UPSC Daily Current Affairs

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TGPSC G 1 | UPSC - CSE | APPSC G 1

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1. New FCRA Rules Mandate Stricter NGO Disclosures (Polity & Governance: GS Paper-II)

Context:

- The Union Home Ministry has notified amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010 rules to tighten oversight on foreign funding. These changes mandate strict activity lists to bring uniformity and avoid administrative duplication.

Stricter Disclosure Norms

- NGOs must declare specific activities, geographical scope, websites, social media, and all publications.
- Separate registration fees are now mandatory for every permitted category and operating State/UT.
- Existing NGOs must ensure full compliance with these updated rules within one year.

Redefined Scope and Leadership

- The "key functionary" definition now spans trustees, partners, and Hindu Undivided Family heads.
- Foreign nationals cannot serve as key functionaries without explicit Central government permission.
- All educational awareness drives regarding constitutional rights must remain strictly non-political.

The Five Permitted Categories

- Educational: Encompasses schools, scholarships, research think tanks, and libraries.
- Economic (19 items): Includes livelihood generation, skill development, and digital inclusion.
- Religious (16 items): Permits pilgrim services but strictly prohibits any proselytisation.
- Social (30 items) & Cultural: Covers public health, disaster relief, arts preservation, and heritage conservation.

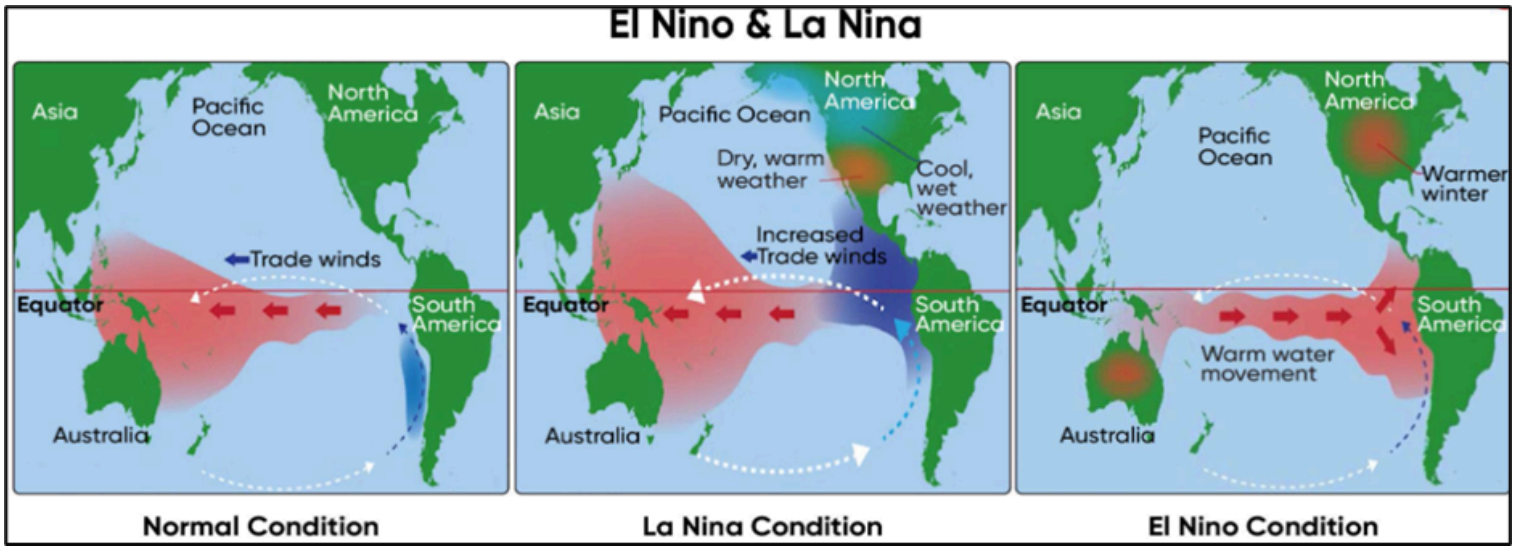
Stringent Penalty Structure

- General FCRA violations will attract a mandatory minimum fine of ₹1 lakh.
- Unauthorised receipt or unapproved administrative spending is strictly penalised.
- Fund misuse incurs a penalty of 30% of the misused amount or ₹1 lakh, whichever is higher.

2. INCOIS Warns of El Niño Peak and Indian Ocean Stress (GS-1: Geography)

Context:

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has issued a special bulletin warning that a developing El Niño will peak between November 2026 and January 2027, triggering prolonged thermal stress across the Indian Ocean.



Core Concepts: El Niño & INCOIS

- El Niño Phenomenon: Abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central equatorial Pacific, directly disrupting global weather and the Indian monsoon.
- About INCOIS: An autonomous body under India's Ministry of Earth Sciences delivering oceanic data, state-of-the-art forecasts, and critical disaster warnings.

Ecological and Marine Sector Impacts

- Thermal Stress: Elevated sea surface temperatures will severely impact the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal during March–May 2027.
- Coral Bleaching: Sustained warming will cause frequent marine heatwaves, accelerating widespread coral bleaching and disrupting reef ecosystems.
- Declining Fish Catch: Marine catches of sardine and mackerel will decline due to species migration, lower recruitment, and stunted growth.

Ocean State and Regional Vulnerabilities

- Turbulent East Coast: The Bay of Bengal will remain rough during the monsoon, increasing coastal erosion and flooding risks along India's east coast.
- Calmer West Coast: The Arabian Sea will remain calmer than usual, reducing coastal hazards and extending operational windows for marine sectors.
- Monitoring Mandate: Maritime operators are strongly advised to continuously track periodic warnings ahead of the next bulletin in July 2026.

3. Policy Gaps in Ayushman Bharat and Digital Health Mission (GS-II: Health, Governance & Social Justice)

Context:

- Recent public health policies aiming for Universal Health Coverage often fail to guarantee minimal benefits due to heavily populist approaches. Flagship initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres and Digital Health Mission illustrate significant policy inadequacies.

Critique of Health and Wellness Centres

- Renaming grassroots facilities (SCs, PHCs) creates severe ambiguity regarding their fundamental institutional mandate.
- The policy dangerously shifts focus from measurable population health to deeply subjective individual well-being.
- This individualistic approach unjustly ignores the crucial structural and social determinants of health outcomes.
- An excessive focus on subjective wellness severely undermines the effective evaluation of health systems.

Shortfalls of the Digital Health Mission (ABDHM)

- Generating digital health records (ABHA) fails to address basic healthcare access barriers.
- The annual budget of around ₹300 crore lacks clear justification without measurable delivery outcomes.
- The mission primarily generates isolated data without building institutional mechanisms for care provisioning.

Systemic Challenges and the Way Forward

- Healthcare inaccessibility fundamentally stems from unaffordable private care and poor public facilities.
- Concrete measures to strengthen India's three-tier public healthcare system are noticeably absent today.
- Immediate curative care remains the most pressing necessity before preventive interventions can truly succeed.
- Policies must urgently address the population's felt needs rather than merely advancing policymaker priorities.

4. India's Tech Paradox: Invention Without Scale (GS-III Science & Technology + Economy)

Context:

- India's technological history reveals a critical paradox: pioneering early visions often falter before achieving global industrial dominance. As the nation pivots toward emerging technological frontiers, the vital lesson remains that invention without scalable commercial ecosystems yields limited long-term success.

Historical Missed Opportunities

- Despite early advantages, institutions like SCL and ECIL remained confined strictly to public-sector strategic needs.
- The visionary Simputer lacked mature venture capital, supportive software platforms, and robust component supply chains.
- Consequently, pioneering initiatives routinely failed to transition from isolated prototypes to globally competitive enterprises.

Successful Ecosystem Models

- India's pharmaceutical sector successfully scaled to become a globally dominant manufacturing and vaccine powerhouse.
- The PARAM supercomputing program demonstrated highly robust and successful indigenous technological capabilities.
- Platforms like UPI and Aadhaar proved that scalable digital public infrastructure fundamentally transforms entire nations.

Future Frontiers in AI & Quantum

- India must strategically democratise AI by developing low-cost, energy-efficient models for massive populations.
- Quantum computing efforts should prioritise infrastructure cost reduction and highly practical, real-world applications.
- Key focus areas must comprehensively include healthcare, drug discovery, materials science, and advanced climate modelling.

Strategic Ambitions in Space Tech

- Missions like Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan firmly highlight the immense global success of India's frugal innovation.
- India must actively pioneer futuristic concepts like orbital computing infrastructure and space-based data centres.
- The ultimate objective is moving beyond mere domestic invention to rapidly scale technological enterprises globally.

5. Beyond Steel & Cement: Tackling the 40% Invisible Emissions (GS-III Environment + Economy)

Context

- Industrial decarbonisation is central to India’s Make-in-India, Viksit Bharat 2047, and net-zero 2070 commitments. The First Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1) to the UNFCCC highlights that the industrial sector accounts for over 20% of national emissions. Specifically, manufacturing and construction fuel consumption contributes 13%, demanding highly targeted climate policies.

Current Mitigation Mechanisms

- Market-based mechanisms are the primary governmental tools to curb industrial emissions and energy consumption.
- The PAT scheme targets specific energy consumption across 13 distinct energy-intensive industries.
- PAT is transitioning to the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) to reduce emission intensity in nine sectors.
- Four industries, including thermal power plants and railways, will continue operating under the PAT scheme.

The "Non-Specific" Policy Gap

- Mitigation policies are designed almost entirely for well-defined heavy-emitting sectors like steel and cement.
- Explicitly identified major sectors generate slightly over 55% of manufacturing and construction emissions.
- Alarmingly, over 40% of these sectoral emissions fall under a vague "non-specific industries" category.
- This 40% block effectively escapes PAT and CCTS emission-reduction targets and energy efficiency mandates.

Strategic Way Forward

- India must successfully decouple industrial growth from emissions using highly transparent, disaggregated data.
- Policymakers must urgently break down and identify the sub-sectors hidden within "non-specific industries".
- Pinpointing specific energy consumption patterns in this massive block is vital for net-zero goals.
- Deep domestic transparency is non-negotiable to monitor interventions and enable necessary policy course corrections.