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Headlines:

- U.S. Midterm Elections: Democrats Capture Congress – Implications for Executive Accountability
- Anaemia Burden in India: Is Double-Fortified Salt the Right Solution?
- BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership: Towards Common Carbon Accounting Standards
- Israel–Palestine Conflict: UN Report, International Accountability and India's Diplomatic Position
- India's Renewable Energy Sector: $400 Billion Investment Commitments and Energy Transition



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1. U.S. Midterm Elections: Democrats Capture Congress – Implications for Executive Accountability

GS Paper II – International Relations (IR), Comparison of Constitutional and Political Systems, Democratic Institutions

1. Why in News?

- In the November 2026 U.S. midterm elections, the Democratic Party secured majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, dealing a setback to President Donald Trump.
- Democrats reportedly won at least 237 seats in the 435-member House and increased their Senate strength to at least 54 seats.
- The outcome could constrain the President's legislative agenda and strengthen congressional oversight of the executive.

2. U.S. Electoral System: Key Features

- **Presidential Elections:** Held every four years through an indirect election involving the Electoral College (538 electors; 270 required to win).
- **Midterm Elections:** Held every two years, halfway through the presidential term. All 435 House seats and approximately one-third of Senate seats are contested.
- **House of Representatives:** 435 voting members elected for two-year terms; seats are allocated among states based on population.
- **Senate:** 100 members, with two Senators from each state, serving six-year terms. One-third of seats are contested every two years to ensure institutional continuity.
- **Voting Process:** House and Senate elections generally follow the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) system. Presidential elections use the Electoral College rather than a direct nationwide popular vote.
- **Administration:** Elections are conducted by individual states, which regulate voter registration, early voting, postal voting and polling procedures.
- **Eligibility:** U.S. citizens aged 18 and above, subject to applicable registration requirements, can vote.

3. Significance of Midterm Elections

- Act as a political referendum on the President's performance.
- Enable legislative oversight through congressional committees, investigations and budgetary powers.
- Opposition control of Congress can create legislative deadlock and constrain the President's policy agenda.

4. India vs USA: Presidential Office and Executive System

Dimension	India	USA
Political System	Parliamentary	Presidential
Election	Indirect election by Electoral College	Indirect election through Electoral College
Tenure	5 years	4 years
Re-election	No constitutional term limit	Maximum two elected terms
Minimum Age	35 years	35 years
Executive Authority	Constitutional head	Real executive head
Council of Ministers	Acts on aid and advice (Article 74)	No parliamentary Council of Ministers
Legislature	President is an integral part of Parliament	President is separate from Congress
Veto Power	Absolute, suspensive and pocket veto	Veto; Congress can override with two-thirds majority in both Houses
Impeachment	Article 61 – violation of Constitution	House initiates; Senate conducts trial

5. Legislative Powers of U.S. Congress

- **Legislation:** Both Houses participate in law-making.
- **Financial Powers:** Controls federal taxation and government expenditure.
- **Executive Oversight:** Congressional committees conduct investigations and hearings.
- **Appointments:** Senate confirms key presidential appointments, including Cabinet-level officials and federal judges.
- **Treaties:** Senate provides advice and consent, requiring a two-thirds majority of Senators present.

6. India–USA: Fundamental Difference in Executive Accountability

India	USA
Executive is collectively responsible to Lok Sabha (Article 75).	President is not responsible to Congress in the parliamentary sense.
No-confidence motion can remove the government.	Congress cannot remove the President through a no-confidence motion.
Executive and legislature are closely connected.	Executive and legislature are institutionally separate.

7. Constitutional Significance

- **Checks and Balances:** Opposition control of Congress strengthens legislative scrutiny of presidential decisions.

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- **Impeachment:** In India, Parliament can impeach the President under Article 61. In the USA, the House has the power to impeach, while the Senate conducts the trial. Removal requires a two-thirds majority of Senators present.
- **Democratic Accountability:** The U.S. system emphasises separation of powers, whereas India's parliamentary system ensures executive accountability to the directly elected Lok Sabha.

2. Anaemia Burden in India: Is Double-Fortified Salt the Right Solution?

GS Paper II – Health, Nutrition and Social Justice | GS Paper III – Food Security and Science & Technology

1. Why in News?

- Debate has emerged over the use of Double-Fortified Salt (DFS) to address India's anaemia burden, with concerns regarding its effectiveness, safety and compatibility with public health priorities.

2. Anaemia Burden in India

- According to NFHS-5 (2019–21):
  - 57% of women (15–49 years) are anaemic.
  - 67.1% of children (6–59 months) are anaemic.
  - Anaemia reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood and affects maternal health, cognitive development and productivity.
- Anaemia is not synonymous with iron deficiency. Other causes include:
  - Folate and Vitamin B12 deficiencies.
  - Chronic inflammation and recurrent infections.
  - Malaria and hookworm infections.
  - Haemoglobinopathies such as thalassaemia and sickle cell disease.
  - Overall undernutrition and poor dietary diversity.

3. What is Double-Fortified Salt (DFS)?

- Salt fortified with two essential micronutrients:
  - **Iron:** Helps prevent iron-deficiency anaemia.
  - **Iodine:** Prevents iodine deficiency disorders.
  - It uses commonly consumed salt as a food vehicle to address both micronutrient deficiencies.
  - Iron absorption depends on the form of iron used and the composition of the accompanying meal.

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- FSSAI operationalised the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations in 2016.

4. Major Concerns Associated with DFS

- **Excessive Salt Intake:** WHO recommends adults consume less than 5 grams of salt per day (less than 2,000 mg sodium). Excessive intake increases hypertension and cardiovascular disease risks.
- **Iron Overload:** Potential risks for individuals with certain haemoglobin disorders, particularly thalassaemia.
- **Poor Absorption:** Phytates in cereals and pulses can reduce non-haem iron absorption.
- **Multiple Causes:** Iron fortification cannot address all causes of anaemia.
- **Programme Overlap:** Cumulative iron intake through fortified rice, DFS and Iron-Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation requires assessment.

5. Government Initiatives

- **Anemia Mukt Bharat (AMB):** Launched in 2018, based on the 6x6x6 strategy covering six beneficiary groups, six interventions and six institutional mechanisms.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** Addresses malnutrition through convergence and behaviour change.
- **National Deworming Day:** Reduces worm infestation and associated nutritional deficiencies.
- **Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS):** Prevents anaemia among adolescents.
- **PM POSHAN:** Improves nutritional outcomes among schoolchildren.
- **Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0:** Strengthens nutrition and early childhood care.
- **National Iron Plus Initiative:** Earlier framework for iron supplementation, with interventions integrated into subsequent anaemia-control programmes.

6. Way Forward

- Conduct monitored district-level DFS pilot studies before wider implementation.
- Strengthen anaemia diagnosis through haemoglobin, ferritin and other relevant biomarkers.
- Promote dietary diversity and affordable iron-rich foods.
- Improve deworming, malaria control, sanitation and nutrition awareness.
- Monitor cumulative iron exposure across government programmes.
- Adopt targeted food fortification based on nutritional assessments rather than relying exclusively on universal fortification.

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3. BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership: Towards Common Carbon Accounting Standards

GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Environment, Climate Change and Climate Finance

1. Why in News?

- The 18th BRICS Summit (September 2026), through the New Delhi Declaration, reiterated the commitment to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership.
- The partnership aims to promote capacity-building, experience-sharing and cooperation among member countries in developing carbon markets.

2. BRICS:

- **Origin:** BRIC acronym was coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill in 2001; it initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India and China.
- **Formation:** First BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting was held in 2006; the first Leaders' Summit took place in 2009 at Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- **Expansion:** South Africa joined in 2011, making it BRICS. Further expansion in 2024–25 brought membership to 11 countries.
- **Present Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.
- **Nature:** An informal cooperation forum without a constitutive treaty or permanent secretariat. Presidency rotates annually and decisions are based on consensus. Its three pillars are political and security, economic and financial, and people-to-people cooperation.



3. What are Carbon Markets?

Platforms facilitating the trading of carbon credits or emission allowances.

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- **Carbon Credit:** Generally represents one tonne of CO_2 equivalent reduced or removed.
- **Emission Allowance:** Permission to emit a specified quantity of greenhouse gases.
- **Compliance Markets:** Operate under mandatory regulations.
- **Voluntary Markets:** Enable organisations to purchase credits voluntarily.

4. India's Carbon Market Framework

- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS):** Established under the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022.
- **BEE:** Administrator of India's carbon market.
- **NSC-ICM:** Provides policy guidance and oversight.
- **CERC:** Regulates carbon credit certificate trading.
- **Grid Controller of India:** Functions as the carbon credit registry.

5. Major Challenges in BRICS Integration

- **Regulatory Differences:** India and China use emissions-intensity benchmarks, while Brazil is developing an absolute emissions-cap system.
- **Lack of Common MRV:** Different Measurement, Reporting and Verification standards affect credit comparability.
- **Double Counting:** Risk of multiple countries claiming the same emission reduction.
- **Legal Differences:** Different regulatory classifications of carbon credits across member countries.

6. International Linkages

- **EU CBAM:** Entered its definitive phase in January 2026, covering carbon-intensive imports.
- **UK CBAM:** Scheduled to commence in January 2027.
- **Paris Agreement – Article 6.2:** Enables international transfer of mitigation outcomes (ITMOs).
- **Corresponding Adjustments:** Prevent countries from double-counting emission reductions towards their climate targets.

7. Way Forward

- Develop common MRV standards and carbon-accounting methodologies.
- Establish mutual recognition of accredited verifiers.
- Harmonise national carbon registries.
- Initiate pilot carbon-credit exchanges under Article 6.2.
- Utilise the New Development Bank (NDB) for carbon-market infrastructure and climate finance.

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- Ensure environmental integrity, transparency and prevention of low-quality credits while preserving national regulatory autonomy.

4. Israel–Palestine Conflict: UN Report, International Accountability and India's Diplomatic Position

GS Paper II – International Relations, International Organisations and Human Rights | GS Paper III – Science & Technology (AI in Warfare)

1. Why in News?

- The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry submitted its fifth report (A/81/430) to the 81st UN General Assembly in October 2026.
- The report documents alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity by Israeli forces and concludes that genocidal acts continue in Gaza.

2. UN Commission of Inquiry:

- **Established:** 2021 by the UN Human Rights Council through Resolution S-30/1.
- **Mandate:** Investigate violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- **Chairperson:** Justice Srinivasan Muralidhar (India), appointed in November 2025.
- **Evidence:** Witness testimonies, medical records, satellite imagery, forensic analysis and video recordings.

3. Major Findings of the Report

- **Humanitarian Crisis:** Over 75,000 Palestinians have reportedly been killed since October 2023, including at least 21,500 children.
- **Violations:** Identifies alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture, persecution and sexual violence.
- **AI in Warfare:** Raises concerns over AI-assisted target identification and military targeting.
- Calls for investigation, prosecution and measures to prevent further violations.

4. International Law and Institutions

- **Geneva Conventions, 1949:** Protect civilians, wounded soldiers, prisoners of war and other persons during armed conflicts.
- **War Crimes:** Serious violations of international humanitarian law.
- **Genocide:** Acts committed with intent to destroy, wholly or partly, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

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- **Rome Statute, 1998:** Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC); entered into force in 2002. Israel is not a party, but ICC jurisdiction can arise in certain circumstances, including crimes committed on the territory of Palestine.
- **ICJ (International Court of Justice):** Principal judicial organ of the UN; settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions.
- **ICC (International Criminal Court):** Independent permanent criminal court that prosecutes individuals for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression.
- **UNSC:** Has primary responsibility for international peace and security. Its enforcement capacity can be constrained by the veto power of its five permanent members (P5).

5. AI in Warfare: Emerging Concerns

- **Distinction:** AI-assisted targeting must distinguish civilians from combatants.
- **Proportionality:** Civilian harm must not be excessive relative to the anticipated military advantage.
- **Precaution:** Feasible measures must be taken to minimise civilian casualties.
- **Human Accountability:** Human responsibility must be maintained in decisions involving lethal force.

6. India's Foreign Policy Dimension

- India supports a negotiated two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.
- India recognised Palestine in 1988 and supports its membership in international institutions.
- Maintains strategic, defence, technological and economic relations with Israel.
- Provides humanitarian assistance to Palestine.
- Highlights the challenge of balancing strategic interests with international humanitarian law and human rights.

7. Way Forward

- Strengthen UN mechanisms for accountability and humanitarian protection.
- Ensure independent investigations into alleged violations.
- Establish international rules governing AI and autonomous weapons.
- Promote diplomatic efforts towards a sustainable two-state solution.
- Strengthen cooperation with international judicial institutions.

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5. India's Renewable Energy Sector: $400 Billion Investment Commitments and Energy Transition

GS Paper III – Infrastructure, Renewable Energy, Investment and Environmental Sustainability

1. Why in News?

- India has secured preliminary investment commitments worth $400 billion across the renewable energy sector, according to Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi.
- The commitments emerged from a CEO roundtable involving global investors and fund managers during the Bharat Renewable Energy Summit and Expo.
- Investments cover renewable energy, green hydrogen, energy storage and transmission infrastructure.
- The government is considering extending the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) framework after consultations with industry stakeholders.

2. India's Renewable Energy Targets

- **500 GW Target:** India aims to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based installed electricity capacity by 2030.
- **Net-Zero Target:** India has announced a target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.
- These targets require large-scale investment in renewable energy generation, storage and transmission infrastructure.

3. Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM)

- Introduced by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- Requires solar PV modules used in specified government-supported projects to be sourced from approved manufacturers.
- ALMM List-I: Covers solar PV modules.
- ALMM List-II: Covers solar PV cells.
- **Objectives:**
    - Promote domestic solar manufacturing under Atmanirbhar Bharat.
    - Reduce import dependence.
    - Ensure product quality and reliability.
    - Strengthen India's solar supply chain.

4. Key Government Initiatives

- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** Promotes green hydrogen production and utilisation.

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- **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana:** Promotes residential rooftop solar installations.
- **PM-KUSUM:** Encourages solar energy adoption in agriculture.
- **PLI Scheme:** Supports domestic manufacturing of high-efficiency solar PV modules.
- **Green Energy Corridors:** Facilitate renewable energy transmission and grid integration.

5. Significance of Investment Commitments

- **Energy Security:** Reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- **Employment Generation:** Creates jobs in manufacturing, installation and maintenance.
- **Green Industrialisation:** Supports domestic solar, battery and hydrogen industries.
- **Climate Commitments:** Supports India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **Economic Growth:** Attracts private capital and promotes clean-energy innovation.

6. Major Challenges

- High initial capital investment and financing costs.
- Intermittency of solar and wind energy.
- Inadequate battery storage infrastructure.
- Grid Stability: Requires flexible power systems, smart grids and energy storage to manage fluctuations in electricity supply.
- Land acquisition and transmission bottlenecks.
- Dependence on imported solar cells, wafers and critical minerals.
- Financial stress of electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs).

7. Way Forward

- Strengthen domestic manufacturing through PLI and ALMM.
- Expand Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and pumped-storage hydropower.
- Improve interstate transmission infrastructure and smart-grid technologies.
- Mobilise private investment and green finance.
- Promote research and development in renewable energy technologies.

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