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Headlines:

- COP31 Talks Fail Over Disagreement on Fossil Fuel Phase-out
- India's Core Sector Growth: Low Base Effect and Persistent Weakness in Oil and Gas Production
- Strengthening India's Domestic Legal Framework for International Criminal Justice
- India–Nepal Relations: Nepalese Prime Minister's Visit to India
- SCO Indraprastha Communiqué: Promoting Cultural Diplomacy and Civilisational Diversity



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1. COP31 Talks Fail Over Disagreement on Fossil Fuel Phase-out

GS Paper III – Environment | Climate Change | International Environmental Agreements

Why in News?

- The 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Antalya, Türkiye, failed to achieve a consensus agreement due to disagreements over the explicit inclusion of fossil fuel phase-out in the final climate text.
- The European Union and over 130 countries opposed the proposed text for not explicitly mentioning the transition away from fossil fuels.
- India, China and Saudi Arabia supported the proposed text, emphasising that climate ambition must be aligned with adequate financial and technological support.

Key Issues and Concerns

Fossil Fuel Phase-out vs Phase-down:

- Phase-out refers to the complete discontinuation of fossil fuel use, whereas phase-down involves its gradual reduction.
    - Developing countries emphasise a gradual and equitable transition considering their energy requirements and developmental priorities.
    - **Developed vs Developing Countries:** Developed countries seek stronger emission-reduction commitments, while developing countries stress energy security and their right to development.
- **Climate Justice:** Developing nations argue that countries with greater historical emissions must take greater responsibility for addressing climate change.
- **Implementation Gap:** The disagreement reflects the persistent gap between ambitious climate commitments and the availability of adequate finance, technology and institutional support.
- **1.5°C Target:** The lack of stronger climate commitments raises concerns about achieving the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C while pursuing efforts to restrict it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- **Greenwashing Concerns:** The European Union criticised the proposed text for weakening commitments towards fossil fuel transition.

India's Position

- India supported the proposed text, emphasising that climate ambition must go hand in hand with the means of implementation.
- Advocates the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).

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- Emphasises equity and climate justice, arguing that developed countries should take the lead in reducing emissions considering their historical contribution to global warming.
- Highlights the need for adequate climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for developing countries.
- Supports a nationally determined and gradual energy transition that protects the developmental interests of emerging economies and ensures energy security.

Way Forward

- **Climate Finance:** Ensure predictable, adequate and accessible climate finance for developing countries.
- **Technology Transfer:** Accelerate the transfer of affordable clean-energy technologies and strengthen capacity-building.
- **Equitable Burden-sharing:** Balance emission-reduction commitments with historical responsibility and developmental needs.
- **Just Energy Transition:** Promote green employment, social protection and alternative livelihood opportunities for fossil-fuel-dependent communities.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Strengthen international cooperation under the Paris Agreement to bridge the gap between climate commitments and their implementation.

Effective climate action requires balancing environmental sustainability, energy security and developmental justice. Global climate commitments must be supported by adequate finance, technology and equitable burden-sharing to achieve a just and inclusive energy transition.

2. India's Core Sector Growth: Low Base Effect and Persistent Weakness in Oil and Gas Production

GS Paper III – Indian Economy | Infrastructure | Energy Security | Industrial Growth

Why in News?

- India's Index of Core Industries (ICI) recorded 10.9% growth in October 2026, the highest growth rate in the series.
- However, the growth was partly influenced by the low base effect, as the index had grown by only 0.8% in October 2025.
- Despite strong performance in construction-related sectors, domestic crude oil and natural gas production continued to decline.

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Key Highlights of Core Sector Performance

- **Eight Core Industries:** The ICI tracks Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilisers, Steel, Cement and Electricity.
- These industries have a combined weight of 40.27% in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- **Positive Growth:** Coal (23%), electricity (nearly 22%), iron ore (26.4%), cement (15.4%) and steel (7.3%) recorded growth.
- **Persistent Decline:** Crude oil production contracted by 4.1%, marking its 22nd consecutive month of decline, while natural gas contracted by 7.6%, its 28th consecutive month of decline.
- **Infrastructure Push:** Growth in iron ore, steel and cement reflects increased construction and infrastructure activity, partly driven by government capital expenditure.

Major Concerns

- **Low Base Effect:** A lower production level in the previous year can inflate year-on-year growth rates. Therefore, headline growth alone may not accurately reflect the actual momentum of economic activity.
- **Energy Import Dependence:** Declining domestic oil and gas production increases dependence on imports, exposing India to global price volatility and geopolitical disruptions.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** Higher fuel imports increase foreign exchange outflows and can widen the CAD, particularly when international energy prices rise.
- **Imported Inflation:** Higher fuel import costs increase production and transportation expenses, contributing to domestic inflation.
- **Sustainability of Growth:** Excessive dependence on government capital expenditure raises concerns about sustaining infrastructure-led growth.
- **Accountability:** Persistent underperformance of domestic oil and gas production requires greater transparency and accountability from the Petroleum Ministry and public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Domestic Exploration:** Improve hydrocarbon exploration through the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), geological surveys and advanced extraction technologies.
- **Improve PSU Efficiency:** Strengthen operational efficiency, investment and accountability in oil and gas PSUs.
- **Encourage Private Investment:** Promote private-sector participation in exploration and production.

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- **Energy Diversification:** Accelerate renewable energy, green hydrogen and biofuel adoption to reduce fossil fuel dependence.
- **Strategic Reserves:** Expand strategic petroleum reserves to manage external supply disruptions.

India's economic resilience requires not only higher infrastructure growth but also stronger domestic energy production. Balancing infrastructure investment, energy security and sustainable economic growth is essential for long-term economic stability.

3. Strengthening India's Domestic Legal Framework for International Criminal Justice

GS Paper II – Polity, Governance and International Relations | GS Paper III – Internal Security | GS Paper IV – Ethics

Why in News?

- The 2026 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Navi Pillay has renewed debate on strengthening domestic mechanisms to prosecute international crimes and address India's justice deficit.

International Criminal Law (ICL)

- ICL establishes individual criminal responsibility for four crimes under the Rome Statute: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crime of aggression.
- However, the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression is subject to special conditions under the Kampala Amendments.

Gaps in India's Legal Framework

- **Absence of comprehensive legislation:** India lacks specific domestic laws comprehensively defining and penalising genocide and crimes against humanity.
- **Limited scope of the Geneva Conventions Act, 1960:** It primarily addresses grave breaches in international armed conflicts, leaving gaps in addressing war crimes in non-international armed conflicts.
- **Limitations of ordinary criminal laws:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) can punish acts such as murder and assault, but does not comprehensively recognise international atrocity crimes as distinct offences.
- **Fair Labelling Principle:** Classifying genocide or crimes against humanity merely as ordinary offences may fail to reflect their exceptional gravity, organised nature and victims' suffering.

India and International Framework

- India is a party to the 1948 Genocide Convention and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, but is not a party to the Rome Statute.

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- Principle of Complementarity: Under Article 17, ICC intervention is generally barred when a state with jurisdiction is genuinely investigating or prosecuting a case. National judicial systems retain primary responsibility.
- Article 253 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to legislate for implementing international treaties.

Way Forward

- Enact comprehensive legislation covering genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Strengthen independent investigations, prosecution and judicial accountability.
- Ensure accountability of both state and non-state actors, alongside victim and witness protection.
- Improve awareness and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

India must bridge the gap between its international commitments and domestic enforcement mechanisms to ensure accountability, uphold human dignity and strengthen the rule of law.

4. India–Nepal Relations: Nepalese Prime Minister's Visit to India

GS Paper II – International Relations | India and its Neighbourhood | Bilateral Relations

Why in News?

- Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah began his first official bilateral visit to India (November 22–23, 2026), holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen bilateral cooperation.
- The discussions focus on development partnership, hydropower, trade, railways, infrastructure, technology, climate change and disaster resilience.

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Key Areas of Cooperation

- **Connectivity:** Proposed inauguration of the Ayodhya–Janakpur passenger rail service, along with cooperation on the Dharchula bridge and border infrastructure.
- **Energy Security:** Expansion of hydropower cooperation and cross-border electricity trade. The existing long-term framework envisages India importing up to 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal over ten years.
- **Economic Partnership:** India is Nepal's largest trading partner. Discussions include trade facilitation, investment, financial assistance and infrastructure development.
- **Disaster Management:** India's support for Nepal's reconstruction following devastating floods and landslides in August 2026.
- **People-to-People Ties:** Religious tourism, cultural exchanges and connectivity between important centres such as Ayodhya and Janakpur.

Strategic Significance for India

- Strengthens India's Neighbourhood First Policy and regional connectivity.
- Enhances energy security through access to Nepal's hydropower resources.
- Supports sub-regional cooperation under the BBIN Initiative (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal).
- Helps maintain India's strategic engagement with Nepal amid China's growing influence in the region.

Challenges in Bilateral Relations

- Boundary disputes: Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura.
- Trade imbalance: Nepal's dependence on Indian transit routes and markets.

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- Delays in implementing infrastructure and hydropower projects.
- Differences over air routes and cross-border connectivity.

Way Forward

- Resolve boundary issues through established diplomatic mechanisms.
- Ensure timely implementation of bilateral projects.
- Promote balanced trade, investment and mutually beneficial energy cooperation.
- Strengthen cooperation in disaster resilience and regional connectivity.

India–Nepal relations must evolve from traditional historical ties towards a mutually beneficial partnership based on connectivity, economic integration, energy security and mutual trust.

5. SCO Indraprastha Communiqué: Promoting Cultural Diplomacy and Civilisational Diversity

GS Paper II – International Relations | Regional Groupings | GS Paper I – Indian Culture

Why in News?

- The first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum concluded in New Delhi (November 20–22, 2026) with the adoption of the Indraprastha Communiqué, promoting cultural diversity and cooperation among participating countries.

SCO: Institutional Background

- Established in 2001, the SCO is a Eurasian regional organisation promoting cooperation in security, economic development, connectivity and cultural exchanges.
- India became a full member in 2017.

Key Provisions of the Communiqué

- **Cultural diversity:** Recognises every civilisation as an equal voice and culture as a bridge for friendship and good-neighbourliness.
- **Heritage preservation:** Encourages joint UNESCO heritage nominations and protection of cultural assets from illicit trafficking, environmental damage and natural disasters.
- **Digital preservation:** Promotes digitisation of manuscripts, languages, literature and oral traditions, including a proposed digital repository.
- **Technology and AI:** Encourages responsible use of AI while safeguarding authenticity, cultural context, copyright and community interests.

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- **People-to-people ties:** Promotes joint exhibitions, cultural festivals, museum collaborations and exchanges of artists, scholars and students.

Significance for India

- **Cultural diplomacy:** Strengthens India's soft power and international cultural engagement.
- **Regional outreach:** Complements India's Connect Central Asia Policy through historical and cultural linkages.
- **Strategic engagement:** Expands SCO cooperation beyond traditional security and economic issues.
- **Shared heritage:** Provides opportunities for collaborative research on Buddhist, Silk Route and Indo-Persian connections.

Challenges

- Geopolitical tensions may constrain sustained cultural cooperation.
- Differences in historical interpretations and heritage ownership.
- Implementation gap: Voluntary commitments may remain declaratory without funding, timelines and institutional mechanisms.

Way Forward

- Establish collaborative digital repositories and research networks.
- Strengthen institutional partnerships with UNESCO and cultural bodies.
- Ensure responsible, inclusive and community-centred heritage preservation.

The Indraprastha Communiqué reinforces culture as an instrument of India's soft power and regional cooperation. Its success will depend on translating shared commitments into sustained institutional action.

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