.

III. Additional Cultural Conservation Efforts:

While these specific physical structures have been delisted, the Ministry of Culture simultaneously highlighted ongoing efforts to preserve intangible heritage:

Gyan Bharatam Mission: Over 7.5 lakh ancient manuscripts have been digitized, with 1.29 lakh already accessible to the public on the Gyan Bharatam portal.

IGNCA Initiatives: The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts is actively conducting audio-visual documentation of endangered tribal and folk-art forms to preserve traditional knowledge systems.

TELANGANA CURRENT AFFAIRS

89. Decoding Obesity: Hyderabad's AIG Hospitals Links Genetics and Lifestyle

Context:

A recent study conducted by AIG Hospitals in Hyderabad, published in Scientific Reports, has shown that the risk of obesity among Indians is largely influenced by a complex interplay of genetic predisposition and daily lifestyle choices.

I. Key Highlights of the Study:

Global Collaboration: The investigation was carried out by AIG Hospitals in partnership with the University of Luxembourg and the University of Marburg, Germany.

Data Sources: The researchers examined genomic profiles from a cohort recruited in India at AIG Hospitals, in addition to data from individuals of Indian ancestry sourced from the UK Biobank.

Graded Risk Pattern: The findings of the study indicated that the risk of obesity is not consistent; rather, it escalates in a graded manner based on the interaction between an individual's genetic composition and their particular lifestyle choices.

Impact on the Youth: An age-stratified analysis uncovered a significant trend: lifestyle decisions exert a considerably stronger influence on younger individuals who carry a high genetic predisposition to obesity.

Unique Indian Physiology: The research confirmed that individuals of Indian descent inherently display a greater metabolic sensitivity to fat accumulation compared to other demographic groups.

Terminology	Definition / Relevance
Polygenic Condition	A physical trait or disease that is controlled by the cumulative effect of multiple genes (thousands of genetic variants), rather than a single gene mutation. Obesity, height, and skin color are polygenic.
Genetic Susceptibility	An increased likelihood of developing a particular disease based on a person's genetic makeup. It does not mean the disease is guaranteed, but the risk is higher.
Adiposity	The medical term for the condition of having excessive fatty tissue in the body. Indians are metabolically more prone to visceral adiposity (belly fat).
Genomic Profiling	A laboratory method used to learn about all the genes in a person or in a specific cell type, helping to identify how genetics influence health and disease.

90. Vision for Inclusive Excellence: Telangana Unveils Education Policy 2026

Context:

Recently, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy introduced the Education Policy for Telangana 2026: Vision for Inclusive Excellence. Developed by the Telangana Education Commission (TEC), this policy suggests extensive structural reforms, which encompass independent institutional evaluations and strict fee regulations.

Key Highlights of the Policy:

Establishment of TESA: The policy requires the formation of the Telangana Educational Standards Authority (TESA), an autonomous apex organization led by a Commissioner.

TESA will oversee the evaluation and ranking of all educational institutions, ranging from primary schools to universities of higher education.

Comprehensive Assessment Framework:

TESA will implement localized summative assessments for Classes 2–9 and 11 to continuously monitor learning outcomes.

It will also introduce compulsory baseline assessments for students entering higher education and end-line assessments for those graduating.

Categorization and Fee Regulation:

Schools will be officially categorized into various groups based on their infrastructure and educational quality.

A specialized regulatory body will be established to enforce stringent fee limits for each category, with significant penalties proposed for institutions that exceed the set thresholds.

Evidence-Based Formulation:

The draft represents the outcome of a comprehensive 14-month survey that encompassed over 305 educational institutions throughout all 33 districts of Telangana.

It incorporates both global and national best practices, utilizing insights gained from study visits to high-performing states (Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab) and international models (USA, Malaysia, Vietnam).

91. Governance in Overdrive: Telangana Constitutes Cabinet Sub-Panel for 100-Day Action Plan

Context:

Recently, the government of Telangana established a high-level Cabinet sub-committee led by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. This panel is responsible for devising and implementing a thorough 99/100-day action plan aimed at rapidly advancing welfare and development programs throughout all state departments.

Key Highlights of the Initiative:

The Composition of the Cabinet Sub-Committee:

Chairman: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka.

Members: Prominent ministers such as N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu, and Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy.

Convenor: The Principal Secretary of the Planning Department.

The Timeline for Implementation:

Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao has instructed each state department to formulate a rigorous, department-specific 100-day action plan.

The timeframe for executing these welfare and development initiatives is established from March 2 to June 9, 2026.

Empowering Local Governance:

The government requires extensive awareness and orientation sessions for newly elected Sarpanches and Municipal Chairpersons.

Training will concentrate on fundamental governance aspects such as rural sanitation, health, and local development.

Modernizing Administration: To promote transparency, accountability, and efficient file processing, the prompt implementation of the e-Office system has been mandated throughout the State Secretariat and all Head of Department (HoD) offices.

Dimension	Constitutional / Administrative Relevance
Cabinet Sub-Committees	Derived from the Rules of Business framed under Article 166(3) of the Constitution. These committees are formed to reduce the immense workload of the full Cabinet by allowing smaller, focused groups of ministers to deliberate on specific policy mandates in-depth.
Capacity Building of Local Bodies	Training Sarpanches and Municipal Chairpersons directly strengthens the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. It empowers local self-governments to effectively manage the 29 subjects in the 11th Schedule and 18 subjects in the 12th Schedule.
e-Governance Initiatives	The shift to the e-Office system aligns with the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), aimed at making all government services accessible to the common man while ensuring efficiency, transparency, and reliability.

92. Balancing Ecology and Equity: The Socio-Political Debate Over Musi Rejuvenation

Context:

Recently, the Musi River Rejuvenation initiative, along with the associated 'Gandhi Sarovar' project, encountered significant political opposition. The opposing party initiated the "Musi Gosa – BJP Bharosa" campaign, which protested against the enlargement of the river's buffer zone and the resulting demolition of residences belonging to impoverished individuals and military personnel.

I. Key Highlights & Core Issues:

The Debate on Development versus Displacement: The initiative by the state government to cleanse and revitalize the severely contaminated Musi River necessitates the removal of encroachments from its floodplains and buffer zones. Nevertheless, opponents contend that this ecological restoration is resulting in unfair urban displacement and the forced eviction of at-risk communities.

The "Musi Gosa – BJP Bharosa" Initiative: This campaign was initiated to call for an immediate cessation of the demolitions associated with the Gandhi Sarovar project.

The political position asserts that the rejuvenation of the river can be achieved through alternative engineering techniques, eliminating the need to significantly enlarge the buffer zone or demolish existing neighborhoods.

Call for Justice and Rehabilitation: The primary demand is to safeguard the housing rights of the impacted families and to guarantee that any required relocation is supported by a comprehensive and pre-established rehabilitation plan.

II. Urban Planning:

Floodplain Zoning: Intrusions into riverbeds significantly hinder the natural water flow, resulting in devastating urban flooding during monsoon seasons (as

frequently observed in Hyderabad). The removal of these encroachments is ecologically essential, yet it presents social complexities.

The Rehabilitation Deficit: A significant obstacle in urban infrastructure initiatives is the absence of trust in governmental rehabilitation programs. Displaced individuals frequently experience a loss of income when moved to the outskirts of the city, far removed from their previous places of employment.

III. Geography & Constitutional Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Legal Framework
Musi River Geography	A major tributary of the Krishna River. It originates in the Ananthagiri Hills near Vikarabad and flows through Hyderabad, historically dividing the old and new cities.
Buffer Zone / FTL	Full Tank Level (FTL): The maximum water spread area of a water body. Buffer Zone: A legally mandated "no-construction" belt adjacent to the FTL to protect the river's ecological integrity and prevent flooding.
Constitutional Rights	Article 21 (Right to Life): The Supreme Court has repeatedly expanded this to include the Right to Adequate Shelter and the Right to Livelihood, making forced evictions without proper rehabilitation legally contentious.
Statutory Backing	WALTA Act (Water, Land and Trees Act): Enacted to promote water conservation, protect water bodies, and prevent encroachments in Telangana.

93. Empowering Homebuyers: TG RERA's Landmark Revival of Stalled Real Estate Projects

Context:

Recently, the Telangana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (TG RERA) played a pivotal role in the successful revival of the halted Jaya Platinum Project located in Dundigal. By implementing rigorous statutory measures, the authority enabled the flat owners' association to officially assume control and finalize the incomplete construction.

I. The Crisis and Regulatory Action:

The Default: Construction of the 60-apartment project by Jayathri Infrastructures halted at 66% completion in 2022, leaving buyers stranded without a viable revival plan.

Strict Penalties: Following a technical inspection by the Engineering Staff College of India, TG RERA revoked the project's registration, formally declared the promoter a "debarred entity," and imposed a hefty penalty of ₹2.36 crore for widespread violations.

II. The Resolution: Power to the Buyers

Association Takeover: Flat owners formed the JP Welfare Association and submitted a detailed financial plan and completion timeline to the authorities.

Supervised Completion: Following government consultation, TG RERA permitted the association to execute the remaining 34% of the civil work using a dedicated escrow account.

Final Outcome: The project was successfully finished, and an Occupancy Certificate was issued. Crucially, the original promoter's statutory liabilities (such as conveyance and mortgage obligations) remain legally binding and preserved.

III. Statutory and Governance Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Legal Framework
Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016	A central legislation designed to protect homebuyers, boost investments, and bring transparency to the real estate sector by establishing state-level regulatory authorities (like TG RERA).
Section 8 of the RERA Act	A powerful statutory provision that kicks in upon the lapse or revocation of a project's registration. It empowers the Authority to consult the state government and grant the "association of allottees" the first right of refusal to carry out the remaining development works.
Escrow Account Mechanism	RERA mandates that 70% of the funds collected from buyers must be deposited in a separate, ring-fenced bank account (escrow) to cover only construction and land costs, strictly preventing builders from diverting funds to other projects.
Consumer Protection	Shields the economic rights of citizens against corporate negligence, aligning with the broader welfare principles of economic justice and the right to a dignified living standard.

94. Judicial Checks on Procedural Lapses: Telangana HC Rulings on MCC and Public Protests

Context:

Recently, the Telangana High Court issued two important judgments that strengthen statutory procedural protections. The Court approved anticipatory bail in a case concerning a violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and annulled criminal proceedings against a professor from Osmania University on the grounds of police failure to adhere to legal requirements.

I. Case 1: MCC Violations and Anticipatory Bail

The Incident: Former Tandur MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy and eight others were booked for allegedly forcibly entering a municipal election counting booth in Vikarabad district.

The Charges: Police invoked Sections 223, 132, and 126(2) read with 189(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which relate to unlawful assembly and obstruction of the election process.

The Ruling: Justice K. Sujana granted anticipatory bail to all petitioners, observing that under the specific circumstances, the police complaint was not legally maintainable.

II. Case 2: Quashing of FIRs against Campus Protests

The Incident: Criminal cases were filed against Prof. C. Kasim (Principal, OU Arts College) for staging a dharna on the Osmania University campus, allegedly violating prohibitory orders issued by the University Registrar.

The Police Action: The police registered an FIR under Section 188 of the IPC (disobedience to an order duly promulgated by a public servant).

The Legal Flaw: The High Court quashed the proceedings because the police failed to comply with Section 195 of the CrPC, which explicitly bars courts from taking cognizance of such offenses without a formal, written complaint directly from the concerned public servant (the Registrar, in this case).

III. Legal & Constitutional Framework:

Legal Concept	Relevance & Definition
Model Code of Conduct (MCC)	A set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission (or State Election Commission for municipal polls under Article 243K) to regulate the conduct of political parties and candidates, ensuring free and fair elections.
Anticipatory Bail	A legal provision allowing a person to seek bail in anticipation of an arrest for a non-bailable offense. It acts as a safeguard against arbitrary arrests and political vendettas.
Procedural Safeguard (Sec 195 CrPC)	A crucial check on police overreach. It ensures that for offenses relating to the contempt of lawful authority of public servants (like violating a protest ban), the police cannot arbitrarily file charge sheets; the aggrieved public servant must personally file a written complaint to the magistrate.
Right to Protest	Article 19(1)(b) guarantees the right to assemble peaceably and without arms. However, it is subject to "reasonable restrictions" under Article 19(3) in the interest of public order.

95. Judicial Nudge to Legislative Delays: SC's 3-Week Ultimatum on Telangana Defections

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court delivered a serious final admonition to the Speaker of the Telangana Assembly, imposing a stringent three-week deadline for the resolution of outstanding disqualification petitions concerning the defecting BRS MLAs. The Court underscored that any additional delay would result in significant contempt proceedings.

I. Key Highlights of the Supreme Court's Directive:

The Ultimatum: A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and A.G. Masih directed the Speaker to "positively" decide the pending petitions against legislators who allegedly shifted allegiance to the ruling Congress.

Warning of Contempt: The apex court explicitly noted that deliberately sitting on defection cases violates earlier judicial mandates and amounts to "gross contempt" of the Court.

No Absolute Immunity: The Supreme Court reiterated a crucial constitutional principle: while adjudicating defection pleas, the Speaker functions as a statutory Tribunal. Therefore, the office does not enjoy absolute constitutional immunity from judicial oversight.

Subsequent Development: Acting just before the Supreme Court's deadline expired in early March 2026, the Speaker officially dismissed the disqualification petitions against all the accused BRS MLAs, citing a "lack of conclusive documentary evidence."

II. Core Issues Highlighted by the Case:

Weaponization of Delay: Ruling parties frequently exploit the lack of a specific statutory time limit in the Anti-Defection law.

This loophole allows defecting MLAs to continue holding power while disqualification pleas slowly "die a natural death" over the Assembly's five-year term.

Impartiality of the Speaker: The controversy reignites the debate over whether the Speaker—who typically retains strong political ties to the ruling party—can act as a truly neutral and independent adjudicator.

III. The Anti-Defection Framework:

Dimension	Constitutional / Legal Relevance
Tenth Schedule	Inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act (1985). It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature.
Grounds for Defection	1. Voluntarily giving up membership of the political party on whose ticket they were elected. 2. Voting or abstaining contrary to the party whip without prior permission.
Kihoto Hollohan Case (1992)	A landmark SC judgment that upheld the validity of the Tenth Schedule. It established that the Speaker's final decision is subject to Judicial Review on grounds of mala fides or constitutional violations.
Keisham Meghachandra Case (2020)	The SC previously ruled that Speakers must decide disqualification petitions within a "reasonable time," defining this standard period as a maximum of three months, barring exceptional circumstances.

96. Tech-Driven Academia: Integrating AI and Quantum Technology in Higher Education

Context:

Recently, Osmania University organized the Central Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet, which centered on the theme of 'Creating AI and Quantum-Enabled Higher Educational Institutions'. Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma emphasized that the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence and Quantum technology into academic frameworks has become an essential "pedagogical necessity."

I. Key Highlights from the Conclave

Indigenous Innovation: The Governor urged universities to transition from being mere consumers of foreign technology to becoming the primary architects of 'Made in India' AI solutions, ensuring they reflect domestic ethics and values.

Osmania University's Repositioning: OU announced the strategic upgrade of its Center of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (CoE-AIML).

It is envisioned as a national resource platform to support government bodies and PSUs in developing AI applications for smart cities, intelligent transportation, and reliable healthcare.

Administrative & Academic Integration: Discussions involving over 100 Vice Chancellors emphasized leveraging AI not just for mainstream classroom learning, but also for ensuring transparent university administration and establishing global standards for responsible tech use.

II. Science, Tech & Governance Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Quantum Technology	A field of physics and engineering that relies on the principles of quantum mechanics (specifically superposition and entanglement). It allows for computing power that is exponentially faster and more complex than classical computers.
Pedagogy & NEP 2020	Pedagogy refers to the method and practice of teaching. The push for AI integration directly aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which mandates the extensive use of technology to improve teaching, learning, and educational planning.
TGCHE	Telangana Council of Higher Education. A statutory body that acts as the highest advisory authority to the State Government on matters concerning the coordinated development, planning, and funding of higher education institutions in Telangana.

97. Fading "Flowers of Light": The Ecological Decline of Fireflies in Telangana

Context:

Recently, researchers have expressed concern regarding the significant decrease in firefly populations (*Photuris lucicrescens*) throughout Telangana. Commonly referred to as "Veluturu Poolu," their vanishing from urban settings as well as safeguarded forests acts as a critical early warning indicator of environmental decline.



SHNU
A S ★

I. Ecological Significance of Fireflies:

Vital Bio-indicators: Fireflies act as living barometers of ecosystem health. Their larvae require pristine water and soil to survive; a drop in their population instantly indicates rising local pollution levels.

Natural Pest Control: Before reaching adulthood, firefly larvae feed extensively on crop-damaging pests, snails, and worms, naturally maintaining the agricultural ecological balance.

Pollination: Adult fireflies feed on pollen and nectar, playing a subtle but important role in local biodiversity.

II. Drivers of the Decline:

Light Pollution: This is the most critical threat. The increasing use of artificial LED lighting in semi-urban areas disrupts the fireflies' natural bioluminescent communication, making it nearly impossible for them to signal mates and reproduce.

Habitat Destruction: Rapid urbanization, deforestation, and the destruction of wetlands have wiped out their natural breeding grounds.

Chemical Agriculture: The excessive use of toxic pesticides directly poisons the soil and water bodies where firefly larvae thrive.

III. Current Habitats and Conservation Efforts:

Remaining Pockets: In Telangana, fireflies are now largely restricted to deep forest pockets like the Amrabad and Kawal Tiger Reserves, as well as areas like Dandepally, Peddapur, and Kishan Bagh.

Global Recognition: Recognizing the crisis, Hyderabad is slated to host a major international conference on firefly conservation in 2027, driven by organizations like the Firefly Asian Association (FAA).

IV. Science & Geography:

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Bioluminescence	The biochemical emission of light by living organisms. In fireflies, it occurs in the abdomen when the chemical luciferin reacts with oxygen and the enzyme luciferase, creating a cold, soft glow used for mating signals and predator deterrence.
Bio-indicator	Any biological species or group whose function, population, or status reveals the qualitative status of the environment (e.g., Lichens for air pollution, Fireflies for soil/water purity).
Amrabad Tiger Reserve	Located in the Nallamala Hills (Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda districts), it is one of the largest tiger reserves in India and a critical catchment area for the Krishna River.
Kawal Tiger Reserve	Located in the Mancherial district of northern Telangana, serving as a vital catchment for the Godavari and Kadam rivers.

98. Plugging the Leaks: Telangana's Mining Revenue Surges by 22%

Context:

Recently, Telangana announced a remarkable 22% increase in revenue from its mining sector, excluding coal. This financial growth can be directly linked to the state government's stringent "Triple Zero" reform policy aimed at combating illegal mining, overloading, and unauthorized transportation.

I. Key Highlights & Revenue Data

The 'Triple Zero' Policy: The Mines and Geology department anchored its reforms on three strict pillars: zero illegal mining, zero overloading, and zero illegal transportation, effectively plugging massive historical revenue leakages.

Minor Minerals Lead the Growth: This sector recorded the sharpest year-on-year growth at 33%.

Collections jumped from ₹1,171.91 crore (up to Jan 2025) to ₹1,561.03 crore in 2025-26, achieving 77% of its annual target.

Robust Sand Sector: Revenue from sand extraction and transport increased by 27%, reaching ₹750.55 crore.

Major Minerals (Excluding Coal): Showed a steady 17% growth, generating ₹197.68 crore against a target of ₹261.30 crore.

Enhanced Surveillance: The state significantly tightened both physical and digital surveillance mechanisms at quarry sites and transit checkpoints to curb regulatory violations.

The MMDR Act, 1957

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act is the central legislation governing the sector.

Major vs. Minor Minerals

Major Minerals

(e.g., Coal, Iron Ore, Uranium)

- Centre frames the rules.
- Royalty goes to the State.



Minor Minerals

(e.g. Sand, Building Stones, Gravel)

- State controls rules & leases.
- Revenue to the State Govt.



District Mineral Foundation (DMF)

- A statutory trust established under the MMDR Act in all districts affected by mining.
- Funded by contributions from miners
- For the welfare of local, mining-affected communities.

II. Economic and Governance:

Resource Mobilization: For a state actively expanding its welfare and infrastructure footprint, maximizing non-tax revenue from natural resources is critical to managing the fiscal deficit and reducing borrowing dependencies.

Curbing the Parallel Economy: Unregulated mining fuels a black economy, environmental degradation, and infrastructure damage (due to overloaded trucks ruining state highways). Strict surveillance ensures legitimate wealth generation.

Sustainable Mining Practices: Efficient revenue collection must be balanced with ecological preservation, ensuring that the extraction of finite resources like sand does not lead to the depletion of riverbeds and groundwater tables.

99. Echoes of the Iron Age: 3,000-Year-Old Settlement Unearthed in Nalgonda

Context:

Recently, historians have uncovered the vast remnants of a settlement that dates back 3,000 years, located along the banks of the Krishna River in the Nalgonda district (Veerlapalem–Veerappagudem). Spanning from the Megalithic Iron Age to the 15th century CE, this site, which is at significant risk, includes ancient warrior graves, medieval granaries, and temples.

I. Key Archaeological Discoveries:

Megalithic Warrior Burials: The exploration revealed hundreds of Iron Age megalithic burials (cairns).

These graves are locally constructed with four large upright stones capped by a flat slab, using Banjar Raallu (Palnadu stone).

Place names like Veerulapadu and Veerappagudem historically reflect this warrior-centric past.

Evidence of Metallurgy: The discovery of iron slag across the site suggests robust local iron smelting and production capabilities, which were essential for cutting and working the massive stone blocks.

Medieval Fortifications:

Evidence from the 10th–15th centuries CE reveals a 70x70 meter square fort with a tall southeastern bastion (watchtower) directly overlooking the Krishna River.

Protected Granary Hub: The distinct absence of domestic pottery, combined with large lime-plastered circular granaries, strongly suggests the site functioned primarily as a strategic military grain storage center rather than a civilian residential hub.

II. Historical and Dynastic Linkages:

Kakatiya Connection: Local oral traditions closely associate the fortified granaries with Kakatiya Queen Rudramadevi, highlighting the riverbank's strategic logistical importance during her reign.

Recherla Padmanayaka Patronage: Ruins of a 14th–15th century Lakshmi Narasimha temple were found just south of the fort.

The recovery of distinct Garuda carvings and idols of Adi Lakshmi and Chenchu Lakshmi confirm the architectural and religious patronage of the Recherla Padmanayakas.

III. History & Heritage Framework:

Dimension	Historical / Statutory Relevance
Megalithic Culture	Refers to the "Large Stone" building cultures of the Iron Age in South India (roughly 1000 BCE to 300 BCE). These communities were primarily pastoralists and early agriculturalists who practiced elaborate burial rituals.
Recherla Padmanayakas	Originally powerful feudatories (Nayakas) under the Kakatiyas. Following the fall of Warangal to the Delhi Sultanate in 1323 CE, they asserted their independence and ruled the Rachakonda and Devarakonda regions in Nalgonda.
State Heritage Protection	Unregulated mining and treasure hunting threaten this site. It urgently requires protection under the Telangana Heritage (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Maintenance) Act, 2017, which empowers the state to safeguard tangible history not covered by central ASI laws.

100. Sustainable Escapes: TGFDCCL Launches 'The Breeze' Ecotourism at Ananthagiri

Context:

Recently, the Telangana Forest Development Corporation Limited (TGFDCCL) introduced a high-end ecotourism initiative called 'The Breeze' located in Ananthagiri Hills, Vikarabad. This project, managed under the Deccan Woods & Trails brand, effectively integrates luxury ecotourism with the provision of employment for tribal communities and the conservation of wildlife.

I. Core Features of the Initiative

The 'Masai Mara of Telangana': The project heavily promotes the Ananthagiri grasslands, earning it the moniker of Telangana's Masai Mara due to its unique topography and wildlife potential.

Curated Experiences: The initiative moves away from mass tourism by offering limited-capacity, guided experiences led by trained naturalists.

Activities Included: Visitors can engage in early-morning safaris, birdwatching, and guided nature treks.

It also features unique outdoor dining experiences, including 'bush breakfasts' set within the grasslands.

II. Community and Ecological Dimensions:

Tribal Empowerment: The project is deeply rooted in community participation. It actively generates sustainable local employment for tribal youth and locals in hospitality, trekking, and site maintenance.

Carrying Capacity Approach: The TGFDC has intentionally kept this a "limited-capacity" initiative.

This ensures strict adherence to forest etiquette, maintains the ecological balance, and prevents the severe environmental degradation often caused by unregulated over-tourism.

III. Geography & Policy Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Ananthagiri Hills	Geography: Located in the Vikarabad district, these hills are the birthplace of the Musi River (a tributary of the Krishna River). The region is known for its dense semi-evergreen forests and historic Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple.
TGFDC	Administration: The Telangana Forest Development Corporation Limited is a state-owned enterprise responsible for raising forest plantations (bamboo, eucalyptus) and sustainably developing ecotourism destinations.
Ecotourism	Concept: Defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves education.

101. End of an Era: White Tiger 'Sharan' Passes Away at Kakatiya Zoo ★

Context:

Recently, a 15-year-old white tiger named 'Sharan' died from age-related multi-organ failure at the Kakatiya Zoological Park in Hanamkonda. This tiger notably exceeded the typical lifespan of its species, thanks to superior veterinary and conservation efforts.



I. Key Highlights of the Event:

Cause of Death: Preliminary reports confirmed multi-organ failure, including severe lung, liver, and cardiac complications resulting from advanced age.

Longevity and Care: The average lifespan of a white tiger in captivity is around 14 years. Sharan lived to be 15.

This longevity was attributed to continuous medical intervention supported by the College of Veterinary Science, Mamnoor.

Recent Arrival: Sharan was a relatively recent addition to the public display at this specific park, having been officially released into the enclosure in July 2025 by the State Environment and Forests Minister.

Protocol Adherence: Following standard Central Zoo Authority (CZA) protocols, samples were sent to the Veterinary Biological Research Centre in Hyderabad, and final rites were conducted strictly within the zoo premises to prevent illegal wildlife trade of animal parts.

II. Geography and Wildlife Science:

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Kakatiya Zoological Park	Also known as the Vana Vigyan Kendra. It is a prominent ex-situ conservation center located in Hanamkonda (formerly part of the undivided Warangal district).
Genetics of White Tigers	White tigers are not albinos or a separate subspecies. They are Bengal Tigers (<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>) possessing a rare, naturally occurring double-recessive allele (a genetic mutation called leucism). This mutation suppresses the red and yellow pigments in their fur, while the black stripes remain intact.
Ex-Situ Conservation	The conservation of biological diversity outside their natural habitats. Zoos, botanical gardens, and seed banks fall under this category, playing a crucial role in veterinary research and species preservation.
Statutory Protection	Bengal Tigers are listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List and are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, granting them the absolute highest level of legal protection in India.

102. On the Prowl: Mitigating Human-Tiger Conflict in Central Telangana

Context:

Recently, the Telangana Forest Department initiated a high-alert surveillance protocol across Siddipet, Jangaon, Karimnagar, and Yadadri districts. This follows the confirmed movement of a migrating tiger near human settlements, prompting urgent measures to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

I. Tracking the Tiger: The Migration Route

Inter-State Movement: The tiger entered Telangana in November 2025, originating from the Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra.

The Transit Corridor: It initially spent two weeks within Telangana's Kawal Tiger Reserve.

It subsequently migrated further south into central Telangana, covering an extensive distance of nearly 270 km before its recent pugmarks were traced in Arepally village (Siddipet).

II. Strategic Surveillance and Safety Protocols:

Real-Time Expert Monitoring: Wildlife experts from Pune are actively collaborating with local veterinary doctors to track the tiger's movements in real-time.

Community Awareness: Forest staff are actively patrolling sensitive mandals (like Shanigaram and Koheda), advising residents against venturing out at night.

Preventing Retaliation: Farmers have been strictly warned against setting up illegal electric fences or traps.

To prevent retaliatory killings by locals, the government is ensuring prompt, on-the-spot financial compensation for the eight cattle killed so far by the tiger.

III. Institutional Response & Standard Operating Procedures:

High-Level Task Force: An expert committee, led by the state's Chief Wildlife Warden, has been constituted to supervise daily operations and ensure public safety.

Capture as a Last Resort: Officials have clarified that capturing the animal is not the primary objective.

Sedation and capture will only be executed strictly under National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines if the tiger is declared a direct, unavoidable threat to human life.

IV. Environment and Statutory Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Legal Framework
Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC)	Arises when animals leave protected areas due to habitat fragmentation, loss of natural prey base, or population spillover, leading to crop damage, livestock predation, or loss of human life.
National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)	A statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). It was established following an amendment to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and sets the binding guidelines for tiger reserve management and conflict mitigation.
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Tigers are Schedule I animals, receiving absolute protection. Under Section 11(1)(a), only the Chief Wildlife Warden can order the hunting or capturing of a Schedule I animal, and only if it has become dangerous to human life or is irreparably diseased.

103. Viveka Suryodaya Saptaham: Commemorating Swami Vivekananda's Hyderabad Visit

Context:

Recently, the Ramakrishna Math (Hyderabad) organized the week-long "Viveka Suryodaya Saptaham" to commemorate the 133rd anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic 1893 visit to the city. The event heavily focused on youth empowerment, ethical leadership, and integrating spiritual grounding with modern challenges.

I. Key Highlights of the Event:

Youth and Ethical Leadership: Addressed by prominent public figures (including former IAS officer Jayaprakash Narayan) at Bhavan's Vivekananda College, the convention urged the youth to reject corruption and prioritize responsible citizenship.

Character Over Materialism: Speakers highlighted that in today's highly competitive and material-driven society, true success relies on combining academic knowledge with solid moral values, self-discipline, and integrity.

Call for Nation-Building: Students were actively encouraged to develop critical thinking and compassion for the underprivileged, channeling their energies into public service and environmental protection.

II. History, Ethics, and Governance importance:

Dimension	Historical / Syllabus Relevance
The 1893 Hyderabad Visit	Swami Vivekananda visited Hyderabad in February 1893, just months before his famous address at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He delivered a historic lecture titled "My Mission to the West" at the Mahboob College in Secunderabad, which garnered massive public and royal attention.
Nawab's Patronage	During his stay, he interacted with the nobility of the Nizam's dominion. The then-Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Sir Asman Jah, and other nobles offered financial assistance for his upcoming journey to the West.
Ethics in Public Life	The event's emphasis on rejecting corruption and building integrity directly ties into the Ethics syllabus. Vivekananda's philosophy of 'Daridra Narayana' (seeing God in the poor) forms the foundational ethic for dedicated public service and compassionate governance.
Ramakrishna Mission	Founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897 to propagate the teachings of his guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is a prime example of a socio-religious reform movement that combined Vedantic spiritualism with active social philanthropy (schools, hospitals, disaster relief).

104. Safeguarding Childhood: TGHRC Takes Suo Motu Action on Exploitation in Schools

Context:

Recently, the Telangana Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) took suo motu cognizance of reports that students in government and aided schools were being coerced into menial cleaning tasks. The Commission has demanded a detailed action-taken report from the School Education Secretary to halt these severe child rights violations.

I. The Core Issue and Violations:

The Exploitation: Due to a severe shortage of appointed sweepers, school administrations were reportedly forcing students to undertake sweeping and garbage disposal.

Coercion and Harassment: The Commission noted alarming allegations that students who refused to participate in these menial tasks faced threats or physical punishment from the school staff.

Directives Issued: The TGHRC mandated a comprehensive factual report by February 24, 2026, demanding strict disciplinary action against erring officials and the immediate implementation of preventive measures.

II. Governance and Human Rights Dimensions:

Infrastructure Deficits Impacting Welfare: The lack of basic non-teaching staff (sweepers) in government schools directly degrades the educational environment, forcing children to substitute for state administrative failures.

Psychological Impact: Forcing children into manual labor under the threat of punishment violates their dignity and creates a hostile learning environment, leading to increased dropout rates and psychological distress.

III. Statutory and Constitutional Framework:

Suo Motu Cognizance: The power of a judicial or quasi-judicial body (like the TGHC) to initiate action on its own accord without a formal complaint being filed, often based on media reports of rights violations.

State Human Rights Commission: A statutory body constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. It is vested with the powers of a civil court to inquire into violations of human rights within the state.

RTE Act, 2009: The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. Section 17 strictly prohibits any form of physical punishment or mental harassment of a child, making the reported threats legally punishable.

Juvenile Justice Act, 2015: The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act contains stringent provisions against cruelty to children, ensuring their protection from exploitation and abuse by persons in authority.

105. Botanical Breakthrough: New Plant Species Discovered in Pakhal Sanctuary Context:

In early 2026, scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) discovered a new flowering plant species, *Dicliptera pakhalica*, in the Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary of Mahbubabad district. Published in the journal *Brittonia*, this discovery highlights Telangana's growing prominence as a vital biodiversity hotspot within the Eastern Ghats.

I. Key Highlights of the Discovery:

Taxonomic Profile: The newly identified species belongs to the Acanthaceae family. It thrives in specific micro-habitats, particularly along stream banks and rocky waterfall areas within the sanctuary's Gangaram Range.

Morphological Uniqueness: While it closely resembles another native Eastern Ghats plant (*Dicliptera parvibracteata*), it is distinctly categorized by its unkeeled bracts, obovoid capsules, and uniquely echinate (spiny) seeds.

Etymology & Heritage: The species, *Dicliptera pakhalica*, derives its name from Pakhal Lake. This serves as a unique intersection of biology and history, honoring the 13th-century man-made reservoir built during the Kakatiya era.

Conservation Status: Researchers have currently classified the plant as 'Data Deficient' under the IUCN guidelines. Despite extensive regional surveys between 2023 and 2025, the plant has only been found in this single "type locality," indicating a highly restricted geographic distribution.

II. Environmental & Geographic Dimensions:

Importance of Micro-Habitats: The discovery underscores that protecting large sanctuary boundaries is not enough; safeguarding specific micro-habitats (like seasonal streams and rocky outcrops) is critical for preserving highly localized, endemic species.

Data Deficiency in Flora: While mega-fauna (like tigers) receive extensive conservation funding and tracking, native flora often suffers from a severe lack of baseline data, risking their quiet extinction before they are even fully studied for ecological or medicinal value.

Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary: Located in the Mahbubabad district. It is centered around the Pakhal Lake, a massive artificial lake constructed in 1213 CE by Jagadala Mummadi, a feudatory of Kakatiya King Ganapati Deva.

106. The Ramsar Deficit: Telangana's Struggle for International Wetland Recognition

Context:

Despite possessing over 13,000 wetlands, Telangana remains entirely absent from India's network of 98 Ramsar sites as of February 2026. On World Wetlands Day, environmentalists highlighted severe administrative delays in the State Wetland Authority, urging immediate action to secure international protection for the state's deteriorating water bodies.

I. The Current Scenario & Administrative Hurdles:

The Ramsar Gap: India currently boasts 98 wetlands of international importance, yet Telangana has zero.

Institutional Lethargy: The Telangana State Wetland Authority (TGSWA) was formed in 2018 to identify and protect these habitats.

Despite shortlisting five wetlands in 2024, the process has stalled due to a lack of regular meetings, opaque public data, and delayed ecological assessments.

Strict Criteria: The Forest Department noted that securing the Ramsar tag requires meeting stringent international parameters, including proven ecological integrity and establishing the site as a crucial migratory bird habitat.

II. Environmental & Urban Governance Dimensions:

Flood Mitigation vs. Urbanization: Wetlands are natural sponges. The destruction of lake systems and natural drainage due to unplanned urbanization around Hyderabad is the root cause of the city's severe monsoon flooding.

Climate Resilience:

Protecting these bodies is critical for urban climate resilience. Intact wetlands regulate local micro-climates, significantly recharge depleting groundwater, and act as vital carbon sinks.

Benefits of the Tag: A Ramsar designation legally enforces stronger protection against encroachments and industrial pollution, while simultaneously opening avenues for sustainable eco-tourism and local livelihood generation.

III. Potential Ramsar Candidates in Telangana:

Experts and officials have identified the following biodiversity hotspots as the state's strongest contenders for the Ramsar tag:

- Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary (Sangareddy)
- Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary (Warangal)
- Kinnerasani Lake (Bhadradri Kothagudem)
- Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary (Medak)
- Ramappa Lake (Mulugu)

ANDHRA PRADESH CURRENT AFFIARS

107. Judicial Transitions: Justice Lisa Gill Proposed as Next Chief Justice of AP High Court

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court Collegium recommended the transfer of Justice Lisa Gill from the Punjab & Haryana High Court to the Andhra Pradesh High Court, proposing her as its next Chief Justice. Concurrently, the Collegium introduced a significant administrative policy shift regarding the timeline of such transfers.

I. Key Highlights of the Development

The AP Appointment: Justice Lisa Gill has been formally recommended to take over the helm of the AP High Court as soon as the upcoming vacancy arises.

New 'Advance Transfer' Policy: The SC Collegium laid down a new policy decision: judges proposed to become High Court Chief Justices will now be transferred to their new High Court two months in advance of the actual vacancy.

Administrative Rationale: This two-month buffer is designed to strengthen administrative efficiency. It gives the incoming Chief Justice ample time to become thoroughly conversant with the specific affairs, local legal nuances, and administrative machinery of the new High Court before formally assuming the top office.

Other High-Profile Appointments: In the same meeting, the Collegium recommended Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari as the next Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, ensuring seamless transitions across major state judiciaries.

II. Governance and Administrative Dimensions:

Ensuring Institutional Continuity: High Courts often suffer from administrative paralysis when an incumbent Chief Justice retires and a new one immediately takes over without prior knowledge of the local court's dynamics. The advance transfer policy ensures institutional continuity and reduces the learning curve.

Collegium Transparency: Formalizing and publicly stating the rationale for transfer timelines is a step toward making the often-criticized Collegium system slightly more predictable and administratively sound.

III. Constitutional & Legal Framework:

Appointment of HC Chief Justice: Article 217: States that the Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and the Governor of the respective State.

Transfer of HC Judges: Article 222: Empowers the President, after mandatory consultation with the CJI, to transfer a judge from one High Court to any other High Court in India.

The Collegium System: A system for the appointment and transfer of judges that is not mentioned in the Constitution. It evolved purely through Supreme Court judgments (the First, Second, and Third Judges Cases). The HC Collegium for appointing a judge consists of the CJI and the two senior-most SC judges.

Memorandum of Procedure (MoP): The official executive rulebook, agreed upon by both the Government of India and the Judiciary, which lays down the step-by-step procedure for appointing and transferring judges.

108. Andhra Pradesh's New Frontier: The Tirupati Space City Cluster

Context:

Recently, the Andhra Pradesh government fast-tracked the mega 'Space City Industrial Cluster' at Routh Suramala near Srikalahasti, Tirupati. Located just 60 km from the Sriharikota launchpad, this flagship project aims to transform the region into India's premier hub for private aerospace and advanced manufacturing.

I. Key Highlights of the Mega-Cluster:

Strategic Geographic Advantage: Proximity to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR) provides immense logistical benefits for space-tech firms, allowing seamless integration between component manufacturing, heavy cargo transport, and final launch operations.

Project Scope and Phasing: Driven by the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC).

Phase A activates an integrated 4,800-acre master plan (scaled up from an initial 600 acres) covering Block 1 and Block 2 to create a cohesive ecosystem rather than isolated pockets.

The Long-term Concept Plan envisions a massive 15,000-acre industrial corridor.

Core Manufacturing Focus: The cluster prioritizes low-risk, high-value manufacturing. Dedicated zones will focus on spacecraft and rocket assembly, precision electronics, and advanced testing facilities rather than traditional heavy industries.

Institutional & Regulatory Synergy: Authorities propose allocating a dedicated 5-acre space within the cluster to IN-SPACE. This ensures immediate regulatory support and collaboration between private industrialists, technocrats, and government space agencies.

II. Economic and Developmental Dimensions:

Capitalizing on Space Privatization: With the Union Government heavily opening the space sector to private players (including recent liberalized FDI norms), AP is positioning itself as the first-mover state to capture domestic and global aerospace investments.

Cluster-Based Economic Growth: Moving away from piecemeal industrialization, the integrated master plan (incorporating expert inputs from former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath) ensures shared infrastructure—like heavy cargo corridors, water, and specialized power grids—reducing the capital expenditure for upcoming space startups.

III. Space Tech:

SDSC-SHAR: Satish Dhawan Space Centre. Located on the spindle-shaped barrier island of Sriharikota in Tirupati district, AP. It is ISRO's primary spaceport, chosen historically for its proximity to the equator and eastward launch advantage over the Bay of Bengal.

APIIC: Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation. A wholly-owned state government undertaking established to develop industrial areas, IT parks, and special economic zones (SEZs) by providing foundational infrastructure like land, roads, and utilities.

109. Digitizing Transparency: The Push for an Online RTI Portal in Andhra Pradesh

Context:

Recently, political representations were formally submitted to the Andhra Pradesh State Information Commission (APSIC) urging the immediate introduction of an online portal for filing Right to Information (RTI) applications, highlighting the state's lag in digital governance in this specific sector.

I. Key Highlights of the Issue:

The Current Bottleneck: At present, citizens in Andhra Pradesh seeking information under the RTI Act are restricted to filing their requests either physically in person or via postal mail.

The Digital Irony: Despite Andhra Pradesh's historical push to brand itself as a technologically advanced, IT-forward state, it remains one of the few major states in India that has not integrated an online RTI filing system on its Information Commission website.

Target Beneficiaries: Transitioning to a digital system would primarily empower the younger demographic and students.

It would critically assist senior citizens, physically challenged individuals, and those living in remote rural areas who cannot easily travel to government offices.

II. Governance and Administrative Dimensions:

Frictionless Transparency: E-governance tools drastically reduce the bureaucratic friction and financial cost associated with seeking public information (e.g., eliminating postal delays and the risk of physical applications being "lost in transit").

Enhanced Tracking and Accountability: An online portal inherently creates a digital paper trail. It allows citizens to track the real-time status of their applications and simplifies the process of filing First and Second Appeals if the Public Information Officer (PIO) fails to respond within the mandated 30 days.

III. Statutory Framework of the RTI:

Dimension	Statutory / Legal Relevance
Right to Information Act, 2005	A landmark legislation enacted to operationalize the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a)), ensuring citizens can secure access to information under the control of public authorities.
Section 6(1) of the RTI Act	Explicitly provides the legal backing for digital portals. It states that a person desiring to obtain information shall make a request in writing or "through electronic means" in English, Hindi, or the official language of the area.
State Information Commission	Constituted under Section 15 of the RTI Act. The APSIC acts as the apex appellate authority in the state for RTI matters. The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners are appointed by the Governor.
E-Governance Policy	Aligns with the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), which aims to make all government services accessible to the common man in their locality through common service delivery outlets, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and reliability.

110. Shielding the Vulnerable: AP Police Launches 'Operation Chinnari Thalli'

Context:

Recently, Andhra Pradesh DGP Harish Kumar Gupta launched 'Operation Chinnari Thalli,' a statewide special drive spearheaded by the Women and Child Safety Wing. The initiative aims to proactively prevent sexual offenses against children through strict law enforcement and community sensitization.

I. Key Highlights of the Initiative:

Preventive Surveillance: The police drive focuses on identifying vulnerable, crime-prone locations and closely monitoring repeat offenders, drug addicts, and suspicious elements known to target women and minors.

Community Sensitization: Special focus is placed on educating mothers of minor girls residing in unsafe environments.

Widespread awareness programs on 'Good Touch and Bad Touch' will be actively conducted across schools, Anganwadis, and student hostels.

Administrative Stringency: Zero Pendency: Police units are directed to achieve absolute zero pendency in making arrests under POCSO cases.

Sexual Offenders Sheets (SOS): The department will open formal 'SOS' records against individuals involved in sexual crimes over the past five years to track their movements.

Time-Bound Justice: To drastically improve the conviction rate, investigations must be completed and charge sheets filed strictly within 60 days, monitored closely through a 'Speed Trial Monitoring' system.

Nodal Monitoring: The entire statewide operation will be continuously monitored by an IG-rank officer heading the Women and Child Safety Office based in Tadepalli.

II. Governance and Social Dimensions:

Institutionalizing Child Safety: Initiatives like 'Operation Chinnari Thalli' represent a shift from reactive policing (acting after a crime) to proactive, community-integrated policing, which is essential for crimes involving vulnerable minors where underreporting is historically high.

The Importance of Speed Trials: The psychological trauma of prolonged trials often revictimizes the child. Fast-tracking investigations to meet the 60-day charge sheet deadline ensures that the deterrence value of the law remains intact.

III. Legal and Constitutional Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Legal Framework
POCSO Act, 2012	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. A gender-neutral law that defines a child as anyone under 18. It mandates stringent punishments, including the death penalty for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, and requires child-friendly trial procedures.
Section 24 of POCSO	Mandates that the recording of the child's statement should ideally be done by a woman police officer not below the rank of sub-inspector, in a safe environment, and the child should not be brought into contact with the accused.
Constitutional Mandate	Article 15(3): Empowers the State to make special protective provisions for women and children. Article 39(f) (DPSP): Directs the State to ensure that children are given opportunities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of

	freedom and dignity, protected against exploitation.
Anganwadi System	Part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme. Utilizing Anganwadis for 'Good Touch/Bad Touch' awareness is a strategic use of grassroots networks to reach rural and marginalized children before they enter the formal schooling system.

111. Decentralized Growth: AP Identifies 22 Industrial Clusters for Mega Job Drive Context:

Recently, HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh announced in the Legislative Assembly the identification of 22 specialized industrial clusters across Andhra Pradesh. This cluster-based approach aims to fulfill the state government's flagship promise of creating 20 lakh jobs within five years.

I. Key Highlights: Sector-Specific Regional Mapping

Rayalaseema Region:

Anantapur: Automotive Cluster.

Kurnool: Renewable Energy and Cement Cluster.

Kadapa & Chittoor: Electronics Manufacturing Clusters.

Coastal & Central AP:

Nellore: Glass and Air Conditioner (AC) Cluster.

Prakasam: Compressed Biogas (CBG) Cluster.

Amaravati: Quantum Computing Cluster.

Godavari Districts: Aqua Cluster.

North Coastal AP: Dedicated clusters for Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices Manufacturing, and Steel.

Frontier Tech: Dedicated hubs for a Drone City and a Space City are also in the active planning phase.

II. The 'Ancillary Unit' Strategy:

Beyond Basic Manufacturing: The core philosophy of this policy is not just attracting a single large factory, but bringing its entire supply chain (ancillary units) into the same geographical cluster to heavily multiply local job creation.

III. AP as India's AC Manufacturing Hub:

Market Dominance: Andhra Pradesh currently manufactures 50% of all air conditioners produced in India.

Future Target: With companies like Daikin, LG Electronics, and Blue Star expanding, the state aims to push this share to 70% within the next two years.

Industry-Academia Linkage: These MNCs have requested direct linkages with local Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). They will provide the curriculum and equipment to ensure students are immediately employable upon graduation.

IV. Constituency-Level Employment Drive:

Decentralized Hiring: The government has mandated conducting job melas in every single constituency once every three months.

Current Impact: Through 1,587 job fairs involving over 11,300 companies, more than 1.08 lakh youth have already secured placements.

V. Economic Geography & Policy Framework:

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Cluster-Based Development	An economic geography concept coined by Michael Porter. It refers to a geographic concentration of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular field. It

	increases local productivity and drives innovation.
Skill Gap & Demographic Dividend	India possesses a demographic dividend (a young working-age population), but suffers from a "skill gap" where graduates lack industry-ready skills. Linking ITIs directly to AC manufacturers bridges this gap.
AP Reorganisation Act, 2014	Section 93 and Schedule XIII mandate the Central Government to take all necessary measures for the industrialization and economic growth of the successor State of AP, making state-level cluster initiatives vital for securing central manufacturing incentives.

112. Modernizing the Granary: 1,000 Warehouses Boost AP's Rural Economy

Context:

In February 2026, Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu announced the successful progress of the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) in Andhra Pradesh. The initiative is transforming Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) into Multi-Purpose Facility Centres (MPFCs) to provide scientific storage and reduce post-harvest losses.

I. Key Highlights & Infrastructure Scale:

Project Investment: A massive investment of ₹504.42 crore is being utilized to build warehouses and drying yards across the state (excluding Visakhapatnam district).

PACS Transformation: The core objective is to convert PACS into Multi-Purpose Facility Centres (MPFCs).

So far, 1,005 warehouses have been initiated, with 717 already completed. 1,111 collection centres have been established across 572 PACS, equipped with moisture meters and weighing balances.

Quality Assurance: Laboratory equipment has been supplied to 462 assaying centres, enabling farmers to test the quality of their produce before storage.

II. The Financial & Administrative Model:

Interest Subsidy: NABARD provides refinance support. PACS receive loans at a highly concessional 4% interest rate, supported further by a 3% interest subvention under the AIF scheme.

Funding Ratio: The projects follow a 90% loan and 10% margin money model. The State Government is contributing ₹50.4 crore toward the margin money requirement.

Land Lease Policy: To ensure viability, the government is leasing land to PACS for 33 years at a nominal rent of just ₹1 per year, with a total exemption of registration fees and stamp duty.

III. Impact on Farmers:

Scientific Storage: Modern warehouses prevent spoilage from pests, moisture, and weather, significantly reducing the post-harvest loss (currently estimated at 10-15% for grains in India).

Eliminating Distress Sales: With storage facilities available, farmers are not forced to sell their crops immediately after harvest when prices are lowest. They can store the produce and wait for favorable market rates.

Rural Credit Linkage: These warehouses allow farmers to use their stored produce as collateral to secure loans, providing immediate liquidity for the next sowing season.

IV. Agricultural Economy & Policy:

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF): A Central Sector Scheme launched in 2020. It provides a medium-to-long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets.

PACS: Primary Agricultural Credit Societies. These are the grassroot-level arms of the short-term cooperative credit structure in India, providing credit and essential services directly to farmers.

NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. Established in 1982, it is the apex regulatory body for the overall regulation and licensing of regional rural banks and apex cooperative banks in India.

Article 43 (DPSP): Directs the State to promote cottage industries on an individual or cooperative basis in rural areas, providing the constitutional spirit behind strengthening PACS.

113. Global Maritime Synergy: Record 75 Nations Converge for MILAN 2026

Context:

In February 2026, the 13th edition of Exercise MILAN concluded aboard the indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off the Visakhapatnam coast. Hosted by the Indian Navy, the biennial event saw record participation from 75 nations, evolving from a five-nation exercise in 1995 to the world's largest naval congregation.

I. Key Highlights & Scale of Operations:

Thematic Core: Guided by the mantra “Camaraderie, Cooperation, and Collaboration,” the exercise aimed to bolster collective security in the Indo-Pacific.

Record Participation: The 13th edition witnessed 42 ships and 29 aircraft. Notably, 18 ships and 5 aircraft were from friendly foreign countries (FFCs).

New Entrants: For the first time, the Philippines, UAE, Oman, South Africa, and South Korea joined the exercise, signaling expanding maritime ties.

Operational Phases: Harbour Phase: Included the 'MILAN Young Officers' Programme' and expert exchanges to build interpersonal trust.

Sea Phase: High-intensity drills involving Anti-Submarine Warfare (CASEX), Air Defence (ADEX), and Over the Horizon Targeting.

Indigenous Prowess: The exercise showcased India's 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in warship construction, with the home-grown carrier INS Vikrant and its MiG-29K fighters leading the fleet.

II. Strategic Dimensions:

India as a 'Net Security Provider': By hosting 75 navies, India has reinforced its role as a preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Interoperability: Exercises like Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with the tanker INS Shakti demonstrated the ability of diverse navies to operate together during extended deployments, crucial for anti-piracy and disaster relief.

Diplomatic Credibility: The willingness of global powers (including the US, France, and Australia) to send their sophisticated platforms (like P-8A and MH helicopters) reflects high professional trust in the Indian Navy.

114. Mission HANUMAN: AP's Strategic Response to Human-Wildlife Conflict

Context:

Recently, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department announced the launch of the HANUMAN (Healing And Nurturing Units for Monitoring, Aid & Nursing of Wildlife) initiative. This program establishes a specialized rapid response framework to manage the rising frequency of human-animal encounters in the state's vulnerable forest fringes.

I. Key Highlights of the Initiative:

Target Vulnerable Ranges: The project identifies high-conflict zones in the Tirupati Circle, including Tirupati, Panapakam, Bhakarapet, Srikalahasti, Madanapalli, and Rajampet.

Rapid Response Teams (RRTs): Each identified range will be equipped with a dedicated RRT led by a Forest Range Officer (FRO) and supported by Section Officers, Beat Officers, and a veterinary assistant.

Specialized Infrastructure: Teams are being provided with dedicated vehicles, specialized rescue gear, and wireless communication sets.

Wildlife Ambulances: Two specialized ambulances will be stationed at Tirupati and Rajampet to provide immediate medical aid to injured animals.

Capacity Building: A one-day training module in Tirupati covered critical SOPs, including:

Elephant and Leopard conflict management.

Scientific tranquilization protocols and snake rescue methods.

Crowd management and public safety during emergency rescue operations.

II. Conflict Mitigation & Community Dimensions:

Scientific Management: By integrating veterinary assistants and conservation biologists into RRTs, the state is moving toward a scientific, data-driven approach to wildlife rescue rather than traditional reactive methods.

Psychological Buffer: Stationing ambulances and rapid response units near villages acts as a psychological buffer, reducing the likelihood of "retaliatory killings" of wildlife by frightened local communities.

Ecological Connectivity: Many of the identified ranges (like Bhakarapet and Rajampet) are part of the Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve, emphasizing the need for professional monitoring in one of India's most biodiverse landscapes.

115. Green Power Surge: AP Sets Ambitious 160 GW Renewable Energy Target

Context:

Recently, Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar announced the Integrated Clean Energy Policy, targeting a massive 160 GW of renewable power generation. The policy focuses on restoring financial stability to the power sector while ensuring long-term sustainability and consumer protection.

I. Key Highlights & Performance Indicators:

The 160 GW Vision: The state is moving toward a 160 GW renewable energy goal to position Andhra Pradesh as a global leader in clean energy.

Current Capacity: AP's total installed capacity stands at 21,457 MW, with 37% already coming from renewable sources.

Cost Efficiency: Strategic reforms have reduced power purchase costs from ₹7.71 per unit to ₹6.35 per unit, resulting in a projected saving of ₹340 crore for 2025-26.

"True-Down" Milestone: In a national first, the state achieved a "true-down" of 13 paise per unit, passing on financial savings directly to the consumers instead of imposing additional burdens.

II. Welfare & Subsidy Framework:

The government has allocated ₹13,000 crore for power subsidies to support various socio-economic sectors:

Agriculture: Free power to 22 lakh farmers with a guaranteed 9-hour quality supply daily.

Social Safety Net: 200 units of free power for 20 lakh SC/ST households.

Livelihood Support: Aqua Farmers: Power at a subsidized rate of ₹1.50 per unit.

Weavers: From April 1, 2026, handlooms will receive 200 units free, and power looms will receive 500 units free.

Others: Subsidies extended to washermen and salons.

III. Economic & Administrative Dimensions:

Backbone of Economy: The energy sector is treated as the primary engine for industrial growth, particularly for the burgeoning technology and manufacturing sectors.

Restoring Investor Confidence: The policy aims to bring back renewable energy investors by providing a stable regulatory environment and addressing the debt-ridden legacy of the previous term.

Energy Security: The shift toward a high renewable mix (Solar, Wind, and Pumped Hydro) ensures long-term energy security and reduces dependence on volatile coal prices.

IV. Energy & Policy Framework:

Renewable Energy (RE): Energy derived from natural processes that are replenished at a rate equal to or faster than the rate at which they are consumed (Solar, Wind, Hydro, Biomass).

True-up / True-down: An administrative process where the actual cost of power purchase is reconciled with the estimated cost. A "True-down" occurs when the actual cost is lower than the estimate, allowing for a tariff reduction.

APGENCO: Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation Limited. One of the highest performing power utilities in India, responsible for the operation and maintenance of the state's thermal and hydel power plants.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy. One of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, which AP's 160 GW target directly helps India achieve.

116. Vision 2035: NITI Aayog's ₹7.5 Lakh Crore Blueprint for 'Green' Andhra Context:

Recently, NITI Aayog unveiled the ASSET (Accelerating Sustainable State Energy Transition) blueprint to transform Andhra Pradesh into one of India's top three renewable energy hubs by 2035. The plan envisions a massive ₹7.5 lakh crore investment to drive clean energy exports and industrial growth.

I. Key Highlights & Investment Scale:

The ASSET Platform: An all-encompassing energy transition strategy formulated by NITI Aayog specifically for Andhra Pradesh.

Total Investment: An impressive ₹7.5 lakh crore is projected:

₹3.4 lakh crore allocated for the State's internal energy transition.

₹4.2 lakh crore dedicated to the creation of a global Renewable Energy Export Hub.

Job Creation: The initiative is anticipated to produce 5–6 lakh new jobs, with 90% of the funding expected to come from private sector participants.

Strategic Targets (By 2035):

Domestic Requirements: 35 GW Solar, 12 GW Wind, and 60 GWh Storage.

National Exports: 30 GW Solar, 30 GW Wind, and 12 GW Pumped Storage Projects (PSP).

II. Infrastructure & Cost Benefits:

Affordability: The anticipated costs for power purchases are expected to decrease to ₹3.90–₹4 per unit, which will considerably reduce living expenses for households and operational expenditures for industries.

Transmission Modernization: An allocation of ₹70,000 crore has been designated for the development of Green Corridors, Gas Insulated Substations (GIS), and High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) lines, aimed at reducing transmission losses.

Agricultural Solarization: The rollout of distributed solar initiatives is set to provide farmers with a dependable power supply during the day, while also alleviating the substantial power subsidy burden faced by the state.

III. Administrative Framework & Vision:

Energy War Room: A specialized monitoring unit is to be established by mid-March 2026 to ensure that the strategic plan achieves its designated milestones.

Policy Alignment: This initiative serves as a fundamental component of the Swarna Andhra Vision, with the objective of positioning the state as a frontrunner in India's Net Zero commitments.

117. Avian Discovery: First Photographic Record of Falcated Duck in AP

Context:

Recently, a rare Falcated Duck (*Mareca falcata*) was photographed at Sylada Lake in Srikakulam district. This sighting marks the first-ever documented photographic record of this East Palearctic migratory species in Andhra Pradesh, highlighting the state's importance as a wintering destination.



I. Key Highlights of the Sighting:

Species Profile: Also known as the Falcated Teal, it is a gadwall-sized dabbling duck.

Distinguishing Features: The adult male is highly distinctive with an iridescent green-and-copper head, a pale grey scalloped body, and unique long, curved tertial feathers.

Native Habitat: It is native to the East Palearctic region, breeding in eastern Siberia, Mongolia, and northern Japan. It migrates to South Asia for the winter.

Habitat in AP: The bird was spotted in the freshwater ecosystem of Sylada Lake, Srikakulam. The district's diverse landscape—comprising inland lakes like Vemulada and brackish estuaries of the Nagavali and Vamsadhara—makes it a critical hub for migratory waders.

II. Conservation Status and Threats:

IUCN Status: Listed as 'Near Threatened'. This status necessitates focused monitoring of its wintering sites to prevent population decline.

Ecological Indicators: Migratory ducks are sensitive bio-indicators. Their presence confirms the availability of specific aquatic plant matter and the relative health of the wetland.

Threats to Habitats: Srikakulam's wetlands are currently facing severe pressures from:

Unregulated Sand Mining: Disrupting riverine and estuarine ecology.

Coastal Development: Leading to the fragmentation of brackish water habitats.

Lack of Formal Recognition: Many of these sites are not yet designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs), leaving them vulnerable to land-use changes.

Dimension	Relevance / Definition
Dabbling Ducks	A category of ducks that feed mainly on the surface of the water or by tipping headfirst into the water to reach aquatic plants (unlike "Diving Ducks" that submerge completely).
Palearctic Realm	The largest of the eight biogeographic realms, covering Eurasia north of the Himalayas, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula.
IBA (Important Bird Area)	A site identified using an internationally agreed set of criteria as being globally important for the conservation of bird populations. In India, these are identified by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and BirdLife International.
River Estuaries in AP	The Nagavali and Vamsadhara are major rivers of North Coastal Andhra. Their estuaries are nutrient-rich zones where freshwater meets the sea, providing ideal feeding grounds for migratory birds.

118. Macro-Economic Snapshot: AP Ranks 8th Nationally in GSDP

Context:

Recently, the Planning Department released a comparative analysis of Andhra Pradesh's economy for the 2025–26 fiscal year. Despite significant fiscal deficits and high debt-to-GSDP ratios, the state has outperformed the national growth average, driven by robust performance in the services and agriculture sectors.

I. Key Macroeconomic Indicators (2025–26):

National Ranking: Andhra Pradesh currently ranks 8th in India in terms of GSDP.

Economic Size: The state's GSDP is estimated at ₹17,62,357 crore, reflecting a nominal growth of 10.75%.

Growth Rate (At Constant Prices): AP recorded a growth of 9.88%, significantly higher than India's national GDP growth of 7.4%.

Per Capita Income (PCI): Rose to ₹2,94,507, marking a 10.43% increase from the previous year (₹2,66,699).

II. Fiscal Health & Challenges:

Debt Burden: Total debt stands at 35% of GSDP, a critical figure for debt-sustainability analysis.

Revenue Profile: Own Tax Revenue (OTR) is ₹1,05,331 crore. Notably, AP's own revenue is only 7.6% of GSDP, lower than peers like Odisha (13.3%) and Chhattisgarh (12%), indicating a heavy reliance on Central Transfers.

Expenditure Pattern: Total expenditure is ₹1,97,950 crore.

Revenue Expenditure: 90% (indicates high spending on salaries, pensions, and interest).

Capital Expenditure: Only 10% (suggests a need for more asset-creating investments).

Deficit Status: The state faces a Revenue Deficit of ₹60,481 crore and a Fiscal Deficit of ₹85,269 crore.

III. Sectoral Growth and Agriculture Performance:

Sectoral Growth Rates:

Services: 10.67% (Leading sector)

Agriculture & Allied: 10.14%

Industry: 9.15%

Agricultural Output: Rice production saw a significant jump of 15.3% (reaching 146.09 lakh tonnes), while Maize production grew by 18.9%.

119. AP Budget 2026–27: A ₹3.32 Lakh Crore Roadmap for 'Swarna Andhra' Context:

In early 2026, the Andhra Pradesh government tabled a ₹3,32,162 crore budget for the 2026–27 fiscal year. The budget marks a strategic pivot from purely consumption-oriented spending to wealth creation, characterized by a sharp increase in capital expenditure and urban infrastructure, particularly for the state capital, Amaravati.

I. Key Budgetary Highlights & Sectoral Allocations

The budget is structured around the "Swarna Andhra" vision, focusing on long-term asset building:

Total Budget Size: ₹3,32,162 Crore.

Welfare Sector (Social Justice): BC Welfare: ₹51,012 crore (The highest-ever allocation for Backward Classes).

SC/ST/Minority Welfare: Substantial outlays aimed at saturation-level implementation of welfare schemes.

Education & Human Capital:

School Education: ₹32,308 crore.

Focus on infrastructure upgrades in government schools and digitizing classrooms.



Infrastructure & Urban Development (MA&UD):

Amaravati Development: Earmarked ₹6,000 crore as the "lion's share" to accelerate capital city construction.

Water Resources (Irrigation):

Allocation: ₹18,223 crore.

Priority: Reviving stalled projects and completing the Polavaram project distribution canals.

Dimension	Constitutional / Legal Relevance
	Article 202: Requires the Governor to cause to be laid before the House the estimated receipts and expenditure (Budget) for the year.
	Consolidated Fund: All revenues received by the Government, loans raised, and recoveries of loans form the Consolidated Fund of the State (Article 266).
	Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act. The 2026-27 budget must align with these targets to ensure the state's debt-to-GSDP ratio remains sustainable.
	Article 206: If the budget is not passed before April 1st, the House passes a 'Vote on Account' to draw money for essential spending for a limited period.

II. Strategic Dimensions:

Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) vs. Revenue Expenditure: The budget signals a shift toward Wealth Creation. By increasing CAPEX, the state aims to create physical assets (roads, irrigation, capital city) that generate long-term economic returns and jobs.

Fiscal Consolidation: While spending is high, the budget includes a roadmap to bring the Fiscal Deficit within the 3.5% limit prescribed by the FRBM Act over the medium term.

Integrated Welfare: The ₹51,012 crore for BC welfare is not just for doles but includes "Self-Employment" and "Skill Development" components to move beneficiaries toward economic independence.

UPSC CSE 2026/27

ANTHROPOLOGY

OPTIONAL (Full Course)

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY


Mentorship Batch


LIMITED TO 75 SEATS


NEW BATCH STARTS FROM


20TH APRIL 2026


OUR UPSC CSE 2025 RANKERS



AIR 49



AIR 51



AIR 175


AIR 242


AIR 376


AIR 468


AIR 480


AIR 700

UNIQUE FEATURES

- 4 Months Duration (1 Year Validity)
- One To One Mentorship
- Test Series & Daily Answer Writing
- 12 Tests + 2 Standard Books
- Value Added Content
- 1000+ Case Studies | Pyq's
- Daily Handouts For Offline Students

Our Phone: 9000350939


Our Website: www.vishnuias.com

Gandhi Nagar, Hyderabad

SOCIOLOGY

OPTIONAL FULL COURSE FOR UPSC

BATCH STARTS FROM 20TH APRIL 2026



Vishnu Vardhan Reddy Sir
9+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

FOR MORE DETAILS: 9000350939 LOCATION: Gandhi Nagar, Hyderabad

WWW.VISHNUIAS.COM

PSIR Foundation Course

Scoring ★ Relevant ★ Strategic

VISHNU IAS

Course Features:

- ✓ Duration: 4.5 Months (350 Hours)
- ✓ App Access: 1 Year
- ✓ Daily Answer Writing Practice
- ✓ Discussion of PYQs in Class
- ✓ 2 Years Current Affairs Coverage
- ✓ Daily Handouts & Classroom Notes
- ✓ Test Series Included
- ✓ Mode: Online & Offline

FREE

GS II Classes & Mentorship

SCAN TO REGISTER



Life long Mentorship

Solution to Score 300+ Marks

Batch Starts from

20th April 2026

Our Phone: 9000350939

Our Website: www.vishnuias.com

Gandhi Nagar, Hyderabad

PRACTICE MCQs

1. With reference to the 'In-situ' conservation model recently adopted for Dal Lake, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to develop 'eco-hamlets' by upgrading existing settlements within the lake rather than mass relocation to distant sites.
2. The Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) is the nodal statutory body responsible for implementing this project.
3. The project involves the scientific installation of modular Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) within lake settlements to ensure zero liquid discharge.
4. The indigenous Hanji community is being integrated as primary stakeholders in the lake's ecological stewardship.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

2. With reference to the recent excavations at the Harappan site of Rakhigarhi, consider the following statements:

1. The discovery of paved roads with a standardized width of 1.92 meters suggests the existence of a centralized municipal administration.
2. The presence of a gold foundry and thousands of unpolished semi-precious stones identifies the site as a specialized industrial and manufacturing hub.
3. Rakhigarhi is currently recognized as the second-largest site of the Indus Valley Civilization, after Mohenjo-Daro.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only

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

Answer: (a)

3. With reference to the Hoysala administration and political history, consider the following statements:

1. The Hoysalas originally emerged as feudatories of the Chola Empire before establishing independence.
2. King Vishnuvardhana is credited with shifting the capital from Belur to Halebidu to mark his sovereignty.
3. The empire reached its territorial zenith under the reign of Veera Ballala II, extending across the Deccan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

4. With reference to the National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) alone.
2. The scheme aims to achieve "Zero Fatalities" in sanitation work across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in India.
3. As per the 2024 expansion, the scheme now includes the formal enumeration and integration of waste-pickers into the mechanized ecosystem.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

5. The Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) is a significant initiative launched under the aegis of the SANKALP scheme. What is its primary objective?

- (a) To provide monthly stipends to rural youth undergoing training in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).
- (b) To recruit specialized trainers for the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs).
- (c) To provide academic and field support to District Skill Committees (DSCs) for decentralized skill planning.
- (d) To offer international internship opportunities for top-performing vocational students.

Answer: (c)

6. Regarding Defense and Industrial Cooperation between India and France, which of the following is/are correct?

- 1. The H125 Final Assembly Line in Karnataka is India's first private sector helicopter manufacturing facility.
- 2. Project-75 (Kalvari-class) involves the indigenous construction of Scorpene submarines with French technology transfer.
- 3. A joint venture between Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Safran has been established to produce HAMMER air-to-surface missiles in India.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (d)

7. In the context of international security, consider the following statements regarding the NATO Plus grouping:

1. It is a formal security arrangement that currently includes India as a permanent member alongside Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

2. Membership in NATO Plus would grant India the protection of Article 5 (Collective Defense) of the North Atlantic Treaty.

3. The U.S. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the U.S. and the Chinese Communist Party recommended including India in this grouping to strengthen Indo-Pacific security.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

8. Regarding the political response to the RIN Revolt, which of the following statements is INCORRECT?

(a) The Communist Party of India (CPI) was the only major political party to officially support the strike and call for a general strike in Bombay.

(b) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Muhammad Ali Jinnah jointly persuaded the ratings to surrender to avoid a violent confrontation.

(c) Mahatma Gandhi supported the mutiny, hailing it as a successful example of "non-violent resistance" by the armed forces.

(d) Aruna Asaf Ali was one of the few prominent Congress leaders who stood in solidarity with the ratings.

Answer: (c)

9. With reference to NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), consider the following statements:

1. It is a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Department of Space (DoS).

2. Unlike the now-defunct Antrix Corporation, NSIL's primary mandate is to move ISRO from a "supply-driven" model to a "demand-driven" model.

3. NSIL is the sole agency responsible for authorizing and regulating private space players in India.

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)

10. With reference to the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body created under the Defence Procurement Reform Act of 2002.

2. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.

3. Its primary objective is to ensure expeditious procurement of approved requirements of the Armed Forces.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (b)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



 **Telegram**



 **Whatsapp**



 **Instagram**



 **Youtube**