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19th November 2026

Headlines:

- Cyclone Akvan: Changing Trajectory and Coastal Preparedness
- Air Pollution in India: Lessons from COVID-19 for Public Health Governance
- India and Southeast Asia: Strengthening Strategic Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific
- Climate Finance and India's Energy Transition: From Global Commitments to Ground-Level Action
- India–U.S. Trade Agreement: Tariff Uncertainty and Implications for Bilateral Economic Relations



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1. Cyclone Akvan: Changing Trajectory and Coastal Preparedness

GS Paper III – Disaster Management | GS Paper I – Geography

Why in News?

- Severe Cyclonic Storm Akvan is expected to make landfall between Narsapur (Andhra Pradesh) and Puri (Odisha) on November 20, 2026, according to the IMD bulletin reported in the news.
- Its changing trajectory has prompted alerts across North Andhra Pradesh and southern Odisha, highlighting challenges in cyclone forecasting and coastal disaster preparedness.

Changing Trajectory and Intensity

- The IMD initially projected a possible landfall near Machilipatnam or Bapatla, followed by revised projections towards Narsapur–Kakinada and subsequently North Andhra Pradesh–South Odisha.
- The system was initially forecast to intensify into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSCS), but subsequent forecasts indicated the possibility of weakening before landfall.
- Cyclone movement and intensification are different processes: Movement refers to the direction and speed of the cyclone, whereas intensification refers to changes in its wind speed and overall strength.

Factors Influencing Cyclone Behaviour

- **El Niño:** Influences large-scale atmospheric circulation and regional weather patterns. However, it does not directly determine an individual cyclone's trajectory.
- **Ocean Heat Content:** Higher ocean heat availability, particularly at greater depths, can provide energy for cyclone intensification.
- **Mid-level Moisture:** Adequate atmospheric moisture supports convection and the organisation of thunderstorms within the cyclone.
- **Vertical Wind Shear:** Changes in wind speed and direction with altitude can disrupt the cyclone's vertical structure and weaken its development.
- **Atmospheric Circulation:** Large-scale wind patterns and surrounding pressure systems influence cyclone movement and direction.

Early Warning and Disaster Preparedness

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) provides cyclone forecasts and warnings to facilitate timely evacuation and disaster preparedness.
- Red alerts have been issued for Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Alluri Sitharama Raju, Anakapalli and Kakinada districts.

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- Andhra Pradesh has deployed preparedness measures involving 13 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and 11 State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams, along with fire service units.
- Timely evacuation, cyclone shelters, emergency communication systems and protection of critical infrastructure are essential to minimise casualties and economic losses.

Challenges

- Uncertainty in predicting cyclone trajectories, intensity and precise landfall locations.
- Coastal erosion, storm surges and flooding in low-lying coastal areas.
- Vulnerability of fishing communities, agriculture, transport networks and critical infrastructure.
- Coordination challenges in evacuation, relief and rehabilitation operations.

Way Forward

- Strengthen satellite-based monitoring, ocean observation systems and numerical weather prediction models.
- Promote impact-based forecasting that communicates likely consequences rather than only wind speed and rainfall predictions.
- Improve last-mile early warning dissemination and community-based evacuation preparedness.
- Develop cyclone-resilient infrastructure, strengthen coastal shelters and protect natural buffers such as mangroves and coastal wetlands.
- Enhance coordination among IMD, NDMA, NDRF, SDRF and coastal State Governments.

2. Air Pollution in India: Lessons from COVID-19 for Public Health Governance

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

Why in News?

- An article by former WHO Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan and public health expert Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya highlights the need to apply lessons from India's COVID-19 response to tackle the growing air pollution crisis.
- It calls for stronger political leadership, scientific monitoring, targeted funding, public participation and sustained pollution-control measures.

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Air Pollution as a Public Health Emergency

- Exposure to PM2.5 and toxic gases contributes to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disorders, stroke, lung cancer, diabetes and neurological conditions.
- Children, pregnant women, elderly people and outdoor workers face disproportionate health risks.
- The State of Global Air 2025 report estimated that more than two million deaths in India in 2023 were attributable to air pollution, including household and ambient exposure.
- Economic Impact: A study published in The Lancet Planetary Health estimated that air pollution caused economic losses equivalent to 1.36% of India's GDP in 2019, affecting productivity and increasing healthcare expenditure.

Lessons from COVID-19 for Air Pollution Governance

- **Coordinated Governance:** Strengthen cooperation among Environment, Health, Transport, Power and Agriculture Ministries.
- **Scientific Surveillance:** Integrate AQI, weather conditions, hospital admissions and mortality data through environmental health surveillance systems.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Establish public dashboards to monitor pollution levels, emission reductions, expenditure and health outcomes.
- **Outcome-based Financing:** Direct greater funding towards major PM2.5 sources, including industrial emissions, transport and household fuel combustion.
- **Public Participation:** Promote scientific risk communication, community involvement and awareness without shifting the responsibility of pollution control entirely to individuals.

Policy and Institutional Framework

- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), 2019:** Aims to reduce particulate pollution through city-level action plans, measurable targets and improved air-quality monitoring.
- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** Provides emergency measures during severe pollution episodes but cannot substitute for continuous emission reduction.
- **Air Quality Standards**: India's annual PM2.5 standard of 40 $\mu g/m^3$ is considerably higher than the WHO's 2021 annual guideline of 5 $\mu g/m^3$.

Challenges

- Fragmented governance and inadequate coordination across State and administrative boundaries.

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- Weak enforcement of industrial emission standards and inadequate monitoring of pollution sources.
- Uneven allocation and utilisation of pollution-control funds.
- Excessive dependence on temporary restrictions rather than structural emission reduction.
- Disproportionate exposure among economically vulnerable communities.

Way Forward

- **Airshed-based Management:** Adopt regional pollution-control strategies through coordination among neighbouring States, recognising that air pollution crosses administrative boundaries.
- Strengthen public transport, cleaner energy, industrial emission standards and scientific urban planning.
- Introduce stricter, phased air-quality standards supported by scientific evidence.
- Develop integrated environmental health surveillance systems and transparent public reporting.
- Ensure outcome-based financing, community participation and protection of vulnerable populations.

3. India and Southeast Asia: Strengthening Strategic Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific

GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Energy Security

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the ASEAN–India Summit, East Asia Summit (EAS) and Quad Summit in Manila, Philippines.
- The meetings focused on regional cooperation, maritime security, disaster management, cybersecurity and strategic partnerships amid geopolitical tensions and disruptions to global energy and trade routes.

India–ASEAN Relations

- ASEAN, comprising 11 member countries, is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.
- ASEAN Centrality: Recognises ASEAN's leading role in shaping regional cooperation and the Indo-Pacific security architecture.
- India seeks to strengthen its strategic presence in Southeast Asia and maintain a balanced regional order amid China's growing influence.
- Cooperation covers trade, investment, maritime security, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- EAS is a regional forum for dialogue on political, security and economic issues.
- It promotes an inclusive regional security architecture by bringing ASEAN members and major powers together.
- India emphasises regional stability, peaceful dispute resolution and a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

QUAD and Indo-Pacific Security

- The Quad comprises India, the United States, Japan and Australia.
- It is a strategic partnership, not a formal military alliance.
- Cooperation includes maritime domain awareness, naval cooperation, critical technologies, resilient supply chains and regional security.

India–Philippines Strategic Partnership

- Defence and maritime cooperation have strengthened following the elevation of bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership.
- BrahMos missile cooperation reflects India's expanding defence exports and defence technology partnerships.
- The South China Sea is strategically important for maritime trade, energy transportation and regional security.
- India supports freedom of navigation, peaceful dispute settlement and respect for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Challenges

- Intensifying strategic competition among major powers and regional maritime disputes.
- Trade imbalances and inadequate economic integration with Southeast Asia.
- Connectivity gaps and delays in regional infrastructure projects.
- Energy and trade vulnerabilities arising from instability around the Strait of Hormuz.

Way Forward

- Strengthen ASEAN centrality through India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
- Accelerate the review and implementation of the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).
- Improve regional connectivity through projects such as the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway.
- Diversify energy sources and strengthen resilient supply chains.
- Promote maritime cooperation, international law and India's strategic autonomy.

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4. Climate Finance and India's Energy Transition: From Global Commitments to Ground-Level Action

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

Why in News?

- The COP29 climate finance agreement and COP31 electrification ambitions have renewed the focus on translating global climate commitments into accessible finance, resilient energy infrastructure and inclusive development.

Climate Finance: From Commitments to Implementation

- Under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), developed countries agreed to take the lead in mobilising at least $300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries.
- A broader global effort aims to scale up climate finance from all sources, including public and private finance, to $1.3 trillion annually by 2035.
- Grants, concessional loans and guarantees are essential to support vulnerable countries without creating unsustainable debt burdens.
- Simplified procedures and timely disbursement are necessary to ensure that finance reaches ground-level projects.

India's Renewable Energy Transition

- India achieved 300.5 GW of non-fossil fuel installed electricity capacity by July 2026, exceeding 60% of its target of 500 GW non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
- However, installed capacity does not guarantee actual electricity generation due to the intermittent nature of solar and wind energy.
- Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO) targets aim to increase non-fossil electricity consumption to 43.33% by 2029–30.

Energy Infrastructure and Security

- Strengthening transmission networks, battery storage, pumped-storage hydropower and smart distribution grids is essential for reliable renewable energy integration.
- Renewable Energy Curtailment: Inadequate transmission capacity and grid flexibility can force operators to reduce renewable power generation, leading to underutilisation of installed capacity.
- Electrification of transport, buildings and industries can reduce fossil-fuel dependence, provided electricity increasingly comes from clean sources.

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Just and Inclusive Energy Transition

- A Just Energy Transition must protect coal-dependent workers, local communities and regional economies through reskilling, alternative employment and social protection.
- Affordable rooftop solar, electric mobility, clean-energy finance and green-skill development can create employment and distribute the benefits of clean energy more equitably.
- Local industries and training institutions should be integrated into emerging clean-energy supply chains.

Challenges

- Inadequate climate finance, complicated approval procedures and unequal access to funding.
- Intermittent renewable generation, insufficient storage and transmission infrastructure.
- Dependence on coal for electricity, employment and regional economic activity.
- Unequal access to clean-energy technologies and benefits.

Way Forward

- Ensure transparent climate-finance delivery through accessible grants, concessional finance and greater private-sector participation.
- Modernise electricity grids, expand energy storage and improve renewable energy integration.
- Adopt comprehensive Just Transition strategies involving workers, local communities and coal-dependent regions.
- Promote affordable clean energy, green skills and decentralised renewable energy solutions.

India's energy transition must balance climate commitments, energy security and inclusive growth. Converting international promises into accessible finance, reliable infrastructure and sustainable livelihoods is essential for achieving a just and resilient low-carbon future.

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5. India–U.S. Trade Agreement: Tariff Uncertainty and Implications for Bilateral Economic Relations

GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Indian Economy (External Sector and Trade Policy)

Why in News?

- India's Commerce Secretary indicated that the signing of the proposed India–U.S. interim trade agreement would take more time, as the U.S. is reviewing its tariff structure and completing Section 301 investigations.

Status of the Trade Agreement

- India and the U.S. announced a framework for an interim trade agreement in February 2026.
- Negotiations and the legal text are reportedly in their final stages, but signing is pending clarity on the evolving U.S. tariff framework.
- The distinction between announcement, conclusion of negotiations, signing and implementation is important.

Section 301 Investigations

- Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act, 1974 empowers the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate and respond to foreign trade practices considered unfair or discriminatory.
- Such investigations can result in additional tariffs or other trade measures.
- Their outcome could influence India's tariff treatment and market access in the U.S.

Implications for India's Economy

- Preferential tariff treatment could improve the competitiveness of Indian exports, particularly textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, chemicals, gems and jewellery.
- Greater market access can support manufacturing, employment, foreign investment and export diversification.
- However, tariff uncertainty may affect exporters' pricing decisions and long-term investment planning.

Strategic and Trade Policy Dimensions

- A stable trade framework can strengthen India–U.S. economic cooperation, supply-chain resilience and strategic partnership.
- India must balance market access with the protection of sensitive domestic sectors, particularly agriculture and dairy.
- Unilateral tariff measures also raise concerns about predictability and the rules-based multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Challenges and Way Forward

- **Challenges:** Tariff uncertainty, regulatory differences, market-access disputes and protection of domestic industries.

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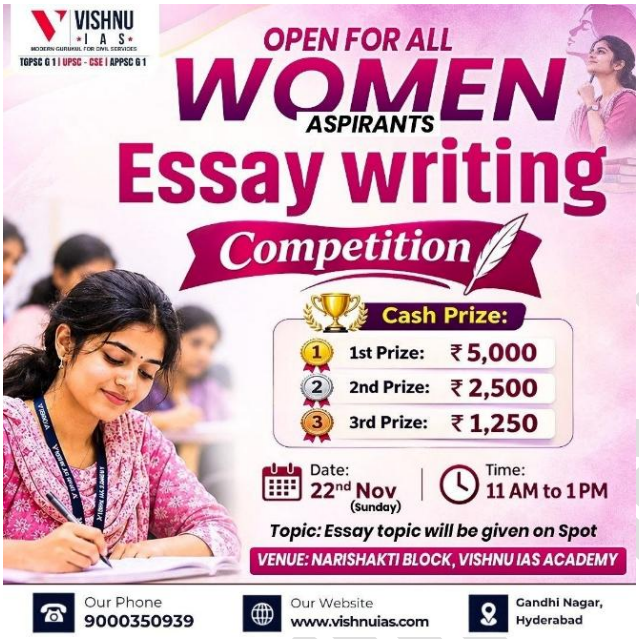
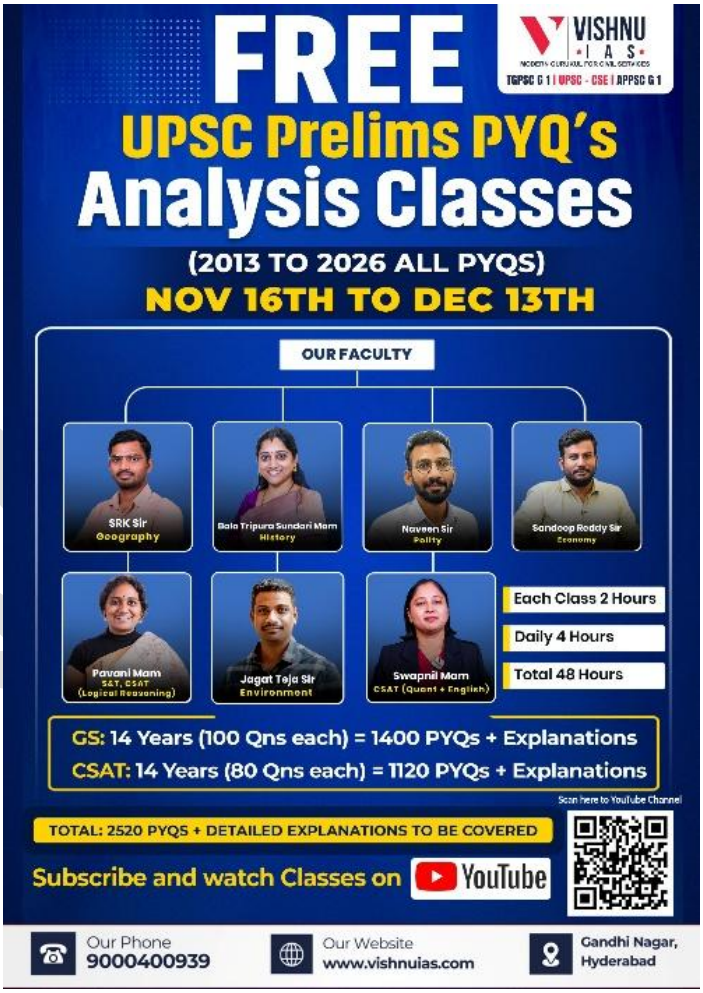
- **Way Forward:** Pursue balanced negotiations, diversify export markets, improve domestic competitiveness and strengthen engagement through WTO-based trade rules.

A mutually beneficial India–U.S. trade agreement can deepen economic ties and strengthen India's global trade position. Its success will depend on predictable market access, balanced commitments and long-term policy stability.





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