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Headlines:

- India's Multi-Alignment: Balancing Russia and the West
- India's Fight Against Drug Trafficking: Targeting the Big Sharks
- Jojari River Pollution: Geography, Environmental Governance and State Accountability
- India's Next Investment Cycle: Building a Low-Carbon Future
- India's Science and Technology: From Laboratory to Land



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1. India's Multi-Alignment: Balancing Russia and the West

GS Paper II – International Relations (IR)

Why in News?

- The SCO Summit in Bishkek (August 31–September 1, 2026) and the BRICS Summit in New Delhi (September 12–13, 2026) highlighted the challenges of India's multi-alignment amid geopolitical tensions involving Russia, the US, Israel and Iran.



About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- **Establishment:** Founded on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China. It evolved from the Shanghai Five mechanism established in 1996.
- **Founding Members (6):** China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- **Current Member States (10):** China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus. India and Pakistan joined in 2017, Iran in 2023, and Belarus in 2024.
- **Headquarters and Languages:** SCO Secretariat — Beijing, China; official languages — Chinese and Russian.
- **Objectives:** Promote regional peace and stability, strengthen economic and political cooperation, and combat the "three evils" — terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **Permanent Bodies and Decision-Making:** The two permanent bodies are the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) Executive Committee in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Council of Heads of State is the highest decision-making body.

Strategic Significance

- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's ability to make independent foreign policy decisions without external pressure.
- **Multi-Alignment:** Active engagement with multiple powers and groupings to advance national interests rather than aligning exclusively with one bloc.
- **India–Russia Partnership:** Historical defence cooperation, energy trade and diplomatic coordination remain important, although India is diversifying its arms imports.
- **Multipolarity:** BRICS and SCO provide platforms for strengthening cooperation among emerging and non-Western powers.

Key Challenges

- **Strategic Dilemma:** Reconciling competing security, energy and economic interests while maintaining ties with Russia, the US, Israel and Iran.
- **Russia's Growing Proximity to China:** Moscow's deepening partnership with Beijing may complicate India's regional and strategic calculations.
- **Trust Deficit:** India's public criticism of Russia's war in Ukraine could be perceived in Moscow as inconsistent with its longstanding partnership; this remains an interpretation rather than an established outcome.
- **Defence and Energy Dependence:** Legacy dependence on Russian military equipment and energy imports creates vulnerabilities amid geopolitical tensions and sanctions.
- **Institutional Limitations:** Differences among BRICS and SCO members constrain collective action on contentious international issues.

Way Forward

- Pursue issue-based engagement while preserving independent decision-making.
- Accelerate defence indigenisation and diversify arms suppliers and energy sources.
- Maintain consistent diplomatic communication and apply international law principles credibly.
- Strengthen BRICS and SCO cooperation without compromising bilateral partnerships.

India's multi-alignment is a strategic asset, but its success depends on balancing competing interests through credible diplomacy, economic resilience and strategic autonomy.

2. India's Fight Against Drug Trafficking: Targeting the Big Sharks

GS Paper III – Internal Security | GS Paper II – Governance

Why in News?

- Operation Trident reportedly targeted an international drug syndicate operating across the India–Myanmar–Bangladesh corridor, resulting in 18 arrests on October 23, 2026.
- The government's Vision Document on Drug Control (2026–2029) aims to strengthen coordination and dismantle major drug cartels.

Key Issues

- **Transnational Networks:** Drug syndicates exploit porous borders, international routes and jurisdictional gaps.

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- **Kingpins vs. Carriers:** Arresting couriers is insufficient without identifying major suppliers, financiers and beneficiaries.
- **Financial Networks:** Tracing illicit money flows and confiscating proceeds of crime are essential to dismantling organised syndicates.
- **Precursor Chemicals:** Diversion of chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture complicates enforcement.
- **Public Health Crisis:** Addiction, synthetic drugs, stigma and inadequate rehabilitation impose significant social costs.
- **Enforcement Gaps:** Increased arrests and seizures do not necessarily indicate reduced drug availability or consumption.

Legal and Institutional Framework

- **NDPS Act, 1985:** Principal legislation regulating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and penalising related offences.
- **Article 47:** A Directive Principle of State Policy directing the State to endeavour to prohibit intoxicating drinks and drugs injurious to health, except for medicinal purposes.
- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):** Coordinates drug-law enforcement and investigations involving inter-State and international networks.
- **NCORD:** The four-tier Narco-Coordination Centre mechanism facilitates coordination among central and State agencies.
- **ANTFs and JCC:** State Anti-Narcotics Task Forces strengthen State-level enforcement, while the Joint Coordination Committee facilitates coordination in significant drug cases.

Major Challenges

- Difficult terrain and porous borders, particularly along the India–Myanmar frontier.
- Limited cross-border cooperation and delays in securing foreign-based suspects.
- Nexus among traffickers, financiers and organised criminal groups.
- Inadequate access to treatment, rehabilitation and community-based prevention.

Way Forward

- Target entire supply chains through financial investigations, asset confiscation and action against precursor-chemical diversion.
- Strengthen regional intelligence-sharing, joint investigations and international legal cooperation.
- Deploy technology-enabled border surveillance and improve inter-agency coordination.
- Combine enforcement with prevention, de-addiction, treatment, rehabilitation and community participation.

- Measure success through reduced drug availability, successful convictions and improved public-health outcomes—not seizures alone.

India needs a network-focused strategy combining intelligence-led enforcement, financial disruption and public-health interventions to achieve sustainable drug control.

3. Jojari River Pollution: Geography, Environmental Governance and State Accountability

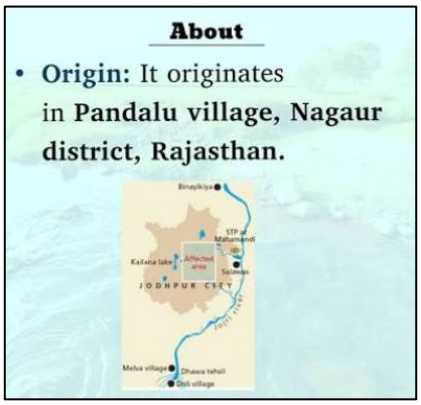
GS Paper III – Environment and Ecology | GS Paper II – Governance

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court intervened over severe pollution in Rajasthan's Jojari River, highlighting industrial discharge, ecological degradation and regulatory failures.

Geographical Profile of Jojari River

- **Origin:** Near Pudlu/Pandalu village in Nagaur district, Rajasthan.
- **River System:** A seasonal (ephemeral) river belonging to the Luni River basin in western Rajasthan.
- **Course:** Flows through Jodhpur district towards Barmer and joins the Luni near the Balotra region.
- **Tributary Status:** The Jojari is the Luni's right-bank tributary and is unusual because it does not originate in the Aravalli Range.
- **Regional Setting:** The arid climate and irregular monsoon rainfall result in seasonal flows, increasing the importance of groundwater and local water bodies.



Causes and Impacts of Pollution

- **Industrial Effluents:** Textile-dyeing and steel industries discharge inadequately treated wastewater, contaminating river water and soil.
- **Urban Sewage:** Insufficient sewage-treatment capacity and underutilised Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) weaken pollution control.
- **Ecological and Social Costs:** Contamination threatens groundwater, agriculture, biodiversity, public health and local livelihoods.

Legal and Institutional Framework

- **Article 21:** The right to life includes the judicially recognised right to a clean and healthy environment.

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- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Polluters bear the cost of environmental damage and remediation.
- **Precautionary Principle:** Preventive measures are necessary against serious environmental risks.
- **Legal Framework:** Water Act, 1974; Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; and the role of the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

Way Forward

- Strengthen industrial inspections, effluent monitoring and CETP capacity.
- Restore river corridors and regulate illegal sand mining.
- Publish water-quality assessments and enforce time-bound restoration targets.
- Fix institutional accountability and involve local communities in monitoring.

Protecting the Jojari requires integrating river-basin management, pollution control and accountable governance to secure ecological and human well-being.

4. India's Next Investment Cycle: Building a Low-Carbon Future

GS Paper III – Environment, Ecology and Indian Economy | GS Paper II – Governance

Why in News?

- UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2026 highlights the need for faster global emissions reductions to limit warming and address the risks of crossing the 1.5°C threshold.
- India's upcoming infrastructure investments offer an opportunity to embed low-carbon technologies and avoid long-term carbon lock-in.

Key Opportunities and Challenges

- **Carbon Lock-in:** Buildings, power networks and industrial facilities can lock in emissions for decades. Energy-efficient infrastructure reduces future retrofitting costs.
- **Green Buildings:** The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) developed the Energy Conservation and Sustainable Building Code (ECSBC), 2024, for commercial buildings and Eco-Niwas Samhita (ENS), 2024, for residential buildings.
- **Implementation Gap:** State-level adoption, enforcement, monitoring and compliance remain essential to translate building standards into actual energy savings.
- **Clean Power Infrastructure:** Renewable-energy expansion requires adequate transmission networks, energy storage and grid modernisation.
- **Industrial Decarbonisation:** Green steel and low-carbon cement can reduce emissions, but technological maturity and cost remain challenges.

- **Green Finance:** High capital costs and financing risks can discourage clean-energy investment.

Policy and Institutional Framework

- **BEE:** Promotes energy efficiency and develops relevant standards.
- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS):** Supports market-based emissions reduction through carbon-credit mechanisms.
- **Green Public Procurement:** Government agencies can create demand for lower-emission steel and cement through competitive tenders and emissions-intensity standards.

Way Forward

- Integrate building-efficiency standards into approvals, inspections and compliance monitoring.
- Plan renewable generation, transmission and storage together.
- Adopt technology-neutral emissions standards and competitive procurement to encourage innovation in green steel and cement.
- Use guarantees and concessional finance for viable projects while limiting contingent liabilities and taxpayer exposure.
- Align infrastructure investment with India's climate commitments and long-term development needs.

India's next investment cycle can reconcile economic growth with climate goals by embedding efficiency in mature technologies, encouraging industrial innovation and ensuring effective implementation.

5. India's Science and Technology: From Laboratory to Land

GS Paper III – Science and Technology | GS Paper II – Governance

Why in News?

At the Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC) 2026, the Prime Minister emphasised translating scientific research into practical solutions that improve people's lives.

Key Developments

- **Research and Innovation:** The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), established under the ANRF Act, 2023, aims to strengthen research and innovation across institutions and disciplines.
- **Research Funding:** The ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund seeks to catalyse private-sector R&D, particularly in strategic and deep-tech areas.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI can accelerate scientific discovery and productivity, but human judgement, independent thinking and scientific validation remain essential.
- **Nuclear Energy:** The 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam attained first criticality on April 6, 2026, marking progress in India's three-stage nuclear power programme.
- **Emerging Technologies:** Indigenous semiconductors, satellite docking, space startups and advanced battery technologies can strengthen technological self-reliance.

Key Challenges

- Weak university–industry collaboration and limited commercialisation of research.
- A gap between patent filing and the development of market-ready products.
- Unequal access to research funding, infrastructure and opportunities beyond established institutions.
- High-risk financing requirements, dependence on imported critical technologies and AI-related ethical concerns.

Way Forward

- Strengthen university–industry partnerships, research incubators and technology-transfer mechanisms.
- Expand patient capital and private investment for deep-tech innovation.
- Promote patent commercialisation and indigenous development of critical technologies.
- Establish responsible AI practices with human oversight and scientific validation.
- Measure research success through tangible societal outcomes in healthcare, agriculture, energy and other public services.

India's transition from technology adoption to technology leadership requires sustained research investment, stronger commercialisation pathways and innovations that deliver measurable societal benefits.

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