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MONTHLY MAGAZINE – FEBRUARY 2025

Si. No.	Topics
Quotes of the Day	
What others say?	
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1	Aero India Aircrafts
2	Rasika Arts of Vitla
3	Aurora Australis
4	Jhumoir Binandini dance
5	Mount Etna, Italy
Facts of the Day	
1	The rise and rise of UPI payments
2	The PLI push: \$1 billion over 3 years to 19 firms, fuels record surge in handset exports
3	Silent Revolution: Drop in unschooled mothers from 47% to 29% in 8 yrs
4	Number of Internet shutdowns highest in 2024 globally, India tops in govt-ordered curbs
Keyword of the Day	
1	Carbon Capture
2	Constitutional Morality
3	Article 101 (4)
4	Stagflation
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1	Tea Horse Road
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3	Savarkar's 'The Indian War of Independence 1857'
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Society & Social Justice	
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2	Budget allocation and scientific research
3	Ranveer Allahbadia controversy
4	South Korea's fertility rate rose to 0.75 in 2024 – the first increase in nine years
5	Tamil Nadu vs Centre clash over NEP's three-language formula

International Relations	
1	USAID to reduce federal funding
2	UK-India Young Professionals Scheme
3	USAID freeze effect on world
4	India-France Ties
5	Modi-Trump Meet
6	In Modi-Trump Summit, benefits for the US are greater
7	India-Qatar Partnership
8	Canceled a \$21 million USAID grant controversy
9	India-EU Ties
10	Trump's \$5 million "Gold Card" visa program
11	22 EU Commissioners visit to India deepening India-EU ties
Economy & Agriculture	
1	Economic Survey 2024-25
2	Livestock Census (2024–25)
3	Critical Minerals Framework
4	Aatmanirbhata in pulses
5	Tax cut and one way gamble
6	RBI's 25 point repo rate cut
7	Income Tax Bill, 2025
8	Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY)
9	Amul's dairy success
10	Middle Class 2.0
11	Indian government is considering raising the deposit insurance cover
12	RBI's Quality of Public Expenditure (QPE)
13	India's textile exports
14	Sustainable fertilisation
15	NAKSHA Scheme
Science and Technology	
1	Union Budget 2025 announced a ₹20,000 crore Nuclear Energy Mission
2	Asteroid 2024 YR4
3	Proposed Atomic Energy Legislations in Budget
4	Story of NavIC
5	Should India build a sovereign, foundational AI model?
6	PM Modi's message at AI Action Summit in Paris
7	India will ensure that the AI future is good, and for all
8	Einstein Ring
9	China's weaponisation of e-supply chains
10	DDoS cyberattack
11	NOVA1 gene variant (I197V) as a potential driver of spoken language evolution
12	IndiaAI Mission
13	In-utero treatment of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)
14	Leaping through time
15	SPHEREx

Geography & Environment			
1	The escalating conflict in Congo, why its neighbours are involved	9	Earthquake in Delhi
2	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	10	Parambikulam Tiger Reserve adds 15 new species to its biodiversity checklist
3	Guinea's Simandou mine	11	Aaravali safari park project
4	North Pole temperatures surged to 20°C above average	12	Black plastic
5	SC directives on sacred groves	13	Gharials
6	Discovery of Potash reserves in Punjab	Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude	
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8	Tackling heatwaves	2	Theory and practice: the ethical core in Amartya Sen's Weltanschauung



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QUOTES OF THE DAY

February 2025

Sl No	Quote
1	<i>'Is freedom anything else than the right to live as we wish? Nothing else'</i> – EPICTETUS
2	<i>'There may be liberty and justice for all, but there are tax breaks only for some'</i> – MARTIN A SULLIVAN
3	<i>'Competitions are for horses, not artists'</i> – BELA BARTOK
4	<i>'Money often costs too much'</i> – RALPH WALDO EMERSON
5	<i>'The right to vote is the right upon which all other rights depend'</i> – THOMAS PAINE
6	<i>'There was never a night or a problem that could defeat sunrise or hope'</i> – BERNARD WILLIAMS
7	<i>'A word after a word after a word is power'</i> – MARGARET ATWOOD
8	<i>'There may be liberty and justice for all, but there are tax breaks only for some'</i> – MARTIN A SULLIVAN
9	<i>'One good thing about music is that when it hits you, you don't feel any pain'</i> – BOB MARLEY
10	<i>'What protectionism teaches us, is to do to ourselves in time of peace what enemies seek to do to us in time of war'</i> – HENRY GEORGE
11	<i>'Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard'</i> – TIM NOTKE
12	<i>'Tennis is a mental game. Everyone is fit, everyone hits great forehands and backhands'</i> – NOVAK DJOKOVIC
13	<i>'The robot uprising is coming! Don't worry, they'll get tired of our inefficiency and give up eventually'</i> – DOUGLAS ADAMS
14	<i>'Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime'</i> – ERNEST HEMINGWAY
15	<i>An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last'</i> – WINSTON CHURCHILL
16	<i>'A man without a vote is a man without protection'</i> – LYNDON B JOHNSON
17	<i>'It takes more than one dove to make peace in the Middle East'</i> – MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
18	<i>'Language exerts hidden power, like the moon on the tides'</i> – RITA MAE BROWN
19	<i>'We must use time as a tool, not as a couch'</i> – JOHN F KENNEDY
20	<i>'You can no more win a war than win an earthquake'</i> – JEANNETTE RANKIN
21	<i>'I treated it like every day was my last day with a basketball'</i> – LEBRON JAMES
22	<i>'The end approaches, but the apocalypse is long lived'</i> – JACQUES DERRIDA
23	<i>'The time for seeking global solutions is running out'</i> – POPE FRANCIS
24	<i>'The fact of being an underdog changes people in ways that we often fail to appreciate'</i> – MALCOLM GLADWELL

WHAT OTHERS SAY?

February 2025

Sl No	Quote
1	<i>'Where international trade agreements are concerned, Islamabad cannot expect to get away with violating the commitments it has made to foreign partners. Those responsible must consider the consequences of their actions'– DAWN, PAKISTAN</i>
2	<i>'If the EU is to stand up to Donald Trump, and fulfil its obligations and pledges to Ukraine, it needs to liberate the collective resources to do so'– THE GUARDIAN</i>
3	<i>'Graceful exit has become an alien concept in Nepali politics where the same set of leaders continue to angle for top party and government posts literally until they are on their deathbeds. The current leaders of all three big parties are known for their unquenchable thirst for power'– THE KATHMANDU POST</i>
4	<i>'Trump would be better off trying to extract symbolic concessions from the other countries, declaring victory and ending the tariffs before they really hurt'– THE WASHINGTON POST</i>
5	<i>'Pakistan should reaffirm its support for the people of Kashmir. It should also keep the door open for India in case it decides to resolve the Kashmir question through dialogue'– DAWN, PAKISTAN</i>
6	<i>'The requirement that 2.2 million Pakistanians be forcibly resettled in neighbouring Arab states amounts to unambiguous endorsement of a criminal atrocity – ethnic cleansing'– THE GUARDIAN</i>
7	<i>'In the absence of any workable and just solution that protects the rights of the Palestine people, the only foreseeable outcome is more conflict'– DAWN, PAKISTAN</i>
8	<i>'Donald Trump's attack on the International Criminal Court is a perverse recognition of its importance, and of international law more generally'– THE GUARDIAN</i>
9	<i>'The festering polarisation and rising extremism threaten to undermine the very ideals that fuelled Bangladesh's July uprising'– THE DAILY STAR</i>
10	<i>'We hope that the Paris summit will open a new chapter in global AI cooperation, shaping a globally recognised governance framework for AI, which contributes to the constitution and improvement of a community with a shared future for mankind in the digital and intelligent age'– THE GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA</i>
11	<i>'One wonders whether the institutional leadership realises the long-term ramifications of the ongoing 're-making' of the judiciary in Pakistan'– DAWN, PAKISTAN</i>
12	<i>'The AI Action Summit was an opportunity for the European Union and France to announce colossal investments. However, this surfeit of resources cannot be seen as an end in itself'– LEMONDE</i>
13	<i>'Donald Trump is abandoning Ukraine. Others would be both wrong and reckless to follow suit'– THE GUARDIAN</i>
14	<i>'It is vital that past crimes by the Awami regime, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions, are tried and those responsible held to account. The UN has made a number of recommendations which must be seriously considered and acted on'– THE DAILY STAR</i>

15	<i>'In the post-Covid War era, the transatlantic alliance was founded on a common commitment to international norms that this White House holds in sneering contempt'–</i> THE GUARDIAN
16	<i>'In this transformative world, further cooperation between China and Europe will be beneficial in building a more equitable and reasonable international order, jointly crafting a new narrative for a multipolar world'–</i> THE GLOBAL TIMES
17	<i>'The tournament is thus a test for Pakistan on multiple fronts. While the eyes of the world will be on cricket, the success of this tournament will be determined by much more than the performances on the field'–</i> THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE
18	<i>'The US President prices up everything and knows the value of nothing. Others must now endeavour to show him that his plans (in Europe) will not come as cheaply as he believes'–</i> THE GUARDIAN
19	<i>'We advise the US side not to challenge China's patience, to stop manipulating Taiwan-related issues, and to cease sending incorrect signals to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces'–</i> THE GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA
20	<i>'With hostages still held, and with conditions in Gaza remaining so dire, the priority must be to maintain the ceasefire. Whether or not it can be the foundation of a long-term response to this crisis, it is still essential to save lives now'–</i> THE GUARDIAN
21	<i>'For the president of the United States to dismiss the appalling sacrifices of the Ukrainians as their own fault... to make deals without Ukrainian or NATO involvement, and to indulge in his admiration of the tyrant in the Kremlin goes far beyond that Americans should tolerate'–</i> THE WASHINGTON POST
22	<i>'Pakistan need to turn things around to become contenders once again. The onus falls on the Pakistan Cricket Board to ensure this'–</i> DAWN, PAKISTAN
23	<i>'In place of the post-second world war order, Mr Trump envisages a world where alliances are no more than empty words and great powers bluff and bully their way through'–</i> THE GUARDIAN
24	<i>'Members of both parties have expressed worry about Mr. Trump's outrageous parroting of Russian line on Ukraine. They are likely to be even more upset when Musk's cuts reach their states and when record-breaking measles outbreaks happen'–</i> THE NEW YORK TIMES

PICTURE OF THE DAY

February 2025

Picture of the Day: Aero India Aircrafts

Why in News? Aero India 2025, Asia's largest aerospace and defence exhibition in Bengaluru, has highlighted India's growing defence capabilities and global partnerships.

Themed 'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities', the event featured 900+ exhibitors, 275+ exhibits, and representatives from 90+ countries

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized strengthening global ties and India's defence-industrial growth.

Indigenous Defence Advancements

- Tejas Mk1A Deliveries:** HAL announced plans to accelerate deliveries of Tejas Mk1A fighters to the Indian Air Force (IAF), with 12 aircraft slated for 2025. Three units have already been produced and flight-tested.
- AMCA Design Tweaks:** India's fifth-gen Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) faces a design review after stress tests revealed the need for structural adjustments to handle 100% load capacity.

International Collaborations

- Su-57E Production Offer:** Russia proposed joint production of its Su-57E stealth fighter in India, leveraging existing Su-30MKI facilities. The jet made its aerobatic debut in India at the event.
- Boeing's India Focus:** Boeing India emphasized India's unique market potential, highlighting partnerships under 'Make in India' and projects like the C-17, P-8, and Apache helicopters.

THE FOREIGN AIRCRAFT PARTICIPATING IN AERO INDIA

Big birds take to the skies

5th-gen US & Russian fighters are on display at the same platform for the 1st time. But they aren't the only foreign aircraft drawing eyeballs. Here's a list:



F-35 LIGHTNING II (US)

■ This fifth-generation fighter is considered the backbone of the US Air Force. Developed by Lockheed Martin, it is known for its air superiority, ground attack capabilities and electronic warfare. It is one of the world's most advanced fighter jets. Its software and hardware upgrades, including AI-powered combat systems, have been a gamechanger.



SUKHOI SU-57 (RUSSIA)

■ The Su-57E is a fifth-generation stealth fighter developed by the Russian company Sukhoi. It is considered the rival of the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Lightning II of the US. Known for its speed, the Su-57E has a range of over 3,500 km. Russia is aiming to produce more of these aircraft, which have AI-assisted combat systems, sensor fusion and electronic warfare capabilities. Russia has also shown interest in exporting these fighters to India and China.



F-16 FIGHTING FALCON (US)

■ The F-16 Fighting Falcon is a multi-role fighter manufactured by Lockheed Martin for the US Air Force. It is known for its agility, speed and advanced avionics. It is also one of the most widely exported fighter jets, with shipments to more than 25 countries. It can carry air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles and bombs, as well as a 20-mm cannon. The US has also supplied F-16s to Ukraine.



EMBRAER C-390 MILLENNIUM (BRAZIL)

■ The Embraer C-390 Millennium is a military transport aircraft built by Embraer of Brazil. Designed to replace older turboprop planes, it offers higher speed, greater payload and advanced avionics. Often compared to the C-130J Super Hercules, it is operated by the Brazilian Air Force and has orders from Portugal, Hungary and the Netherlands.



JAS 39 GRIPEN (SWEDEN)

■ The Saab JAS 39 Gripen is a fourth-generation multi-role fighter developed by Sweden's Saab Group. A rival of the Rafale, the F-16 and the Eurofighter Typhoon, it is known for its agility, advanced avionics and cost-effectiveness. It is used by the Swedish Air Force and exported to countries such as Brazil, Hungary, Czech Republic, Thailand and South Africa.



AIRBUS A330 MRTT (USED BY 15 NATIONS)

■ The Airbus A330 MRTT (multi-role tanker transport) is an air-to-air refuelling and transport aircraft developed by Airbus. It can carry troops, tankers, and large amounts of materiel. It is used by over 15 countries, including the UK, Australia, Germany and France. It can act as a supporter for fighter jets and bombers due to its wide operational ability.



AIRBUS A400M ATLAS (GERMANY)

■ The largest aircraft at Aero India 2025 is Airbus A400M Atlas, a military transport plane operated by the German Air Force. The A400M has a payload of 37 tonnes and is faster than a traditional transport plane. It can carry choppers and armoured vehicles, and run on unprepared runways.

REPORT AND PHOTOS BY KIRAN PARASHAR

Drone and Tech Innovations

- 1) Zen Technologies showcased Vyom Kavach, an AI-powered anti-drone system, and Remote-Controlled Weapon Systems for precision targeting.
- 2) Adani Defence displayed futuristic warfare tech, including AI-driven defence solutions.

Picture of the Day: Rasika Arts of Vitla

About the Art

- 1) **Event and Occasion:** The performance took place during the annual car festival at the Sri **Veeranarayana Temple in Mangaluru, Karnataka**.
- 2) **Art Form:** The dance is called **Keelu Kudure**, meaning "horse on false legs," a traditional folk art of Karnataka.
- 3) **Performers:** Artists from **Rasika Arts of Vitla** showcased their talent in this vibrant and culturally significant dance form.
- 4) **Performance Style:** The dancers wear costumes that create the illusion of riding a horse, with colorful attire and rhythmic movements adding to the visual appeal.

Free rein



Annual ritual: Artists of Rasika Arts of Vitla perform the 'Keelu Kudure' (horse on false legs) dance at the Sri Veeranarayana temple, on the occasion of an annual temple car festival, in Mangaluru on Thursday. H.S. MANJUNATH

Picture of the Day: Aurora Australis

Aurora Australis Captured from the ISS

The image, taken on February 1 by cameras aboard the International Space Station (ISS), shows the aurora australis (southern lights) at an altitude of 419 km southwest of Western Australia.

BIG SHOT



What Causes Auroras?

- 1) Auroras are caused by collisions between charged solar particles and Earth's magnetic field.
- 2) These particles excite atmospheric gases, producing light.
- 3) The green glow in the image is due to oxygen molecules at altitudes of 100–300 km.

This phenomenon is a vivid reminder of the dynamic relationship between Earth and the Sun.

An image of an aurora was captured by cameras onboard the International Space Station on February 1 at an altitude of 419 km southwest of the coast of Western Australia. Its location makes this an example of aurora australis — the southern lights. NASA

Picture of the Day: Jhumoir Binandini dance
Jhumoir Binandini 2025: Record attempt

A Assam state-led cultural festival celebrating 200 years of Assam's tea industry, featuring a Guinness World Record attempt with 8,648 performers.

Main Event: Scheduled for Monday, February 24, 2025.

Special Attendance:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the main event.



Women rehearsing for a mega Jhumoir Binandini dance event in Guwahati on Friday, in an attempt to set a world record. The main event on Monday is scheduled to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. PTI

About Jhumoir dance

- 1) **Roots:** Traditional folk dance of Assam's tea-tribe communities (Adivasi groups), also practiced in parts of West Bengal.
- 2) **Historical Purpose:** Originated as a recreational activity during breaks from agricultural labour, later evolving into ritual worship, courtship, and seasonal celebrations like harvests.
- 3) **Dancers:** Primarily performed by young girls in open fields or under trees, linked at the waist and moving synchronously.
- 4) **Musical Accompaniment:** Rhythmic beats from instruments like **Madal** (drum), **flute**, and **Taal** (cymbals), played by male performers.
- 5) **Themes:** Songs and dialogues reflect everyday joys, sorrows, and aspirations of tea-garden communities.
- 6) **Key Celebrations:** Performed during **Karam Puja** and **Tushu Puja**, week-long festivals honouring deities like **Karam Raja**.
- 7) **Seasonal Timing:** Traditionally associated with the autumn harvest season

Picture of the Day: Mount Etna, Italy
Key Details

Volcanic steam and ash are rising from Europe's highest and most active volcano.

Location: **Mount Etna, Italy.**

Tourist Warning: Rescuers caution that tourists climbing the volcano at night in sneakers and light clothing to view the eruption are risking their lives.

BIG SHOT


Volcanic steam and ash rise from Mount Etna, Italy, on February 22. Tourists climbing Europe's highest and most active volcano at night in sneakers and light clothing to get a close-up view of an ongoing eruption may be risking their lives, rescuers warned, Reuters.

FACTS OF THE DAY

February 2025

Fact of the Day: The rise and rise of UPI payments [Link](#)

India's digital payments ecosystem has experienced exponential growth over the past decade, driven primarily by the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

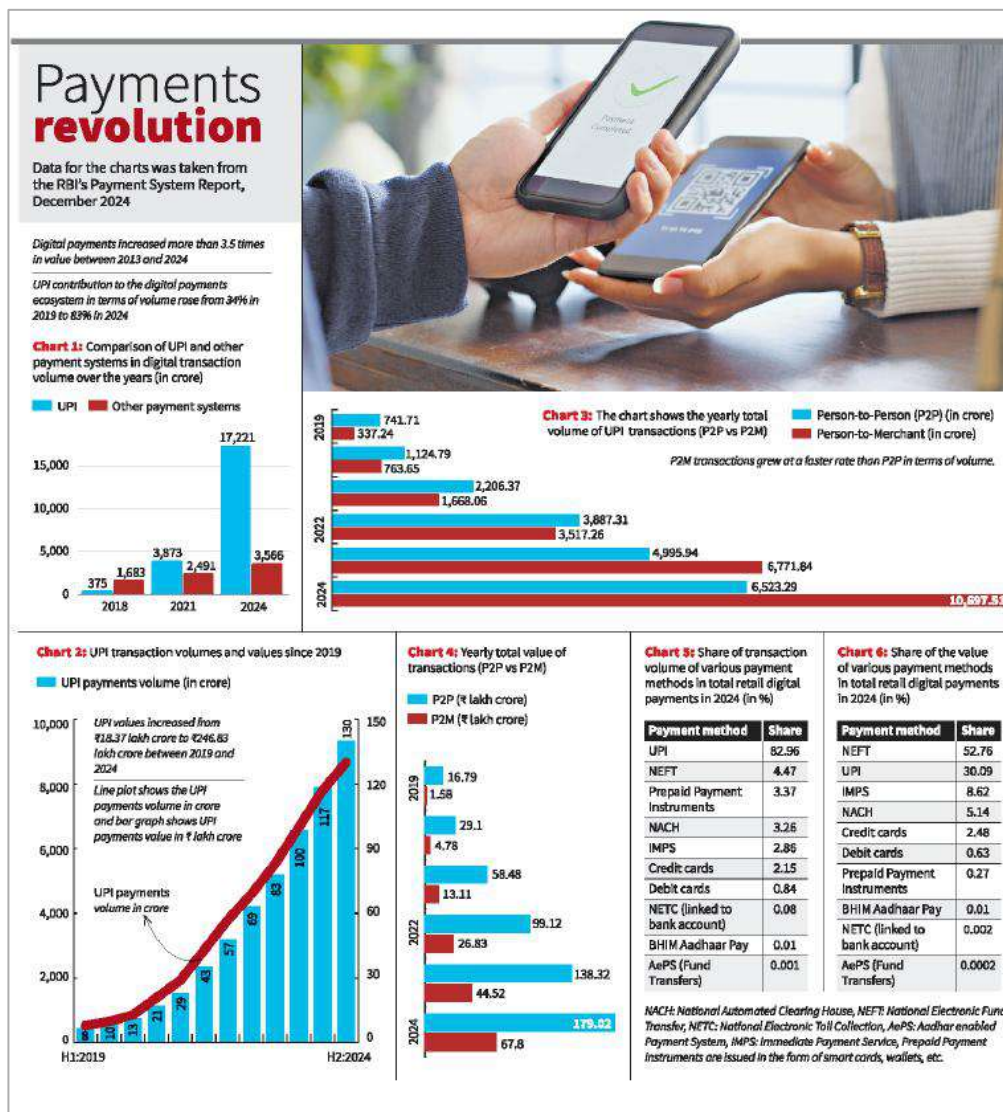


Chart 1: UPI vs Other Payment Methods (2018-2024)

- UPI's share in digital payment volumes surged from **34% (2019)** to **83% (2024)**
- UPI transactions grew **46× in volume (375 crore to 17,221 crore)** between 2018-2024
- Non-UPI digital payments **doubled to 3,566 crore** transactions in same period
- 10× overall growth** in digital payments (2,0787 crore transactions in 2024 vs 2018)

Chart 2: UPI Transaction Trends (2019-2024)

- Volume skyrocketed **16× (1,078.75 crore to 17,220.80 crore)**
- Value increased **13.4× (₹18.37**

lakh crore to ₹246.83 lakh crore)

- Demonstrates compound **annual growth rate of 68.7%** in value terms

Charts 3 & 4: P2P vs P2M Transactions

- Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions growing faster than P2P in volume
- P2M adoption reflects deepening merchant acceptance nationwide
- Indicates UPI's evolution from peer transfers to commerce enabler

Charts 5 & 6: 2024 Payment Method Share

- UPI dominates **83% of transaction volume** but only **30% of value**
- Non-UPI systems (RTGS, NEFT, cards) handle **70% of transaction value**

- 3) Highlights UPI's role in high-frequency, low-value transactions

Contextual Growth:

- 1) **Digital payment value grew 3.5×** (2013-2024) from ₹772 lakh crore to ₹2,758 lakh crore
- 2) **Last 5 years saw 6.7× volume growth** despite being post-demonetization era
- 3) UPI emerged as primary driver with **17,221 crore transactions (2024) vs initial 375 crore (2018)**

Facts of the Day: IE – The PLI push: \$1 billion over 3 years to 19 firms, fuels record surge in handset exports [Link](#)

Why in News? The PLI scheme disbursed \$1 billion (₹8,700 crore) over three years (2022–25) to 19 smartphone manufacturers, driving India's mobile exports to a record \$13.1 billion (April–Nov 2024) and securing the highest FY26 budget allocation (₹8,885 crore) among all PLI schemes.

About PLI Scheme for Smartphone Manufacturing

- 1) Launched in 2020 with ₹38,601 crore outlay, offering 4–6% incentives on incremental sales over base-year production.
- 2) Aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing, exports, and job creation.

FOR MAKE IN INDIA FOR THE WORLD

Company name	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Samsung India Electronics	NIL	407.98	957.93	1,365.91
Foxconn Hon Hai	357.17	2450	NIL	2,807.17
Pegatron Technology	NIL	844.98	879.38	1,724.36
Tata Electronics (formerly Wistron)	952.62	274.37	840.52	2,067.51
Padget Electronics	261.2	202.58	132.22	596
14 other entities	73.36	45.99	19.65	139
Total	1,644.35	4,225.9	2,829.7	8,699.95

(Figures in Rs cr)

Source: RTI

Success

- 1) **Export surge:**
 - a) iPhone exports: Crossed ₹1 lakh crore in 10 months (April 2024–Jan 2025), up 30% YoY.
 - b) Handsets: Became India's 2nd-largest export category; FY25 target set at \$20 billion.
- 2) **Production growth:** Annual output rose from 60 million units (2014–15) to 330 million (2023–24), valued at ₹4.22 lakh crore.
- 3) **Employment:** Created 1.22 lakh direct jobs in smartphone manufacturing.

Challenges

- 1) **Domestic firms:** Lava, Bhagwati, and Optimus failed to meet PLI targets.
- 2) **Investment gaps:** Actual investments (₹8,282 crore) fell short of commitments (₹11,324 crore).
- 3) **Supply chain:** Heavy reliance on imported components (e.g., semiconductors) persists.

FY26 Focus: The scheme's increased budget aims to address bottlenecks and solidify India's position as a global smartphone hub.



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Facts of the Day: IE – Silent Revolution: Drop in unschooled mothers from 47% to 29% in 8 yrs [Link](#)

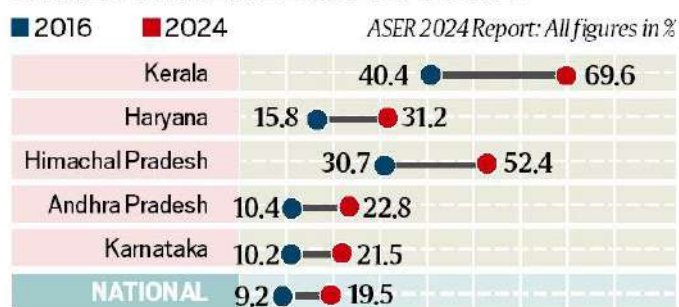
Why in News? ASER 2024 highlights a 18% decline in unschooled mothers (47% in 2016 to 29% in 2024), driven by decades of education reforms like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Reduction in Unschooled Mothers: 47% in 2016 to 29% in 2024
1) National trends:

- Mothers educated beyond Class 10 rose from 9.2% (2016) to 19.5% (2024)
- Fathers' post-Class 10 education increased from 17.4% to 25% (gender gap narrowed to 5%)

2) State performance: Growth % in mothers who studied beyond class 10

- Kerala: +29% (40% to 69.6%), Himachal Pradesh: +22% (30.7% to 52.4%)
- Madhya Pradesh: Lowest at 9.7% (up from 3.6% in 2016)
- Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, UP, Uttarakhand, and WB saw >10% growth

STATES WITH THE BIGGEST JUMPS

Impact on Education Outcomes
1) Child learning:

- Class 3 reading levels in govt schools rose from 16.3% (2022) to 23.4% (2024)
- Maternal literacy linked to +0.073 SD in child math scores and +0.053 SD in language skills.

2) Health & survival:

- Under-5 mortality drops with maternal secondary education.
- Higher immunization rates (e.g., iron supplementation, ANC visits) among educated mothers.

Policy Drivers

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Since 2001):** Universalized elementary education, enabling today's young mothers' schooling.
- Anganwadi expansion:** Over 50% of 3–4-year-olds enrolled in rural pre-primary centers.
- Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) & Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Improved maternal health access, indirectly boosting education uptake.

Challenges

- Regional disparities:** MP, Bihar, and Rajasthan lag in maternal education and child health metrics.
- Healthcare gaps:** Overcrowded facilities, unhygienic conditions, and staff shortages hinder service quality.
- Girls' education:** 8.1% of rural girls (15–16 yrs) remain unenrolled, rising in MP (16.1%) and UP (15%)

Takeaway: Maternal education gains reflect India's long-term policy focus, yet equity gaps persist. Prioritizing secondary education for girls, rural infrastructure, and WASH facilities is critical to sustain progress.

Facts of the Day: Number of Internet shutdowns highest in 2024 globally, India tops in govt-ordered curbs [Link](#)

Why in News? India recorded 84 government-imposed internet shutdowns in 2024, contributing to a global all-time high of 296 shutdowns.

India's shutdown trends

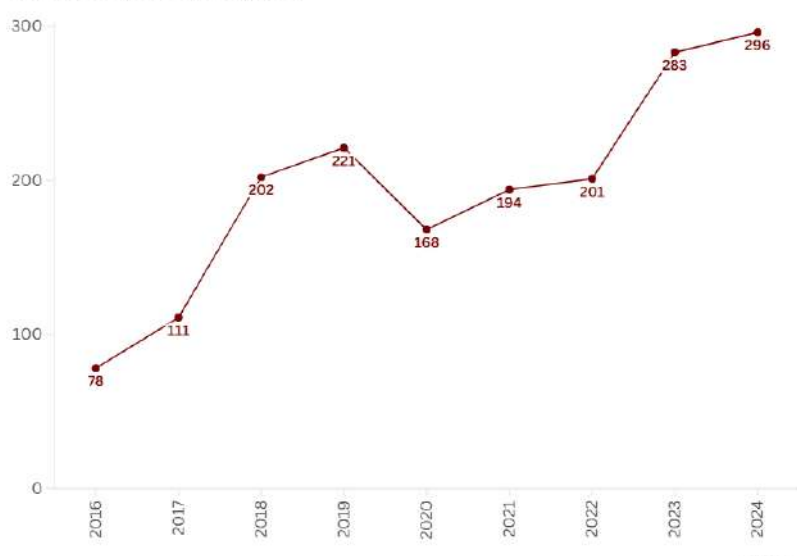
- 1) **Decline:** Fewer shutdowns compared to 2023.
- 2) **Regions affected:** 16 states/UTs, with Manipur (21), Haryana (12), and J&K (12) as top offenders.
- 3) **Causes:** 41 shutdowns linked to protests, 23 to communal violence.

Global context

- 1) Myanmar reported 85 shutdowns (including 11 by foreign entities/groups).
- 2) China, Thailand, and Myanmar's exiled groups imposed additional shutdowns in conflict zones.

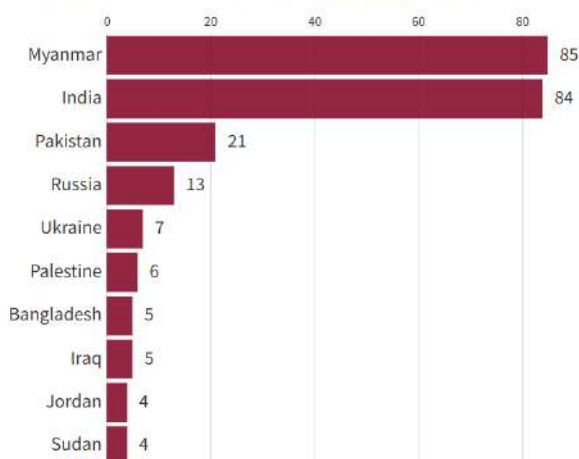
Exam-related shutdowns

- 1) 5 shutdowns enforced during recruitment exams (e.g., Jharkhand, Assam, Rajasthan).
- 2) Criticized as "disproportionate" responses to prevent cheating.

Internet shutdowns by year


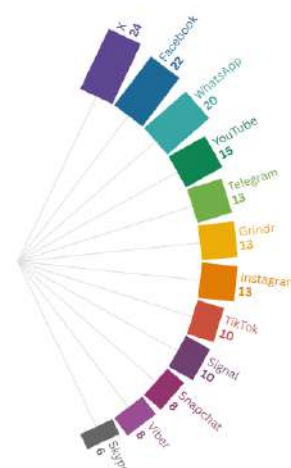
Source: Access Now

THE HINDU

Top 10 countries with most no. of Internet shutdowns in 2024


Source: Access Now

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Shutdowns of platforms


Source: Access Now

THE HINDU

KEYWORD OF THE DAY

February 2025

Keyword of the Day: Carbon Capture [Link](#)

Why in News? A February 2025 study found carbon capture deployment incurs 9–12× higher social costs than switching entirely to renewables like wind, water, and solar.

What is Carbon Capture?

- 1) **Technology:** Extracts CO₂ from emission sources (e.g., power plants) or the atmosphere, converts it, and stores it.
- 2) **Purpose:** Part of climate mitigation efforts to reduce atmospheric CO₂ levels.

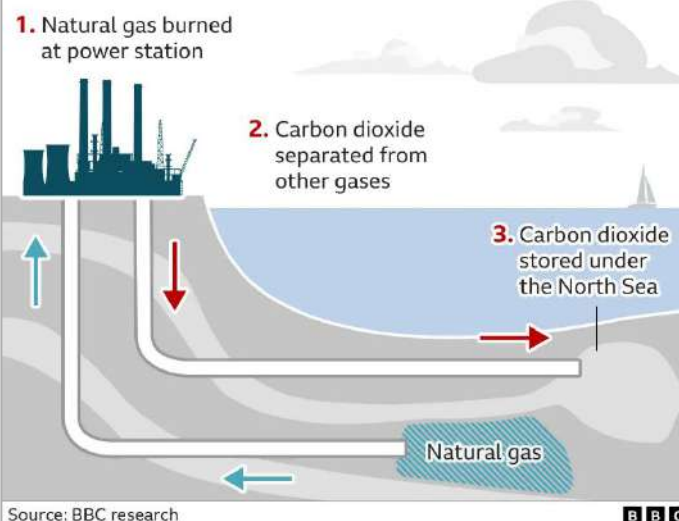
Cost Comparison: CCS vs. Renewables

- 1) **CCS costs:** Policies promoting carbon capture in 149 countries face significantly higher expenses compared to renewable adoption.
- 2) **Renewables:** Wind, water, and solar transitions are more economically viable for reducing emissions.

Controversy Around CCS

- 1) Critics argue CCS could enable continued fossil fuel use by creating "room to pollute".
- 2) Questions about long-term efficacy and prioritization over renewable energy transitions.

Carbon capture and storage



Keyword of the Day: Constitutional Morality [Link](#)

Why in News? The Indian Supreme Court revitalized constitutional morality as a legal principle in landmark judgments like Navtej Singh Johar vs UOI (2018) and Joseph Shine vs UOI (2018) to address issues ranging from LGBTQ+ rights to women's temple entry.

Origins of Constitutional Morality

- 1) **George Grote's conceptualization:**
 - a) Defined as a "rare and difficult sentiment" requiring reverence for constitutional forms/procedures.
 - b) Emphasized civic culture combining public reason, self-restraint, and critique.
 - c) Argued democratic stability depends on citizens viewing constitutional rules as sacred, even during political disagreements.
- 2) **B.R. Ambedkar's adaptation:**
 - a) Highlighted constitutional morality as essential for India's democracy, calling it an ideal needing active cultivation.

'CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY'

VITAL TO DEMOCRACY, SAYS DR AMBEDKAR

TRIVANDRUM, June 9. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Minister for Law, in the Government of India, declared here today that constitutional morality was far more important than the constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar, who was addressing a public meeting at the Legislative Chamber, said if the parliamentary system of Government was to succeed both the people and the Governments should observe certain morals or conventions of the constitution.

Pertaining to the people, he said, these fundamentals were: respect for the form of Government, obedience to law, habit of free thinking and observance of the rule of the majority.

Similarly, Governments should follow the constitutional moralities of willingness to surrender power peacefully when they had lost confidence of the majority, respect for minority and impartial administration.

Constitutions had failed, Dr. Ambedkar said, because they had no relation to constitutional morality, because they were merely a sort of super-structures framed purely on the basis of theory without reference to the thoughts, ways and inter-relations of the different element composing the society.

- b) Warned against perverting constitutional spirit through administrative overreach despite formal adherence.

Key Nuances

- 1) **Process over outcomes:** Demands non-transactional adherence to constitutional processes, even when results contradict personal beliefs.
- 2) **Balancing reverence and reform:**
 - a) Encourages critique of constitutional operations while respecting established procedures.
 - b) Contrasts with Habermas' "constitutional patriotism" by rejecting singular identity politics.
- 3) **Guard against fundamentalism:**
 - a) Promotes mature engagement with constitutionalism, blending stability with adaptability.
 - b) Prioritizes self-restraint to preserve democratic freedoms.

Keyword of the Day: Article 101 (4) [Link](#)

Why in News?
 Incarcerated Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh faces potential seat vacation under Article 101(4) of the Constitution due to prolonged absence from Parliament while detained under the National Security Act (NSA).

Key Constitutional Provision: Article 101(4): Allows Parliament to declare an MP's seat vacant if absent for 60 days without permission. Excludes periods when the House is adjourned for over four days.

101. Vacation of seats.—(1) No person shall be a member of both Houses of Parliament and provision shall be made by Parliament by law for the vacation by a person who is chosen a member of both Houses of his seat in one House or the other.

(2) No person shall be a member both of Parliament and of a House of the Legislature of a State, and if a person is chosen a member both of Parliament and of a House of the Legislature of a State, then, at the expiration of such period as may be specified in rules made by the President, that person's seat in Parliament shall become vacant, unless he has previously resigned his seat in the Legislature of the State.

(3) If a member of either House of Parliament—

(a) becomes subject to any of the disqualifications mentioned in clause (1) or clause (2) of article 102, or

(b) resigns his seat by writing under his hand addressed to the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and his resignation is accepted by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be,

his seat shall thereupon become vacant:

Provided that in the case of any resignation referred to in sub-clause (b), if from information received or otherwise and after making such inquiry as he thinks fit, the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, is satisfied that such resignation is not voluntary or genuine, he shall not accept such resignation.

(4) If for a period of sixty days a member of either House of Parliament is without permission of the House absent from all meetings thereof, the House may declare his seat vacant:

Provided that in computing the said period of sixty days no account shall be taken of any period during which the House is prorogued or is adjourned for more than four consecutive days.

Legal Precedent & Process

- 1) **Leave Committee:** MPs can seek permission from the parliamentary panel for absences, often granted for reasons like illness or detention.
- 2) **No historical precedent** of Article 101(4) being invoked to vacate a seat.

Amritpal's Legal Challenges

- 1) **Petitions Filed:**
 - a) Requested Punjab & Haryana HC to attend Parliament, citing constitutional rights and voter representation.
 - b) Challenged NSA detention as "politically motivated" and violating free speech.
- 2) **Cited Delhi HC's precedent** allowing custody parole for jailed MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh to attend Parliament.

Keyword of the Day: Stagflation [Link](#)

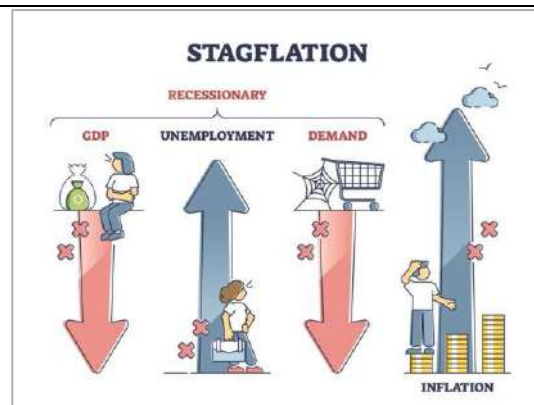
Why in News? President Trump's aggressive tariff proposals and persistent 3% inflation are sparking renewed stagflation fears reminiscent of the 1970s.

Explainer: Stagflation

Stagflation refers to an economic scenario combining **stagnant growth** and **high inflation**, creating a challenging policy environment. Key points from recent developments:

Core Characteristics

- 1) **Dual crisis:** Simultaneous occurrence of slowing economic growth and persistently high inflation
- 2) **Historical context:** Last seen prominently in the 1970s U.S., triggered by oil price shocks and supply constraints

**Current Triggers (2025) of Stagflation**

- 1) **Trade policies:** Tariffs act as a "tax on consumers," potentially stifling growth while keeping prices elevated
 - a) 10% tariffs on Chinese imports and 25% levies on autos/semiconductors
 - b) Global steel/aluminium tariffs threatening supply chains
- 2) **Inflation persistence in US:** Annual CPI at 3% (January 2025 data), fastest monthly rise since August 2023.

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Session 03	15-Feb	Geography
Session 04	22-Feb	Environment
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History, Art & Culture

February 2025

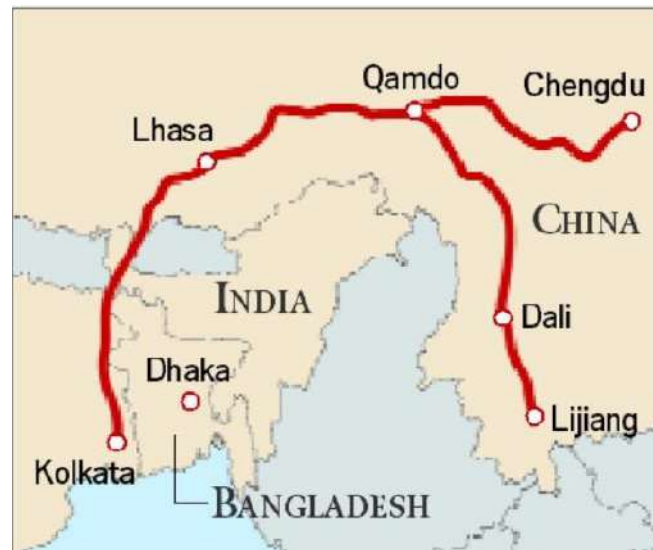
News / Explained / Explained History / The historic Tea Horse Road, connecting India and China through Tibet

The historic Tea Horse Road, connecting India and China through Tibet

Although not as well-known as the Silk Road, which linked China and Europe, the Tea Horse Road was a crucial commercial pathway for centuries

IE Explained; Rishika Singh;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History [Link](#)

Why in News? China's Ambassador to India Xu Feihong referenced the **Tea Horse Road** in a February 2025 X post, emphasizing its role in historical China-India exchanges.



Network of Roads

- 1) **Branching pathways:** Not a single route but a network spanning 2,000+ km from southwest China (Yunnan, Sichuan) to the Indian subcontinent (India, Nepal, Bangladesh).
- 2) **Key cities:** Passed through **Dali, Lijiang (China), Lhasa (Tibet)**, and Himalayan trade routes to **Kolkata**.
- 3) **Challenging terrain:** Included high-altitude passes (up to 10,000 feet) and perilous mountainous routes.

Origin & Historical Significance

- 1) **Tang Dynasty roots:** Emerged during **618–907 CE**, with Buddhist monk **Yijing** documenting early exchanges of sugar, textiles, and medicinal herbs.
- 2) **Song Dynasty formalization:** By the **10th century**, tea-horse trade became institutionalized, with border facilities regulating exchanges.
- 3) **Complementary trade:** Tibetan demand for tea (for nutrition in harsh climates) and China's need for horses (military/transport) drove the corridor.

Tea-Horse Trade Dynamics

- 1) **Tea as currency:** Compressed into portable "bricks," tea became a trade currency in Tibet.
- 2) **Military significance:** Tibetan horses bolstered Chinese armies against Mongol tribes, including Genghis Khan's predecessors.
- 3) **Cultural staple:** Yak butter tea—a salty, oily blend—served as a calorie-rich staple for Tibetan nomads.

Modern Relevance

- 1) **Qing Dynasty decline (1912):** Domestic turmoil and foreign invasions expanded

- Yunnan's tea industry via global market access.
- 2) **WWII role:** Transported supplies to Chinese battlefronts after Japan blockaded coastal areas.
 - 3) **Post-1949 decline:** Land reforms under Mao Zedong reduced reliance on porters and traditional trade.
 - 4) **Tourism revival:** UNESCO recognized Lijiang (1997) as part of the route, merging it with the Silk Road's legacy.

The Tea Horse Road remains a testament to ancient cross-cultural connectivity, now revitalized through historical tourism and academic interest.

News / Explained / Explained History / How Nadir Shah's victory in Battle of Karnal ended Mughal power in India

How Nadir Shah's victory in Battle of Karnal ended Mughal power in India

The Battle of Karnal, on February 24, 1739, saw Persian emperor Nadir Shah handing a crushing defeat to the forces of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah Rangila, effectively ending Mughal power in India

IE Explained;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History [Link](#)

Why in News? The **Battle of Karnal (February 24, 1739)** is remembered as the decisive event that ended Mughal dominance in India, with Nadir Shah's sack of Delhi weakening the empire permanently.



Structural weaknesses of the Mughal Empire predating the battle:

- 1) **Agrarian crisis:** Excessive taxation under Aurangzeb triggered peasant revolts, draining resources and destabilizing governance.
- 2) **Nobility issues:** Overexpansion of Mughal nobility led to corruption, infighting, and ineffective military administration.

- 3) **Regional rebellions:** Challenges from Marathas, Sikhs, Jats, and others eroded territorial control and revenue.

Battle of Karnal: Decisive Moments

Mughal weaknesses:

- 1) **Delayed response** to invasion (6-month gap between Nadir's advance and Mughal mobilization).
- 2) **Outdated tactics:** Reliance on war elephants and heavy cavalry vs. Persian swivel guns and disciplined musketeers.
- 3) **Leadership failure:** Emperor Muhammad Shah's indecisiveness and commander Sa'adat Khan's tactical blunders.

Nadir Shah's strengths:

- 1) Smaller (55,000 troops) but **technologically superior army**.
- 2) **Strategic brilliance:** Lured Mughal cavalry into a trap using feigned retreats and mounted artillery.

Consequences of the Battle

- 1) **Immediate impact:**
 - a) **Sack of Delhi:** 30,000 civilians massacred, women enslaved, and key areas like Dariba Kalan looted.
 - b) **Financial collapse:** Loss of the Peacock Throne, **Koh-i-noor diamond**, and 700 million rupees emptied the treasury.
- 2) **Long-term effects:**
 - a) **Erosion of authority:** Mughal emperors became nominal rulers, with real power shifting to regional kingdoms and later the British.
 - b) **Territorial losses:** Persian control over Sindh, Punjab, and Afghanistan weakened Delhi's geopolitical influence.

The battle exposed the Mughal Empire's fragility, accelerating its subjugation by regional and colonial powers until its formal end in 1857.

SPOTLIGHT: 2015 PYQ

"Nadir Shah's invasion of India in 1739 was the result of political, economic and strategic causes." Elaborate. (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

News / Explained / Explained History / How Savarkar's 'The Indian War of Independence 1857' gave a national character to the revolt

How Savarkar's 'The Indian War of Independence 1857' gave a national character to the revolt

The characterisation of the revolt of the sepoys in his 1909 book, although not universally accepted, has been influential in how the events of 1857 are viewed till date

IE Explained; By Arjun Sengupta;
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History [Link](#)

Why in News? Savarkar's 1909 book is being discussed on the 59th anniversary of his death (February 26, 1966), highlighting its role in redefining the 1857 revolt as a unified national struggle.



Savarkar's 'The Indian War of Independence 1857' was published in 1909

Redefining the 1857 Revolt

- 1) **Rejection of "Mutiny" narrative:** Savarkar dismissed British colonial terms like "Sepoy Mutiny," framing 1857 as India's first War of Independence driven by **principles of Swadharma (self-rule) and Swaraj (self-governance)**
- 2) **Nationalist historiography:** He countered British accounts, accusing them of bias, and presented a **"scientific" history** emphasizing pre-planned coordination among soldiers, princes, and civilians
- 3) **Symbol of unity:** Portrayed the revolt as a pan-Indian effort transcending regional/communal divides, with Hindus and Muslims uniting against colonial rule.

Ideological Framework

- 1) **Mazzini's influence:** Borrowed Giuseppe Mazzini's revolutionary framework to center

the revolt around motives (national liberation) rather than isolated events.

- 2) **Bakhar tradition:** Drew from Marathi historical narratives to present recurring patterns of resistance (e.g., Shivaji's legacy) as templates for future action.
- 3) **Nation-first approach:** Prioritized forging a collective consciousness over academic neutrality, urging Indians to "master" history for future struggles.

Forging National Consciousness

- 1) **Shared identity:** Called Hindus and Muslims **"children of the soil of Hindusthan,"** stressing a common motherland
- 2) **Critique of divisiveness:** Argued historical Hindu-Muslim conflicts (e.g., Shivaji vs. Mughals) were context-specific and irrelevant to 1857's unity
- 3) **Legacy for future movements:** Positioned the revolt as a blueprint for anti-colonial resistance, inspiring revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh

Critique of Nonviolence

- 1) **Opposition to Gandhi:** Rejected "absolute nonviolence" as immoral, arguing India's military decline stemmed from excessive pacifism (e.g., Ashoka, Buddha)
- 2) **Glorification of militancy:** Praised Maratha rulers (Shivaji, Baji Rao) for resisting "foreign" rule, contrasting them with Mughals/Akbar

Legacy and Criticism

- 1) **Banned but influential:** The book was prohibited in India until 1946 but circulated secretly, shaping revolutionary thought
- 2) **Historiographical debates:** Later scholars critiqued its selective sourcing and ideological bias, yet acknowledged its role in popularizing 1857 as a national struggle
- 3) **Hindutva vs. Hinduism:** Distinguished Hindutva (cultural-national identity) from Hinduism (religion), framing nationalism as transcending religious dogma

Savarkar's narrative remains contentious but pivotal in recasting 1857 as a foundational moment in India's anti-colonial consciousness, blending historical reinterpretation with militant nationalism.

News / Explained / Explained History / How Chandra Shekhar remained 'Azad' until the very end

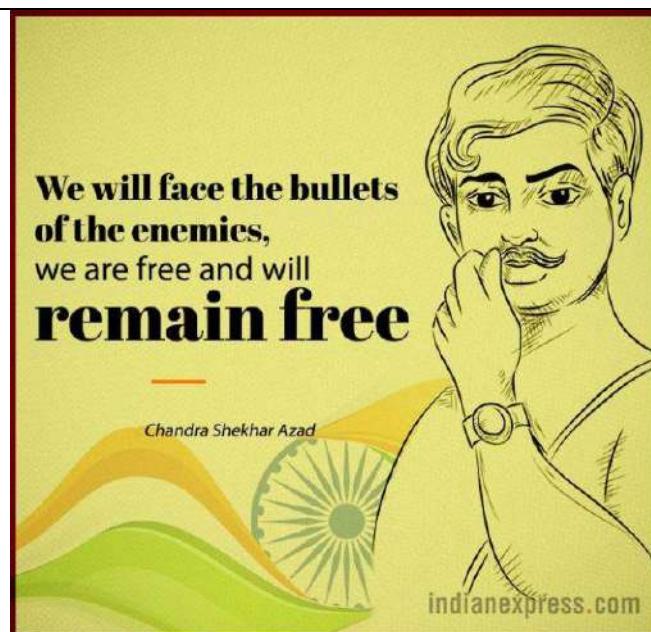
How Chandra Shekhar remained 'Azad' until the very end

The revolutionary freedom fighter had made a resolve to never be captured alive. So after being surrounded by police, and with only a single bullet left in his gun, Azad had only one option before him

IE Explained;

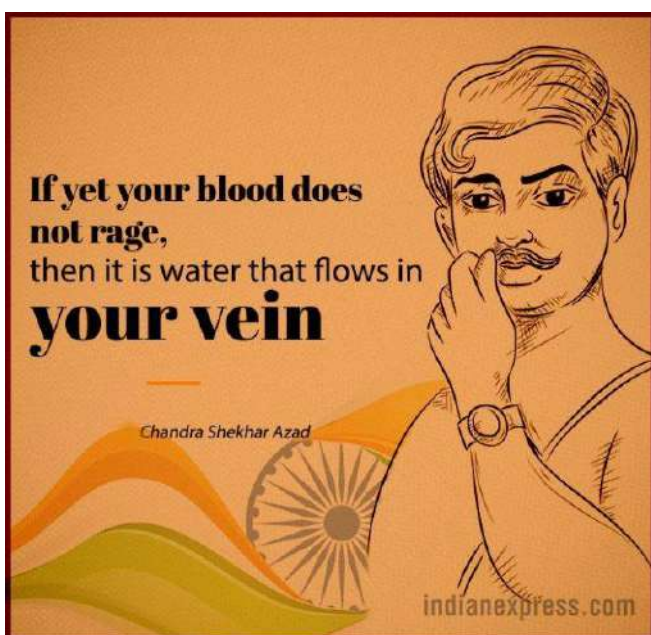
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History [Link](#)

Why in News? Chandra Shekhar Azad's martyrdom on February 27, 1931, is commemorated annually, with 2025 marking 94 years since his death.



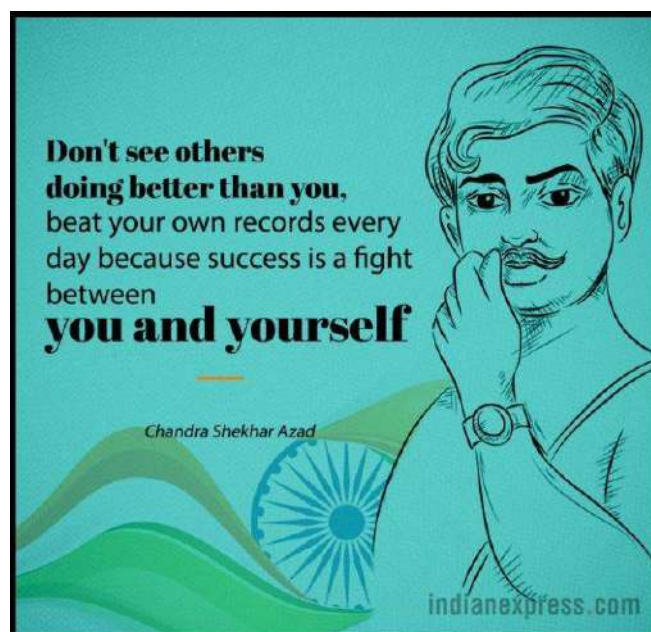
Transition to Revolutionary Activities

- 1) **Frustration with Gandhi:** Shifted to militancy after Gandhi halted the Non-Cooperation Movement (1922).
- 2) **HRA Involvement:** Joined Ram Prasad Bismil's Hindustan Republican Army (HRA), participating in the **Kakori Train Robbery (1925)** to fund anti-colonial activities.
- 3) **Escape and Reorganization:** Evaded arrest post-Kakori, reorganized revolutionaries, and later co-founded the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)** with Bhagat Singh.



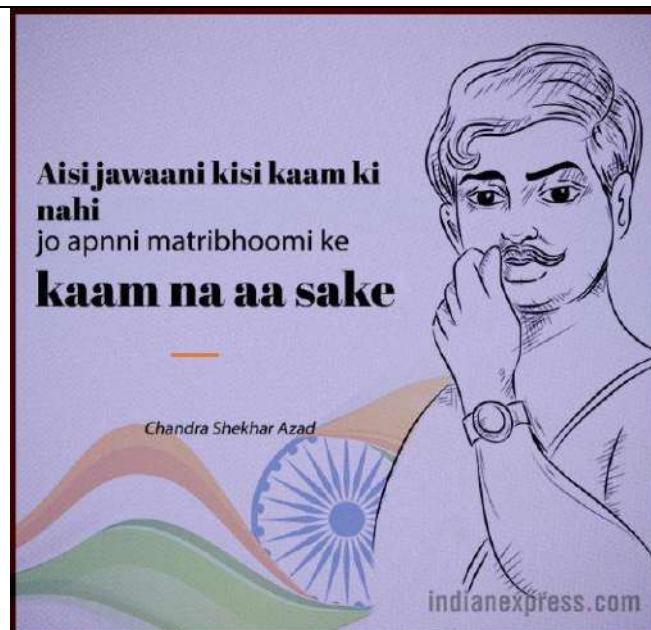
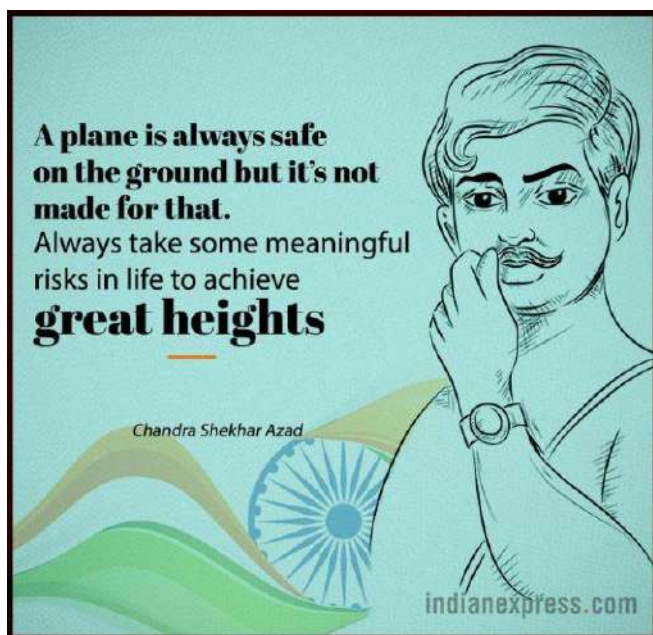
Early Life and Adoption of 'Azad'

- 1) **Birth and Poverty:** Born as **Chandra Shekhar Tiwari** in 1906 in Alirajpur (Madhya Pradesh), he grew up in poverty and left home at 15.
- 2) **Non-Cooperation Movement:** Joined protests in Benares during Gandhi's movement, leading to his arrest in 1921.
- 3) **Defiant Name:** Declared himself "Azad" (free) during court proceedings, resolving never to be captured alive.



Role in HSRA and Key Actions

- 1) **Military Strategist:** Trained revolutionaries, sourced arms, and led operations.
- 2) **Saunders Assassination (1928):** Avenged Lala Lajpat Rai's death by killing British officer John Saunders in Lahore.
- 3) **Assembly Bombing (1929):** Supported Bhagat Singh's bombing of the Central Assembly to protest repressive laws.



Final Stand and Death

- 1) **Last Meeting in Alfred Park:** Surrounded by police in Allahabad on February 27, 1931, while planning to rescue Bhagat Singh.
- 2) **Sacrifice for Freedom:** Fought until his last bullet, killing three policemen before shooting himself to avoid capture.
- 3) **Legacy:** Alfred Park was renamed **Chandra Shekhar Azad Park**, with a memorial marking his martyrdom.

Key Quote: "Our aim is to bring about a revolution which would end all exploitation... Inqalab Zindabad!" — HSRA pamphlet signed by Azad's pseudonym, Balraj.

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Which of the following was/were the founder member(s) of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) established in September 1928?

- 1) Bhagat Singh
- 2) Jatindranath Das
- 3) Ajoy Ghosh
- 4) Phanindranath Ghosh

Options:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 3, and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

Which of the following was/were associated with the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)?

- 1) Ramprasad Bismil
- 2) Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee
- 3) Sachin Sanyal

Options:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Polity & Governance

February 2025

When freedom came on Aug 15, 1947, AK Gopalan was in jail; his case a benchmark for personal liberty

In 1950, he moved the Supreme Court against his detention, perhaps hoping that the freedoms guaranteed by the new Constitution that came into force in 1950 would ensure his release from jail.

IE Frontpage, By Shaju Philip, Apurva Vishwanath

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History, Art & Culture [Link](#)

Why in News? The 1950 Supreme Court case AK Gopalan v State of Madras remains a benchmark for debates on personal liberty and preventive detention laws, recently highlighted in constitutional discussions.

Case Details

- 1) **Context:** Communist leader AK Gopalan challenged his detention under the Preventive Detention Act, 1950, arguing violations of Articles 21 (right to life/personal liberty) and 22 (protection against arbitrary arrest).
- 2) **Verdict:** A 6-judge bench upheld the law, ruling that “procedure established by law” (Article 21) meant parliamentary statute, not natural justice.
- 3) **Outcome:** Gopalan lost, but the case introduced procedural safeguards (e.g., informing detainees of detention duration).

Dissenting Opinion & Later Impact

- 1) **Justice Fazl Ali’s dissent:** Argued “law” in Article 21 must mean “valid law” aligned with natural justice, not arbitrary statutes.
- 2) **Vindication in 1978:** The Maneka Gandhi verdict adopted this dissent, establishing “due process” as essential for constitutional validity of laws.

Legacy & Significance

- 1) **Constitutional Evolution:** Highlighted tensions between state security and individual

rights, shaping judicial scrutiny of preventive detention.

- 2) **AKG’s Role:** A freedom fighter detained 17 years under British and Indian governments, his case symbolized post-Independence struggles against colonial-era laws.

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Discuss the evolution of the interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution through landmark judgments. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

News / India / Supreme Court to AG: After withholding assent, can TN Governor refer Bills to President?

Supreme Court to AG: After withholding assent, can TN Governor refer Bills to President?

A day before, the Supreme Court questioned Governor R N Ravi’s decision to withhold assent to the Bills.

IE Express Network

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? The Supreme Court is examining constitutional boundaries of gubernatorial powers under Article 200 after Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi withheld assent to state bills for prolonged periods.

Bills status: Out of 181 bills, 152 assented, 5 withdrawn, 9 reserved for President, 9 assent withdrawals, 5 pending (as of February 2025)

Constitutional Provisions under Article 200:

- 1) **Assent Options:** The Governor may
 - a) (a) grant assent,
 - b) (b) withhold assent,
 - c) (c) return the bill (except Money Bills) to the legislature for reconsideration, or
 - d) (d) reserve the bill for the President’s consideration.
- 2) **Reconsideration Process:** If a returned bill is repassed by the legislature (with or without amendments), the Governor must assent to it, eliminating further veto power.
- 3) **Mandatory Reservation:** Bills that endanger the constitutional position of the High Court must be reserved for the President’s review.

Legal Status and Judicial Interpretations:

- 1) **SC Ruling (2023):** Governors cannot indefinitely withhold assent without communicating reasons or returning the bill for reconsideration, as this violates constitutional principles.
- 2) **No Super-Legislator Role:** The Governor cannot act as a "super-legislature" by overriding the elected assembly's decisions after reconsideration.
- 3) **Timely Action:** The phrase "as soon as possible" in Article 200 implies Governors must act promptly, avoiding undue delays.

Court's focus on Tamil Nadu Governor

R.N. Ravi issue: Framed 11 constitutional questions on Article 200, including:

- 1) Can the Governor send a re-enacted bill to the President if he didn't do so initially?
- 2) Is the Governor's discretion to reserve bills for the President limited to specific categories, such as bills beyond state competence or repugnant to central laws?
- 3) What considerations should guide the Governor's decision to reserve a bill for presidential consideration?
- 4) What is the concept of pocket veto in relation to Article 200?
- 5) Does the phrase "shall declare" in Article 200 imply a time limit for the Governor's decision?
- 6) How should Article 200 be interpreted when the Governor returns a bill with a message for reconsideration?
- 7) Is the Governor bound to give assent when a bill is presented again after being initially withheld?
- 8) How should the President act when a bill is presented again after being returned on the President's direction?
- 9) Is the Governor mandatorily required to assent to a reconsidered bill, or is there a constitutional scheme in Article 201?
- 10) Can the Governor act as a "super-legislator" by indefinitely withholding bills without clear reasons?
- 11) Should the Governor provide specific reasons when withholding assent to a bill?

Arguments Against Governor RN Ravi

- 1) **Pocket veto unconstitutional:** Withholding assent without sending bills back to the

legislature violates Article 200, as per the Punjab Governor case precedent.

- 2) **Mandatory disclosure of reasons:** Returning bills without explaining objections is "anti-federal" and undermines legislative primacy.
- 3) **Delay in decision-making:** Taking 3 years to act on bills creates governance paralysis.
- 4) **Post-Punjab judgment defiance:** Withholding assent on November 13, 2023, days after SC's November 10 ruling against pocket veto, shows disregard for judicial authority.
- 5) **Invalid presidential reference:** Bills can only be sent to the President during the first consideration under Article 200, not after re-enactment.

Arguments Supporting Governor RN Ravi

- 1) **Discretionary powers:** Attorney General argued Governors aren't required to provide detailed justifications for withholding assent.
- 2) **Repugnancy concerns:** Bills allegedly conflicted with central laws under Article 254, justifying presidential referral.
- 3) **Procedural autonomy:** Contested the need for "essay-like explanations" when returning bills.
- 4) **Timing coincidence:** Denied deliberate defiance of Punjab judgment, calling the November 13 decision unrelated.
- 5) **Constitutional safeguards:** Asserted the Governor's role in preventing unconstitutional legislation.

The Supreme Court is examining whether Article 200 allows Governors to withhold assent indefinitely and whether presidential referrals require substantive reasoning.

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

Consider the following statements:

- 1) No criminal proceedings shall be instituted against the Governor of a State in any court during his term of office.
- 2) The emoluments and allowances of the Governor of a State shall not be diminished during his term of office.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

SPOTLIGHT: 2014 PYQ

Which of the following are the discretionary powers given to the Governor of a State?

- 1) Sending a report to the President of India for imposing the President's rule
- 2) Appointing the Ministers
- 3) Reserving certain bills passed by the State Legislature for consideration of the President of India
- 4) Making the rules to conduct the business of the State Government

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

News / Long Reads / In a new nation, when abolition of zamindari system was challenged in Supreme Court

 Premium

In a new nation, when abolition of zamindari system was challenged in Supreme Court

In this new series, The Indian Express tracks down the women and men who reshaped the Republic

IE Express Network; By Santosh Singh, Partha Paul, Apurva Vishwanath

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? This article tracks the story of Shankari Prasad Singh Deo, a zamindar who challenged the abolition of the zamindari system in the Supreme Court of India, marking a crucial moment in India's constitutional history.



Shankari Prasad Singh Deo at the Kashipur Palace. (Express Photo by Partha Paul)

Background: Abolition of Zamindari System

- 1) Independent India's first major social revolution was the abolition of the zamindari system, aimed at land reform and redistribution.
- 2) This initiative was challenged by zamindars who argued it violated their fundamental rights, particularly the right to property.

Patna High Court Ruling (1950)

- 1) The Patna High Court struck down the Bihar State Management of Estates and Tenures Act, 1949, deeming it unconstitutional.
- 2) The court argued the law violated zamindars' right to equality because land was taken without "just" compensation, infringing on fundamental rights.



Shankari Prasad Singh Deo's grandson plans to convert the palace in Kashipur into a hotel. (Express Photo by Partha Paul)

Nehru's Response: First Amendment to the Constitution (1951) – Introduced changes

- 1) **Articles 31A & 31B:** Protected land acquisition laws from being challenged on grounds of violating fundamental rights.
- 2) **Ninth Schedule:** Laws listed in this schedule were immune from challenges based on fundamental rights violations. The Bihar Land Reforms Act, 1950 was added to it.

Sankari Prasad's Challenge in Supreme Court (1951)

- 1) Shankari Prasad, a zamindar from Kashipur, challenged the First Amendment itself in the Supreme Court.
- 2) His arguments were:
 - a) The provisional Parliament's competence to amend the Constitution before the first Lok Sabha elections.

- b) Whether Parliament could amend the Constitution in a way that potentially violated fundamental rights (Article 13(2)).

Supreme Court's Verdict in Shankari Prasad Case (1951)

- 1) A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government, upholding the First Amendment.
- 2) The Court differentiated between:
 - a) Ordinary law (legislative power): Cannot violate fundamental rights.
 - b) Constitutional law (constituent power): No such restriction applies when amending the Constitution.
- 3) This meant Parliament had the power to amend fundamental rights through constitutional amendments.

Implications of the Ruling

- 1) The Shankari Prasad ruling established that fundamental rights were not absolute and could be amended by Parliament.
- 2) This led to further constitutional amendments and litigation concerning land reforms and property rights in the following years.
- 3) Concerns were raised that this ruling prioritized executive power over individual rights, with some viewing it as a departure from the intended protection of fundamental rights.

Later Developments and Basic Structure Doctrine

- 1) The Shankari Prasad ruling was initially affirmed in **Sajjan Singh v State of Rajasthan (1964)** but doubts were raised.
- 2) It was eventually reversed in **I C Golaknath v State of Punjab (1967)**, which initially restricted Parliament's power to amend fundamental rights.
- 3) Ultimately, the **Kesavananda Bharati ruling (1973)** established the "basic structure

doctrine," stating that constitutional amendments cannot violate the basic structure of the Constitution, which includes fundamental rights. However, land reforms were deemed to be outside of this basic structure.

Is appointing ad-hoc judges a viable means to reduce backlog?

 Premium

TH Opinion: By Aaratrika Bhaumik

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? The Supreme Court on January 30, 2025, permitted High Courts to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis to address the mounting backlog of cases, specifically authorizing them to hear criminal appeals as part of a bench led by a sitting judge.

About Ad-hoc Judges

- 1) **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - a) Article 127 (Supreme Court): Permits the Chief Justice of India to appoint High Court judges as ad-hoc SC judges during a lack of quorum, after consulting the HC Chief Justice and obtaining presidential consent.
 - b) Article 224A (High Courts): Allows the Chief Justice of a High Court (with the President's consent) to appoint retired High Court judges as ad-hoc judges to address case backlogs or vacancies.
- 2) **Eligibility:**
 - a) Supreme Court: HC judges qualified for SC appointment
 - b) High Courts: Retired judges of any HC
- 3) **Tenure:**
 - a) Duration: 2–3 years, extendable based on backlog
 - b) Limit: Up to 2–5 ad-hoc judges per HC, not exceeding 10% of the HC's sanctioned strength

Arguments for and against appointing ad-hoc judges as a viable means to reduce backlog

Arguments for	Arguments against
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Addresses the staggering backlog of 62 lakh cases in High Courts as of January 2025 2) Endorsed by the Supreme Court in 2021 and reaffirmed in 2025 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The appointment process requires presidential approval, making government cooperation crucial 2) Only three recorded instances of such appointments in the past, indicating a lack of traction

3) Does not interfere with the regular judicial appointment process 4) Expedites criminal appeals, potentially reducing overcrowding in jails 5) Ad-hoc judges serve for a limited term and do not compete with sitting judges for career progression 6) Can help address the issue of High Courts functioning below sanctioned strength 7) Appointments can follow a summary process as retired judges have already undergone rigorous vetting	3) May not adequately incentivize meritorious judges to return to the Bench due to more lucrative alternatives like arbitration or independent practice 4) Requires additional resources (personnel, infrastructure) which may strain the existing judicial system 5) Challenges in finding suitable candidates, especially senior lawyers, due to post-appointment practice restrictions 6) The effectiveness depends on the executive's willingness to cooperate and allocate necessary resources 7) Potential concerns about judicial independence, though these are debatable
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How does a President's rule function? | Explained

Why did the President of India issue a proclamation in Manipur after Chief Minister Biren Singh resigned? What are the different kinds of emergencies? Is a national emergency and President's rule the same? Has this power been misused by the Union?

TH Text & Context; By Kartikey Singh

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? President's rule has been imposed in Manipur on February 13, 2025, following Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's resignation and ongoing violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

Understanding President's Rule Constitutional Basis

- 1) Outlined in Article 356 of the Indian Constitution
- 2) Part of emergency provisions inspired by the German Constitution
- 3) Allows the Central government to address extraordinary crises in states

Implementation Process

- 1) President issues proclamation based on Governor's report or other information
- 2) Requires parliamentary approval within two months
- 3) Can be extended for up to three years under specific conditions

Effects on State Governance

- 1) Transfers executive functions to the Centre
- 2) Legislative functions move to Parliament
- 3) State Assembly placed under "suspended animation"
- 4) High Court powers remain unaffected

Comparison with National Emergency

- 1) National emergency (Article 352) differs in scope and implementation
- 2) President's rule does not affect fundamental rights, unlike national emergency
- 3) National emergency requires special majority for approval, while President's rule needs simple majority

Historical Context

- 1) Imposed 134 times across 29 States and UTs since 1950
- 2) Manipur ties with Uttar Pradesh for most frequent impositions (11 times)
- 3) Jammu & Kashmir holds record for longest cumulative duration (over 12 years)

Judicial Oversight

- 1) S.R. Bommai vs Union of India (1994) judgment redefined powers
- 2) Supreme Court established judicial review of President's rule
- 3) Emphasized use as last resort and prevention of political misuse

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

Which of the following are not necessarily the consequences of the proclamation of the President's rule in a State?

- 1) Dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly
- 2) Removal of the Council of Ministers in the State
- 3) Dissolution of the local bodies

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

News / Explained / Explained Politics / PM Modi, Amit Shah & Rahul Gandhi meet to appoint new Chief Election Commissioner; How the appointment process works, why it was changed

PM Modi, Amit Shah & Rahul Gandhi meet to appoint new Chief Election Commissioner: How the appointment process works, why it was changed

This marks the first time a selection panel has been set up to appoint the head of the country's election watchdog. Why was the appointment process changed and what happened earlier? We explain.

IE Explained; By Damini Nath, Ritika Chopra

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? PM Modi, Amit Shah, and Rahul Gandhi met on February 17, 2025, to appoint India's new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) under a revised selection process, sparking political dissent amid pending Supreme Court challenges.

Key Developments

- Retirement of Rajiv Kumar:** Outgoing CEC Rajiv Kumar retired on February 17, necessitating the appointment of his successor.
- Selection Committee Composition:** The panel included PM Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and LoP Rahul Gandhi, marking the first use of the 2023 Appointment Act.

Appointment Process

- New Law Framework:** The 2023 Act replaced the CJI with a Union Cabinet Minister in the selection panel, granting the government majority voting power.

- Shortlisting Mechanism:** A search committee led by the law minister proposed five candidates, with the selection panel retaining authority to consider additional names.



Concerns Raised

- Dissent by Rahul Gandhi:** The LoP submitted a dissent note urging deferment until the Supreme Court rules on petitions challenging the 2023 Act's constitutional validity.
- Pending Judicial Review:** The Supreme Court's February 19 hearing on the Act's legality could retroactively invalidate the appointment.

Next Steps: The President is expected to formalize the appointment ahead of the 2025 general elections, with Gyanesh Kumar (senior Election Commissioner) being a frontrunner.

Comparison of the CEC appointment processes:

Aspect	Pre-2023 Process	SC-Mandated Interim Process (2023-2023 Act)	2023 Act Process
Legal Basis	No parliamentary law; President's discretion under Article 324	Supreme Court judgment (Anoop Baranwal case)	Chief Election Commissioner Act, 2023
Appointing Authority	President (on PM's advice)	President (based on Selection Committee advice)	President (based on Selection Committee advice)
Selection Committee	None (executive-led)	PM + LoP + Chief Justice of India	PM + LoP + Union Cabinet Minister
Eligibility	Senior bureaucrats (convention)	Not specified by SC	Secretary-level bureaucrats with

			election management experience
Judicial Oversight	None	CJI included in committee	CJI excluded; replaced by Cabinet Minister
Search Committee	None	Not mandated by SC	Law Minister + 2 secretaries shortlist candidates
Primary Concern	Executive dominance	Independence via judicial balance	Government majority in committee

HOME / NEWS / INDIA

What is the 'rarest of rare' doctrine? | Explained

What was the sentence meted out to the accused in the R.G. Kar Medical College case and the Sharon murder case? How were they different from each other? Is the death penalty constitutionally valid? In what circumstances can the death sentence be given and does judicial discretion play a part in it?

TH Text & Context; By Smriti S;
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

- Inconsistency:** Similar crimes receive divergent sentences (e.g., Greeshma vs. Roy)
- Subjectivity:** Gendered perceptions (e.g., Kerala court's focus on Greeshma's "betrayal") and moral judgments influence outcomes.
- Lack of reform assessment:** Rare use of mental health/socio-economic evaluations.

Why in News? Recent contrasting verdicts in the RG Kar Medical College rape-murder case (life sentence) and Sharon Raj murder case (death penalty) reignited debates over inconsistent application of the death penalty under India's "rarest of rare" doctrine.

The 'Rarest of Rare' Doctrine

- Origin:** Introduced in **Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)**, mandating death penalty only when life imprisonment is "unquestionably foreclosed".
- Criteria:**
 - Aggravating factors:** Brutality, motive (e.g., terrorism), social impact, victim vulnerability (children, elderly)
 - Mitigating factors:** Potential for reform, mental health, socio-economic background
- No statutory definition:** Relies on judicial interpretation, leading to subjectivity.

Constitutional Validity of Death Penalty

- Upheld in **Bachan Singh (1980)** and **Jagmohan Singh (1973)**, provided it follows due process.
- Exceptions:** Mandatory death sentences (e.g., Section 303 IPC) struck down in **Mithu v. Punjab (1983)** for violating Articles 14 and 21.

Judicial Discretion & Challenges

- Role:** Judges balance aggravating/mitigating factors under **Machhi Singh (1983) guidelines**.
- Criticism:**

Global Context & Reforms

- Global trend:** 112+ countries abolished capital punishment; India retains it.
- Pending reforms:** 2022 Supreme Court referral to Constitution Bench for standardizing mitigating circumstance assessments.

The doctrine's ambiguity and judicial discretion create a **"lottery system"** in sentencing, underscoring the need for statutory clarity or abolition.

RG Kar Medical College Case

- Accused:** Sanjay Roy convicted of raping/murdering a junior doctor (August 2024).
- Sentence:** Life imprisonment (not "rarest of rare") due to:
 - Insufficient evidence of irreformability
 - No proven premeditation
- Court:** Highlighted need for balancing crime severity with offender's circumstances

Sharon Raj Murder Case

- Accused:** Greeshma poisoned her partner (October 2022) after failed engagement.
- Sentence:** Death penalty (classified as "rarest of rare") due to:
 - Extreme brutality and premeditation (23 Google searches on poisoning)
 - "Socially abhorrent" crime causing "psychosis among lovers"

- c) Court concluded she was “incapable of reform”

News / Long Reads / Is the law encroaching on rights? How a labour crusader's case led to SC laying out a 'test'

Premium

Is the law encroaching on rights? How a labour crusader's case led to SC laying out a 'test'

V G Row was a veteran trade unionist and co-founder of the renowned Row & Reddy, a Madras-based law firm that continued to champion the rights of workers.

IE Express Network; By Apurva Vishwanath

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? Anniversary of the landmark 1952 Supreme Court judgment in **State of Madras vs V G Row** that established the **proportionality test** for evaluating laws restricting fundamental rights.

Case Background

- Parties Involved:** Madras State challenged VG Row, secretary of the People's Education Society, declared unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908
- Allegations:** The Society was accused of aiding the Communist Party and posing a threat to public order

Key Legal Issues

- Violation of Fundamental Rights:**
 - The state's declaration restricted the right to form associations (Article 19(1)(c)) without judicial scrutiny
 - Procedural flaws included no formal notice to the Society, denying them a chance to contest
- Reasonableness of Restrictions:** The court emphasized that restrictions under Article 19(4) must be proportionate to state goals and subject to judicial review.

Judgement Highlights

- Proportionality Test:** The SC ruled that laws restricting rights must balance state interests and individual freedoms, preventing arbitrary executive action.
- Unconstitutional Provisions:** Struck down Section 15(2)(b) of the amended Act for lacking procedural fairness and judicial oversight.

- Judicial Scrutiny:** Stressed the necessity of courts evaluating both substantive and procedural reasonableness of restrictions.

Legacy and Impact

- Precedent for Anti-Terror Laws:** The proportionality test now guides assessments of laws like UAPA and anti-terror legislation.
- Labour Rights:** VG Row's advocacy also led to the Tamil Nadu Shops and Establishment Act, 1947, a model for national worker protections.
- Continued Influence:** The case remains a cornerstone for safeguarding fundamental rights against executive overreach.

This case redefined constitutional safeguards, ensuring restrictions on rights are neither disproportionate nor procedurally unjust.

SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements about constitutional jurisprudence in India:

- The "double proportionality" test requires balancing between two competing fundamental rights when restricting either.
- The V.G. Row test prohibits Parliament from enacting preventive detention laws under entries of the Union List.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Statement 1: Correct (recently applied in the Electoral Bonds case to balance Right to Privacy vs Right to Information).

Statement 2: Incorrect (V.G. Row never prohibited preventive detention; it only mandated proportionality).

SC stays Lokpal order giving itself jurisdiction over HC judges

The Supreme Court also issued a notice to the Union Government and sought the assistance of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and P.B. Suresh

TH Frontpage; By Krishnadas Rajagopal;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? SC stayed Lokpal's January 27, 2025 order asserting authority over High Court judges, terming it a **"very disturbing" interpretation**.

Key Developments

- 1) **Stay Order:** SC Special Bench (Justices Gavai, Kant, Oka) halted Lokpal's decision, stating it **undermines judiciary independence**.
- 2) **Notices Issued:** Centre, Lokpal Registrar, and complainant directed to respond by March 18 hearing.
- 3) **Confidentiality:** Complainant barred from disclosing the judge's identity or complaint details.

Lokpal's Rationale

- 1) **Historical Basis:** Argued High Courts were established by British-era Acts (e.g., Indian High Courts Act, 1861), not the Constitution.
- 2) **Public Servant Definition:** Cited **Section 14(1)(f) of Lokpal Act 2013**, claiming judges fall under "any person" in bodies created by Parliament.
- 3) **Distinction from SC:** Earlier ruled Supreme Court judges not under Lokpal's purview (January 3 order), as SC is a constitutional entity.

Supreme Court's Counterarguments

- 1) **Constitutional Mandate:** All judges appointed under the Constitution (Article 214 recognizes HCs but does not "establish" them).
- 2) **Judicial Independence:** Lokpal's interpretation risks external interference in judiciary.

This case **tests the balance between judicial autonomy and anti-corruption mechanisms**, with implications for accountability frameworks.

News / Political Pulse / What a government study reveals about the state of panchayats in India

W Premium

What a government study reveals about the state of panchayats in India

Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu have topped the Panchayat Devolution Index for 2024, while UP and Bihar have recorded the biggest improvements.

IE Express Network; By Anjishnu Das
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance

[Link](#)

Why in News? A 2024 government study highlights Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu as top performers in panchayat empowerment, while UP and Bihar show significant improvement.

Key Findings of the Panchayat Devolution Index 2024

- 1) **Top Performers**
 - a) **Top 3 States:** Karnataka (1st), Kerala (2nd), Tamil Nadu (3rd)
 - b) **Most Improved:** Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
 - c) **Lowest Ranked:** Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand
- 2) **National Progress**
 - a) Overall devolution score rose from **39.92 (2013-14) to 43.89/100 (2024)**
 - b) 18 states/UTs improved scores since 2014; 11 declined

The six parameters and top performing states

The index score is on a scale of 0 to 100

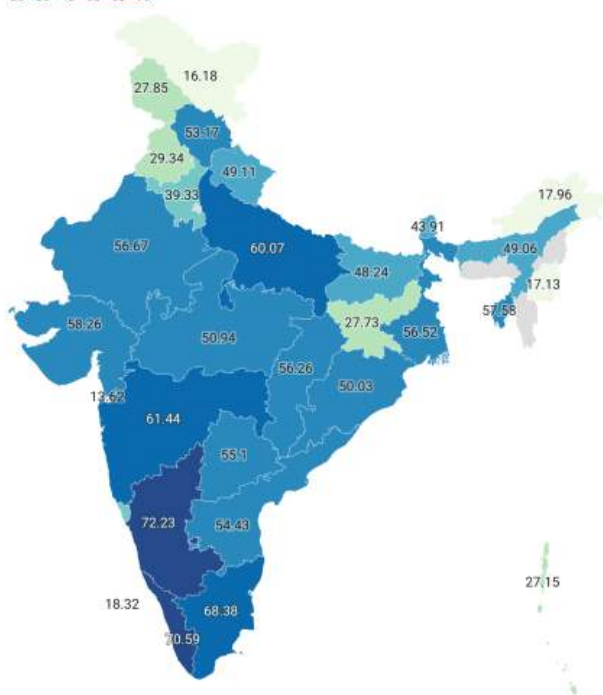
Parameter	Definition	Top state	Score
Framework	Whether the basic provisions mentioned in the Constitution are adhered to by states	Kerala	84
Functions	How panchayats fulfilled civic responsibilities, from sanitation and waste management to health and education	Tamil Nadu	60
Finances	Efficiency in the devolution of funds to panchayats and the sources of their funding, whether from their own revenues, borrowing, or from state and Central grants	Karnataka	71
Functionaries	Strength and performance of panchayat officials and the infrastructure available to them	Gujarat	91
Capacity Building	How states are expanding the knowledge and skills of panchayat officials to fulfil and take on more responsibilities	Telangana	86
Accountability	The framework in place to audit and monitor the functioning of panchayats	Karnataka	81

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj • Created with Datawrapper

How states fared on the devolution index in 2024

Panchayat Devolution Index score (0-100)

20 30 40 50 60 70



Note: Data not available for grayed out states

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj • Map data: © DSM • Created with Datawrapper

- b) 13% panchayats in Odisha have computers; none in Arunachal

3) Administrative Issues

- a) <20% states transferred all 29 Eleventh Schedule subjects to panchayats
- b) Bureaucratic interference and proxy governance ("Sarpanch Pati" culture)

4) Digital Divide: 14 states/UTs have 100% panchayat internet access vs 1% in Arunachal

Recommendations for Improvement

1) Policy Reforms

- a) Constitutional recognition for panchayat fiscal powers
- b) Mandatory transfer of all 29 subjects under Eleventh Schedule

2) Capacity Building

- a) Two-year training program in local governance
- b) Digital integration through e-Panchayat initiatives

3) Accountability Measures

- a) Real-time financial monitoring via PFMS
- b) Strengthened social audits and Local Government Ombudsmen

4) Electoral Reforms

- a) Independent authority for State Election Commissions
- b) Common electoral rolls to avoid duplication

The study underscores the need for coordinated efforts to achieve true grassroots empowerment, with southern states providing replicable models of decentralized governance.

SPOTLIGHT: 2015 PYQ

The fundamental object of the Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following?

- 1) People's participation in development
- 2) Political accountability
- 3) Democratic decentralization
- 4) Financial mobilization

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Representation in Panchayats

1) Women's Participation

- a) **National average:** 46.44% women representatives (up from 45.9% in 2013-14)
- b) **Top performers:** Odisha (61.5%), Himachal Pradesh (57.5%), Tamil Nadu (57.3%)
- c) 7 states/UTs (including MP, Punjab) fall below 50% reservation norms

2) Social Group Representation

- a) **SC:** Punjab leads (36.3%) | National avg: 18%
- b) **ST:** Chhattisgarh leads (41%) | National avg: 16.2%
- c) **OBC:** Bihar leads (39%) | National avg: 19.1%

Major Challenges Identified

1) Financial Constraints

- a) Only ₹10,761 crore released of ₹47,018 crore allocated (2023-24)
- b) Over-dependence on tied grants from central schemes

2) Infrastructure Gaps

- a) 5% panchayat offices pucca in Arunachal vs 100% in 7 states

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Assess the importance of the Panchayat system in India as a part of local government. Apart from government grants, what sources can the Panchayats look out for financing developmental projects? (250 Marks, 15 Marks)

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

To what extent, in your opinion, has the decentralisation of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots? (250 Marks, 15 Marks)

News / Explained / Explained Global / German Election Results 2025: The frontrunner, significance of these polls for Germany, Europe

German Election Results 2025: The frontrunner, significance of these polls for Germany, Europe

German Federal Election Results 2025: This election in Germany will reveal if one of Europe's major powers gets a stable government, the direction its failing economy could take, and how Berlin will deal with a Europe in turmoil and an unpredictable US.

IE Explained;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance
[Link](#)

political shifts and far-reaching implications for Europe.

Key Outcomes**1) CDU/CSU Victory:**

- Friedrich Merz's** center-right CDU/CSU alliance secured 28.5% of votes, positioning him to become Germany's next chancellor.
- This marks a return to conservative leadership after years of coalition instability.

2) Far-Right Surge:

- The AfD achieved its best-ever result (20.5%), doubling its 2021 vote share.
- Despite mainstream parties' "firewall" to exclude it from governance, the AfD's rise signals growing voter frustration with immigration policies and economic stagnation.

3) SPD's Historic Collapse:

- Chancellor Olaf Scholz's SPD plummeted to 16.5%—its worst post-WWII result—reflecting public discontent with the collapsed "traffic light coalition"

4) Record Voter Turnout: 83.5% participation, the highest since reunification, underscored the election's perceived urgency amid economic and geopolitical crises.

Why in News? The 2025 German federal election is making headlines due to its historic

Feature	German Basic Law (Grundgesetz)	German Basic Law (Grundgesetz)
Adoption Year	1949 (provisional), made permanent post-reunification in 1990	1950 (adopted in 1949, enacted on 26 January 1950)
Nature	Initially temporary; became permanent after reunification under Article 23	Permanent, written as a comprehensive document
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parliamentary democracy - Federal President (ceremonial) - Chancellor (executive head) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parliamentary federal republic - President (ceremonial) - Prime Minister (executive head)
Key Principles	Democracy, rule of law, federalism, social welfare state, and protection of human dignity	Sovereignty, socialism, secularism, democracy, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity
Federalism	16 federal states (Länder) with significant autonomy in policing, culture, and education	Federal system with a unitary bias; states have limited autonomy compared to the central government
Rights & Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fundamental rights (Articles 1–19) - Emphasis on human dignity as inviolable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fundamental Rights (Part III) - Directive Principles (Part IV) - Fundamental Duties (Part IV-A)
Judicial Review	Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) acts as the guardian of the Basic Law	Supreme Court enforces the Constitution; established the "Basic Structure Doctrine" in 1973
Amendment Process	Requires 2/3 majority in both Bundestag and Bundesrat. Articles 1	Requires parliamentary majority; some amendments need state ratification. No

	(human dignity) and 20 (democratic principles) are unamendable	unamendable parts, but "Basic Structure" is inviolable
Emergency Provisions	Limited provisions for legislative emergencies (Article 81)	Detailed emergency provisions (Articles 352–360) for national, state, and financial crises
Citizenship	Dual citizenship permitted under certain conditions	Single citizenship (no state citizenship)
Unique Features	- "Eternity Clause" (Article 79(3)) protects core principles - Strong federal council (Bundesrat)	- Longest written constitution globally - Blend of rigidity and flexibility in amendments

Key Differences

- 1) **Federalism:** Germany's Länder have more autonomy (e.g., education, policing) compared to India's states, which are subordinate to the central government in critical areas.
- 2) **Citizenship:** Germany allows dual citizenship, while India enforces single citizenship.
- 3) **Amendment Rigidity:** Germany's "Eternity Clause" explicitly bars changes to core principles, whereas India's "Basic Structure Doctrine" is a judicial innovation.
- 4) **Emergency Powers:** India's constitution provides extensive emergency provisions, unlike Germany's limited framework.

Similarities

- 1) Both emphasize democracy, rule of law, and judicial oversight.
- 2) Both blend federal and unitary elements, though India leans more toward centralization

Each has a bicameral legislature (Bundestag/Bundesrat in Germany; Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha in India)

News / Explained / Explained Politics / Why southern states are nervous about delimitation

Why southern states are nervous about delimitation

The Constitution mandates delimitation after every Census. But, the number of seats in Parliament, and the share of each state, has remained static since 1976. This is largely due to opposition from southern states

IE Explained; By Deeptiman Tiwary, Amitabh Sinha;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated southern states will not lose parliamentary seats during delimitation, addressing long-standing fears about reduced political influence.

Constitutional Mandate of Delimitation

- 1) **Legal requirement:** Constitution mandates seat redistribution after each Census to balance constituency populations.
- 2) **Historical freeze:** 42nd Amendment (1976) paused seat adjustments until 2001 to incentivize population control in high-growth states.
- 3) **Current status:** Seat numbers remain unchanged since 1976 due to southern states' resistance.

Southern States' Apprehensions

- 1) **Slower population growth:** Southern states' lower birth rates compared to northern states risk reducing their parliamentary share.
- 2) **Political marginalization:** Leaders like DMK's Kanimozhi and TMC's Mahua Moitra argue delimitation would skew power toward northern states.
- 3) **Economic implications:** Higher development indices in the south contrast with northern states' population-driven gains.

Projected Impact of Delimitation

Scenario	Southern States	Northern States
10.11 lakh/constituency base	TN: 76 seats (from 39)	UP: 250 seats (from 85)
20 lakh/constituency base	TN: No change; Kerala loses 2 seats	UP: 126 seats; Bihar: 85 seats
15 lakh/constituency base	TN: 52 seats; Kerala: 24 seats	UP: 168 seats; Bihar: 114 seats

Political Implications

- 1) **Regional parties:** Fear northern dominance could sideline southern issues
- 2) **Congress reliance:** Historically dependent on southern seats (e.g., 15/52 seats in 2019 from Kerala and TN)
- 3) **BJP advantage:** Stronghold in northern states could expand post-delimitation

SPOTLIGHT: 2024 PYQ

How many Delimitation Commissions have been constituted by the Government of India till December 2023?

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) Four

SPOTLIGHT: 2012 PYQ

With reference to the Delimitation Commission consider the following statements:

- 1) The orders of the Delimitation Commission cannot be challenged in a Court of Law.
- 2) When the orders of the Delimitation Commission are laid before the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly, they cannot effect any modification in the orders.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

News / Explained / Explained Law / Telangana Backward Classes quota: 3 SC judgements behind the 50% ceiling on reservations

Telangana Backward Classes quota: 3 SC judgements behind the 50% ceiling on reservations

The ruling Congress in Telangana is preparing to table a bill which will increase overall reservations in the state over the 50% limit, laid down by the Supreme Court in 1992.

IE Explained; By Ajoy Sinha Karpuram;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Three Landmark SC Judgements Shaping 50% Ceiling

- 1) **M R Balaji vs State of Mysore (1962)**
 - a) Struck down Mysore's 68% reservation in medical/engineering colleges
 - b) Introduced "reasonable limits" principle: Reservations "less than 50%" unless exceptional circumstances
- 2) **State of Kerala vs N M Thomas (1976)**
 - a) Upheld temporary exemptions for SC/ST employees in promotions
 - b) Challenged 50% rigidity: Called it a "rule of caution," not absolute
 - c) Hypothetically endorsed 80% quota if backward population justifies it
- 3) **Indra Sawhney vs Union of India (1992)**
 - a) Upheld 27% OBC quota under Mandal Commission
 - b) 50% ceiling formalized for SC/ST/OBC combined
 - c) Allowed exceptions for "extraordinary situations"

Historical Context: Ambedkar's Role

- 1) During Constituent Assembly debates, Ambedkar argued reservations must occupy "minority of seats"
- 2) Warned against 70% reservations compromising equality of opportunity
- 3) **Attempts to Breach 50% Ceiling**
 - a) **Failed attempts:**
 - i) Maharashtra's 2018 Maratha quota law (struck down in 2021)
 - ii) Bihar's 2024 quota hike (struck down by Patna HC)
 - b) **Exception:** Tamil Nadu's 69% quota (protected under 9th Schedule since 1993)

Current Legal Position

- 1) 50% ceiling remains binding unless states prove:
 - a) Exceptional circumstances
 - b) Quantifiable backwardness data
- 2) Judicial trend favors strict adherence post-2021 Maharashtra verdict

Why in News? The Telangana Congress government plans to table a bill in March 2025 to increase BC reservations from 25% to 42%, pushing total quotas to 62%.

News / Long Reads / Who is Champakam Dorairajan, the woman in a nine-yard sari who triggered the First Amendment?

W Premium

Who is Champakam Dorairajan, the woman in a nine-yard sari who triggered the First Amendment?


In another part of The Indian Express's ongoing series on 75 years of the Constitution, a look at how an upper-caste homemaker challenged the government's move on quota in educational institutions

IE Express Network; By Apurva Vishwanath;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance [Link](#)

Why in News? Champakam Dorairajan, a Brahmin homemaker from Madras, is in the news for her landmark 1951 Supreme Court case that led to India's First Constitutional Amendment enabling caste-based reservations in education.

1951

STATE OF MADRAS VS SRIMATHI CHAMPAKAM DORAIRAJAN



Case:

Champakam Dorairajan, a Brahmin woman from Chennai, challenged the state government's 1948 law providing for caste-based quotas for admission to educational institutions. The petitioner, who intended to apply to medical college, argued that the law violated her fundamental right to equality since, as a Brahmin woman, she had little chance of getting a seat. The Constitution provided for reservation in public employment but not expressly in college admissions. The SC struck down the law, prompting the government to introduce an express provision in the Constitution to allow affirmative action through the First Amendment.

Relevance today:

The first such decision on reservation, the ruling ignited a lasting debate on merit, equality, and discrimination — one that remains relevant today. The Court's textual approach in giving effect to the right to equality has now been revised to looking at reservations as a facet of the right to equality rather than an exception to the rule.

AN EXPRESS SERIES

Constitutional Significance

1) Challenged Communal G.O. (1948):

- a) Madras government reserved medical college seats by caste (**6/14 for non-Brahmin Hindus**)

- b) Dorairajan contested exclusion of Brahmins as **violation of equality rights**
- 2) **Supreme Court Ruling (1951):**
 - a) 5-judge bench **struck down quota policy** as unconstitutional
 - b) Held caste-based classification **violated Articles 14 (equality) and 15 (non-discrimination)**
- 3) **First Amendment (1951):**
 - a) Parliament added **Article 15(4)** to Constitution
 - b) Enabled reservations in education for backward classes/SC/STs

Legacy and Impact

1) Judicial Evolution:

- a) 1951 verdict initially prioritized fundamental rights over Directive Principles
- b) 2024 SC ruling criticized this approach as **"formalistic"**, allowing sub-classification of quotas

2) Enduring Debate: Case sparked 75-year discussion on merit vs social justice

This case remains foundational to India's reservation jurisprudence, illustrating the tension between individual rights and compensatory justice.

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

In India, which one of the following Constitutional Amendments was widely believed to be enacted to overcome the judicial interpretations of the Fundamental Rights?

- (a) 1st Amendment
- (b) 42nd Amendment
- (c) 44th Amendment
- (d) 86th Amendment



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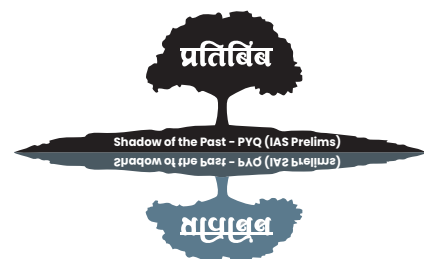
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Society & Social Justice

February 2025

NEWS / OPINION / COLUMNS / What AI could do in the classroom

Opinion by Ameeta Mulla Wattal

What AI could do in the classroom

Schools must find ways to use it to assist, not replace, natural learning

IE Editorial, By Ameeta Mulla Wattal

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Social Justice

[Link](#)

Why in News? The 2025 World Economic Forum's theme, "Collaboration for the

- 3) adaptive learning persist, especially for marginalized communities.
- 4) **Overemphasis on Rote Learning:** Traditional systems prioritize memorization over creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- 5) **Disconnect Between Intelligence & Consciousness:** Intelligence (problem-solving, reasoning) dominates curricula, while consciousness (empathy, imagination, ethics) is neglected.
- 6) **Teacher Preparedness:** Educators lack training to integrate AI tools ethically or address AI-generated errors ("hallucinations").
- 7) **Fragmented Community Partnerships:** Schools struggle to collaborate with parents, NGOs, and governments to enhance learning ecosystems.

AI's Role in Classrooms

- 1) **Upskill Educators:** Train teachers to use AI for personalized learning, student engagement analysis, and content curation.
- 2) **Equitable Access:** Governments and schools must prioritize AI infrastructure in underserved regions to bridge the digital divide.
- 3) **Consciousness-Driven AI Tools:** Develop AI systems that complement human traits (e.g., empathy, ethics) rather than replacing them.
- 4) **Community Collaboration:** Partner with NGOs and parents to create inclusive AI policies and address disengagement.
- 5) **Scenario Planning for BANI Future:** Adopt Jamais Cascio's BANI framework to prepare for unpredictable futures through flexible curricula.

Intelligent Age", emphasized integrating AI into education to address global challenges and transform learning ecosystems.

Challenges in Modern Education Systems

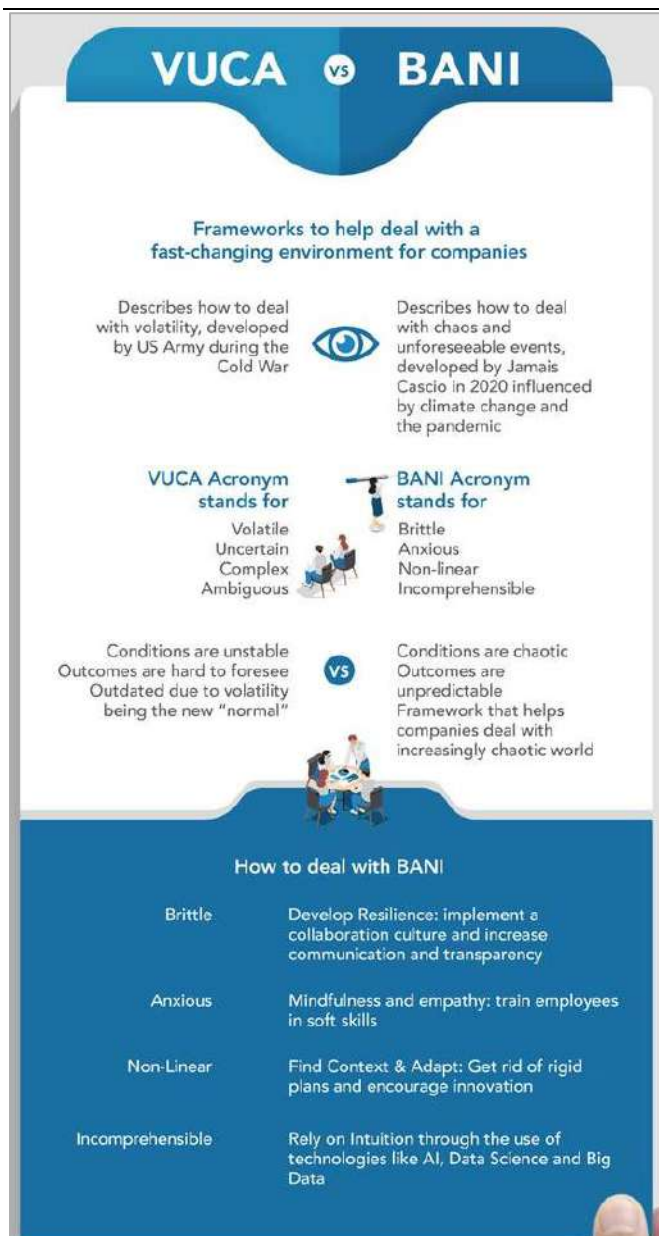
- 1) **Inadequate Focus on Societal Crises:** Schools fail to nurture students' potential to address existential challenges like climate change and inequality.
- 2) **Equity Gaps:** Disparities in access to AI tools and

What is BANI framework?

The BANI framework is a conceptual model developed by futurist Jamais Cascio in 2018 to describe the characteristics of our modern world. BANI stands for:

- 1) **Brittle:** Systems that appear strong but are susceptible to sudden, catastrophic failure.
- 2) **Anxious:** A pervasive sense of worry and fear about the future, especially among younger generations.
- 3) **Nonlinear:** Situations where cause and effect are disproportionate or unpredictable.
- 4) **Incomprehensible:** Challenges that defy simple explanation or understanding.

Cascio created BANI as an evolution of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) framework, which he felt had become insufficient to describe contemporary realities. The BANI model aims to capture the unique traits of our rapidly changing environment, emphasizing the need for adaptability, resilience, and innovative thinking.



Key Budget Announcements

- 1) **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** ₹20,000 crore allocated to develop five SMRs by 2033 for clean energy transition.
- 2) **Research, Development & Innovation (RDI) Fund:** Part of the Department of Science & Technology (DST)'s budget, aimed at boosting start-ups and undefined "sunrise sectors".
- 3) **DST's Budget Surge:** Total allocation tripled to ₹28,000 crore (7x the 2023-24 actual expenditure of ₹4,000 crore).

Challenges Before R&D Sector in India

- 1) **Low R&D Spending:**
 - a) India's R&D expenditure at 0.64% of GDP (lowest since 1995), far below the global average (1.8-3%).
 - b) Private sector contributes only 36% of total R&D spending.
- 2) **Absorption Capacity:** Past underspending raises doubts: DST utilized only ₹4,000 crore in 2023-24 vs. ₹28,000 crore allocated now.
- 3) **Infrastructure Deficits:** Lack of semiconductor fabs, skilled engineers, and innovation ecosystems despite missions in AI/quantum computing.
- 4) **Public vs. Private R&D Efficiency:** Public sector allocated 0.30% of sales turnover to R&D vs. 1.46% by private firms (2020-21).

Way Forward

- 1) **Structural Reforms:**
 - a) Create a transparent mechanism for private sector access to R&D funds with measurable outcomes.
 - b) Strengthen industry-academia collaboration for IP generation.
- 2) **Incentivize Private Participation:** Offer tax breaks, long-term policy support, and risk-sharing models to boost private R&D investment.
- 3) **Infrastructure Development:** Prioritize semiconductor fabs, skill development in advanced tech, and innovation hubs.
- 4) **Policy Roadmap:** Define clear timelines and deliverables for SMR deployment and RDI fund utilization.

A gift horse's teeth: on allocations and scientific research

Higher allocations are not enough to boost scientific research

TH Editorial

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Social Justice

[Link](#)

Why in News? The 2025-26 Union Budget announced major allocations for scientific R&D, including small modular reactors and a new innovation fund, amid concerns about structural challenges in India's research ecosystem.

News / Explained / Explained Law / Were Ranveer Allahbadia's comments 'obscene' under the law?

Were Ranveer Allahbadia's comments 'obscene' under the law?

The Indian judiciary is no stranger to hearing cases about works or actions of public figures being labelled "obscene". What are the laws governing obscenity in online content? How do courts determine if a piece of media is "obscene"?

IE Explained; By Ajoy Sinha Karpuram
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Social Justice
[Link](#)

Why in News? YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia is under police probe for allegedly obscene comments made on the YouTube show "India's Got Latent", leading to investigation of obscenity laws in online content.

Laws Governing Obscenity in India

1) Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) - Section 294:

- Punishes selling, importing, exporting, advertising, or profiting from obscene material, including "display of any content in electronic form."
- Defines obscene material as "lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest" or "tend to deprave and corrupt."
- Punishment: Up to 2 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 5,000 for first-time offenders.

2) Information Technology Act, 2000 - Section 67:

- Punishes publishing or transmitting obscene material online.
- Definition of obscene material is identical to Section 294 BNS.
- Punishment: Up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 5 lakhs for a first-time offence (more rigorous than BNS).



Evolution of Court's Understanding of Obscenity

1) Early Standard: Hicklin Test (Queen v. Hicklin, 1868):

- Adopted by Indian Supreme Court in **Ranjit D Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra (1964)** regarding "Lady Chatterley's Lover".
- Work is obscene if it has a tendency to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences."
- Judged from the perspective of young, impressionable, or those with "impure" thoughts.

2) Shift to Community Standards Test:

- Roth v. United States (1957, US):** Test for obscenity is "whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest".
- Obscene Publications Act, 1959 (UK):** Work must be considered "as a whole".
- Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal (2014, India):** Indian SC adopted "community standards" test.
- Rejected Hicklin test as judging work on "isolated passages" and influence on "most susceptible readers."
- Upheld quashing of obscenity proceedings for magazine featuring nude Boris Becker photo, considering community standards.

Cases of Obscenity in Online Content

1) "College Romance" Web Series (2024):

- SC quashed proceedings under Section 292 IPC & Section 67 IT Act.
- Held distinction between obscenity and "foul, indecent and profane" language.
- Applied community standards test:** Vulgar language used in show reflected emotions, not arousal of "sexual feelings or lust" in viewers of "ordinary prudence".

2) Ranveer Allahbadia Case - Determining Obscenity

- Proceedings initiated over a question asked by Allahbadia on "India's Got Latent".
- Court will need to:**
 - Consider the show "as a whole".
 - Determine if comments are merely "vulgar and profane" or "obscene" by arousing "sexual thoughts".
 - Likely apply the "community standards" test to evaluate the content.

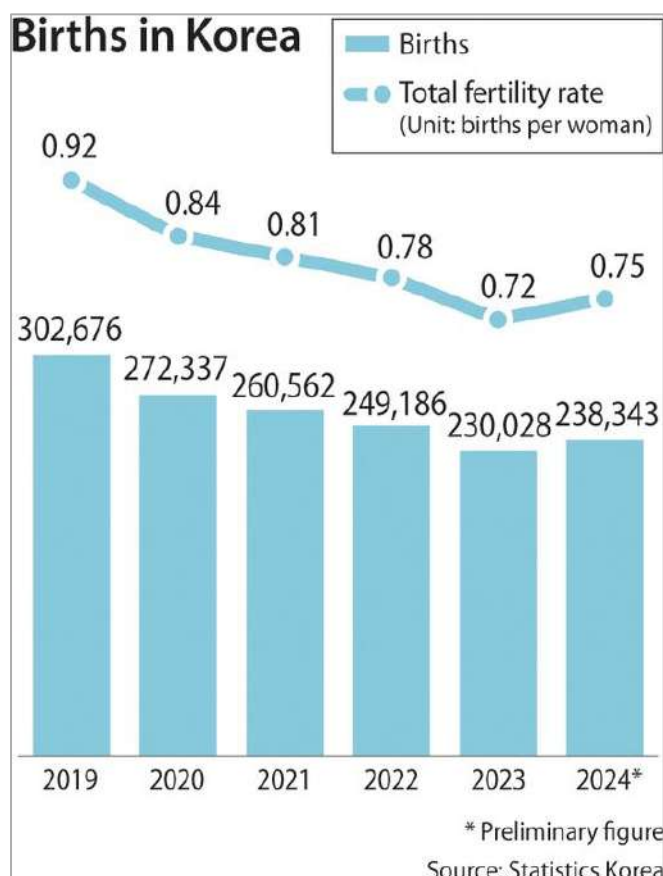
News / News Today / South Korea birthrate rises for first time in 9 years, marriages surge

South Korea birthrate rises for first time in 9 years, marriages surge

The country's fertility rate, the average number of babies a woman is expected to have during her reproductive life, stood at 0.75 in 2024, according to Statistics Korea.

IE Frontpage;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society & Social Justice
[Link](#)

Why in News? South Korea's fertility rate rose to 0.75 in 2024 – the first increase in nine years – alongside a historic 14.9% surge in marriages, signalling a potential shift in the country's severe demographic crisis.



Key Statistics

1) Fertility rate:

- 2024: 0.75 (up from 2023's record low of 0.72)
- 2015 comparison: 1.24 (showing 59% decline over 9 years)
- Seoul's 2024 rate: 0.58 (lowest among regions)

2) Marriage trends:

- 2024 marriages increased by 14.9% – largest jump since 1970

- Followed 2023's 1% rise (first growth in 11 years)

Reasons for the Increase

1) Government measures:

- New ministry creation for demographic crisis management
- Financial incentives for marriage and childcare

2) Social factors:

- Post-pandemic "catch-up" effect in family planning
- Shifting societal attitudes favoring marriage

Demographic Challenges

1) Population decline:

- 2024 deaths exceeded births by 120,000 (5th consecutive year)
- Current population: 51.83 million (2020 peak)
- Projected to fall to 36.22 million by 2072

2) Regional disparities:

- Only Sejong city recorded population growth
- Urban-rural divide in birthrates persists

This tentative recovery follows over \$270 billion spent on pro-natal policies since 2006, though rates remain far below the OECD average and replacement level (2.1).

SPOTLIGHT: 2024 PYQ

Consider the following countries:

- Italy
- Japan
- Nigeria
- South Korea
- South Africa

Which of the above countries are frequently mentioned in the media for their low birth rates, ageing population, or declining population?

Options:

- 1, 2 and 4
- 1, 3 and 5
- 2 and 4 only
- 3 and 5 only

News / Explained / Why Tamil Nadu, Centre are clashing over New Education Policy's 3-language formula

Premium

Why Tamil Nadu, Centre are clashing over New Education Policy's 3-language formula

Tamil Nadu has an almost century-old history of anti-Hindi agitations. Unlike most other states — including southern states such as Kerala and Karnataka — it follows a two-language formula in which students are taught only Tamil and English.

IE Explained; By Abhinaya Harigovind , Ritika Chopra;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society & Social Justice

[Link](#)

Why in News? The Centre withheld ₹2,152 crore in education funds for Tamil Nadu due to its refusal to adopt the NEP's three-language formula, reigniting debates over linguistic federalism.



Historical Context

- 1) **Anti-Hindi Agitations:** Tamil Nadu has resisted Hindi imposition since the 1930s–60s, fearing cultural erosion.

- 2) **Two-Language Policy:** Unlike most states, Tamil Nadu teaches only Tamil and English, rejecting the three-language formula.

Three-Language Formula Explained

- 1) **Origin:** Proposed by the 1948 Radhakrishnan Commission to promote bilingualism (regional + federal language + English).
- 2) **NEP 2020 Version:** States can choose any two Indian languages (not necessarily Hindi) and English.
- 3) **Tamil Nadu's Opposition:** Perceives it as a covert push for Hindi despite policy flexibility.

Centre's Shifting Stand

- 1) **Pre-2020:** Called the three-language formula "recommendatory," leaving implementation to states (e.g., 2004 and 2014 statements).
- 2) **Post-NEP 2020:** Linked Samagra Shiksha funds to NEP adoption, forcing compliance.

Current Implications

- 1) **Federalism Debate:** Tamil Nadu argues education is a Concurrent List subject, accusing the Centre of coercive federalism.
- 2) **Political Tensions:** DMK-led TN government views this as BJP's cultural imposition, while the Centre frames it as employability-driven.

The standoff reflects deeper tensions between linguistic identity and national integration policies.



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International Relations

February 2025

Trump, Musk gun for USAID: All about the agency, it's role in India

USAID is the "lead international humanitarian and development arm of the US government", according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

IE Explained, By Arjun Sengupta

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

[Link](#)

Why in News? The Trump administration and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) are targeting USAID to reduce federal spending, impacting its global humanitarian role.

About USAID

- 1) **Historical Context:** Established in 1961 under JFK to counter communism via initiatives like the Alliance for Progress.
- 2) **Cold War roots:** Linked to the Marshall Plan (1947) and US strategy to expand global influence.
- 3) **Role:** Primary US agency for international humanitarian aid, funding NGOs, governments, and programs in ~130 countries (FY2023)
- 4) **Funding:** Managed \$43 billion in FY2023, with top recipients including Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Syria.
- 5) **Recent Developments:**
 - a) Trump ordered a 90-day pause on foreign aid; USAID security officials removed for denying DOGE access.
 - b) Musk labeled USAID a "criminal organisation" and seeks to eliminate it.

India-USAID Relations

- 1) **Past Contributions:** Supported IITs, agricultural universities, and health programs (e.g., polio eradication)
- 2) **Current Stance:** India rejects conditional foreign aid (since 2004); US aid dropped to \$141 million (FY2024)

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

'International aid' is an accepted form of helping 'resource-challenged' nations. Comment on 'ethics in contemporary international aid'. Support your answer with suitable examples. (150 Words, 10 marks)

News / Explained / Ballot for UK-India Young Professionals Scheme opens next week: Everything you need to know

Ballot for UK-India Young Professionals Scheme opens next week: Everything you need to know

For Indian nationals wanting to travel to the UK, the three-day YPS ballot starts on February 18, and those selected will then get 90 days to make an application to the UK Home Office

IE Explained; By Divya A

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

[Link](#)

Why in News? The ballot for the UK-India Young Professionals Scheme (YPS) for 2025 is opening next week, starting February 18th.



About the UK-India Young Professionals Scheme (YPS)

- 1) **Reciprocal Scheme:** YPS is a scheme between the UK and India allowing young citizens of both nations to experience living and working in the other country.
- 2) **Purpose:** Offers individuals aged 18 to 30 the chance to live, study, travel, and work in the UK or India for up to two years.

- 3) **Agreement:** Established under the Migration and Mobility Agreement signed in 2021 between the UK and India.
- 4) **Annual Cap:** Limits the number of young professionals from each country to 3,000 per year.
- 5) **For Indian Nationals:** There is a ballot system to apply for the YPS to live in the UK.
- 6) **For British Nationals:** No ballot system exists for British citizens applying under this scheme for India.
- 7) **Flexibility of YPS over other Visas:** YPS does not need pre-arranged employment, allowing individuals to seek jobs or self-employment in the UK with sufficient savings.

YPS Ballot for Indian Nationals (2025)

- 1) **Ballot Dates:** A three-day ballot will commence on February 18th.
- 2) **Post-Selection:** Those selected in the ballot will have 90 days to submit their visa application to the UK Home Office.
- 3) **Eligibility Criteria:** Applicants must possess a qualification at UK bachelor's degree level or higher.
- 4) **Financial Proof:** Applicants need to demonstrate savings of £2,530 to support themselves upon arrival in the UK.
- 5) **Visa Issuance in 2023:** Over 2,100 YPS visas were issued to Indian nationals in 2023.
- 6) **Return Requirement:** Individuals on a YPS visa must return to India after their two-year stay in the UK.

How will freeze on USAID affect the world?

TH Premium

Why is the U.S. administration halting foreign assistance and scaling back personnel in the United States Agency for International Development? What will happen if the agency stops funding development projects in many countries? Which are the key sectors it is involved in? What will be the fallout on the Global South?

TH Text & Context; By Ramya Kannan
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? The Trump administration's freeze on USAID funding and scaling back of personnel has far-reaching implications across the globe.

Reasons for the Freeze

- 1) President Trump initiated a 90-day freeze on foreign assistance to assess programmatic efficiencies and consistency with U.S. foreign policy.

- 2) The administration has criticized USAID's spending, with some officials calling for the agency's closure and restructuring.

Potential Global Impacts

- 1) **Disruptions to critical programs:** The freeze has caused the cessation of food distribution, shutdown of health services, and created obstacles to delivering lifesaving aid.
- 2) **Global health setbacks:** Cuts to USAID could hinder disease control, delay vaccine development, and allow the resurgence of contained diseases. Programs addressing undernutrition, sanitation, and access to clean water may also suffer.
- 3) **Economic and Social Instability:** Restriction of access to essential resources like food and water could exacerbate migration and be exploited by extremist groups.
- 4) **Damage to U.S. standing:** Abruptly halting services can undermine public confidence and trust, potentially damaging the U.S.'s global reputation.
- 5) **Impact on humanitarian aid:** Given that the U.S. is a major contributor to global humanitarian aid, the freeze could lead to a collapse of the humanitarian framework.

Impact on India

- 1) **Project suspensions:** USAID has directed organizations implementing projects in India to suspend work.
- 2) **Affected sectors:** The most significant impact is expected in health-related programs, but education, gender, and climate change initiatives may also be affected.
- 3) **Diminished funding:** Although USAID's funding in India has decreased over the years, its withdrawal could still affect critical sectors such as health, education, and environmental sustainability.
- 4) **Broader implications:** The USAID situation is part of a larger trend of declining global aid, which can compound financial challenges for development NGOs.

Concerns in the Global South

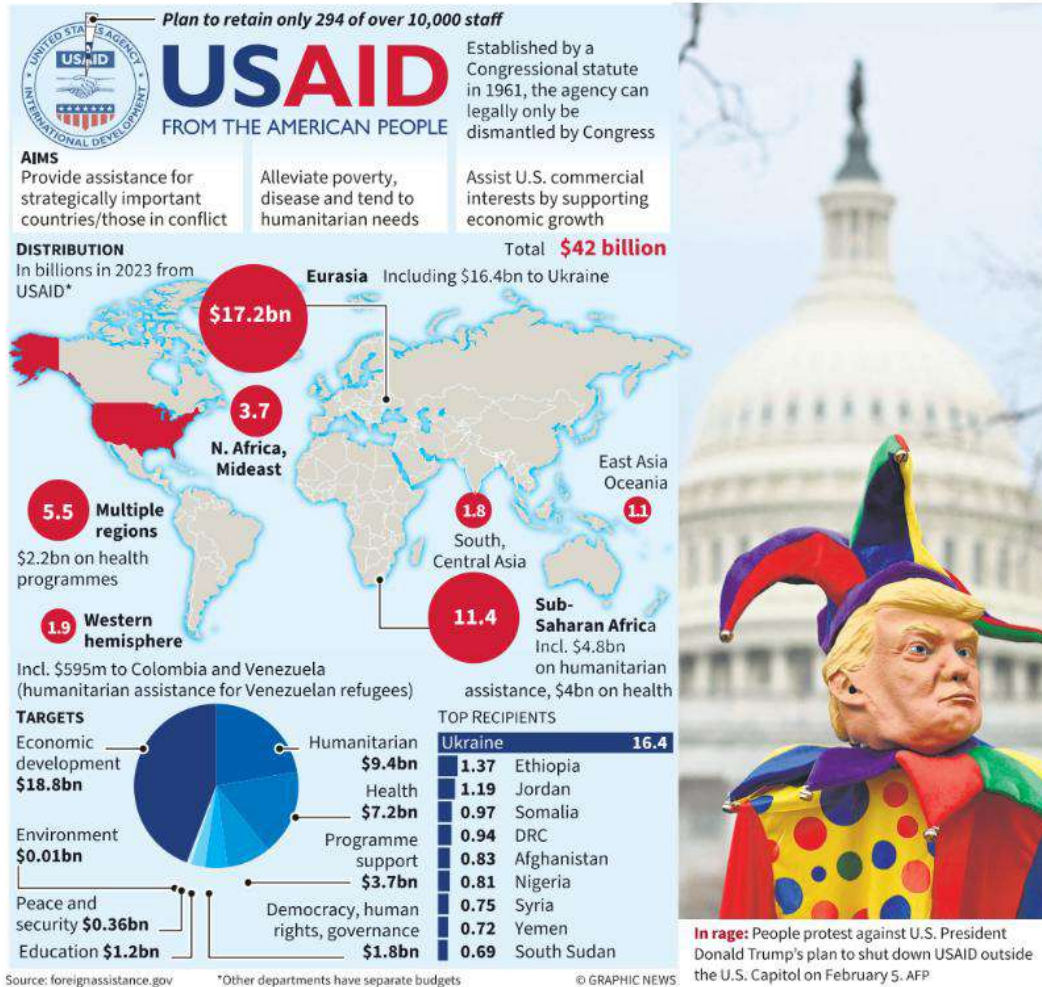
- 1) **Vulnerable populations at risk:** Programs crucial for education, health, access to basic resources, and local economic development are in danger, threatening the well-being of vulnerable populations.
- 2) **Impact on specific regions:** Africa, a major recipient of USAID funding, faces significant

challenges in filling gaps in essential services like healthcare and education.

- 3) **Food security:** Food kitchens are closing, and the U.S. monitoring system for global famine has been halted, with millions lacking access to vital services.

Dismantling aid from the U.S.

The withdrawal of USAID, arising out of a decision born of petulance, might severely impact the fortunes of many nations, as a number of projects will have to be dropped, in the light of aid being stopped through an executive decision by the Donald Trump administration



THE GIST

The U.S. Agency for International Aid was set up as an independent agency, through an Act of Congress in 1961. It was an attempt to align all U.S. efforts to administer civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

In India, the quantum of funding has reduced over the years, with the government of India objecting to certain aspects of the conditions for the agreement for grants.

While health remains the main sector where USAID has been involved in India, with a funding of \$79.3 million in 2024, it also has interests in economy, energy, water supply and sanitation, and environmental health.

In rage: People protest against U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to shut down USAID outside the U.S. Capitol on February 5. AFP

News / Explained / Explained Global / Defence to energy, deepening of India-France ties amid geopolitical shifts

Defence to energy, deepening of India-France ties amid geopolitical shifts

The PM's visit had two key dimensions: the AI Action Summit which he co-chaired with President Macron, and consolidating India-France ties, which were elevated to the strategic partnership level in 1998. The two countries also reviewed the 'Horizon 2047' Roadmap agreed two years ago.

IE Explained; By Gulshan Sachdeva

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

[Link](#)

Why in News? PM Modi's visit to France (Feb 10-12, 2025) deepened Indo-French strategic ties through agreements on defence, nuclear energy, and AI amid global geopolitical shifts.



AI Action Summit Outcomes

- 1) Co-chaired by Modi and Macron, focusing on safe, ethical AI governance and public interest applications
- 2) Launched **India-France AI Roadmap** for joint research, innovation, and startups, including hosting 10 Indian firms at France's Station-F incubator
- 3) Announced **2026 as India-France Year of Innovation** to strengthen tech collaboration

Defence Cooperation

- 1) Progress on **Scorpene submarines** with DRDO's Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) integration
- 2) Discussions on **joint production of helicopter/jet engines** (with Safran Group) and missile systems
- 3) India invited to observe **Eurodrone MALE programme**; France urged to consider India's Pinaka rocket launcher

Civil Nuclear Energy

- 1) **Jaitapur nuclear plant discussions** revived, with focus on resolving liability law hurdles
- 2) Agreement to **co-develop Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) for energy security
- 3) ₹20,000 crore **Nuclear Energy Mission** announced in India's 2025 budget for SMR research

Geopolitical Implications

- 1) **Trump's outreach to Russia** heightened EU's strategic concerns, pushing France-India closer on Indo-Pacific security
- 2) **Collaboration on India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, with Marseille proposed as a hub
- 3) Shared focus on **multipolar global order** and climate action, countering U.S. withdrawal from Paris Agreement

Bilateral Initiatives

- 1) Reviewed **Horizon 2047 Roadmap** for long-term partnerships in defence, space, and tech
- 2) **Triangular Development Cooperation** pact for Indo-Pacific SDG projects
- 3) Inaugurated **Indian Consulate in Marseille** to boost trade and cultural ties

News / India / From AI to space, India and US to work together on key areas as Biden-era initiative renamed

From AI to space, India and US to work together on key areas as Biden-era initiative renamed

PM Modi and President Trump also committed to "build trusted and resilient supply chains, including for semiconductors, critical minerals, advanced materials and pharmaceuticals."

IE Modi-Trump Meeting [Link](#) [Link](#)

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump met on February 14, 2025, to deepen bilateral ties through technological, economic, and strategic collaborations, marking a pivotal shift in India-US relations.

Key Outcomes of the Modi-Trump Meeting

- 1) **US-India TRUST Initiative**
 - a) Launched to enhance collaboration in critical technologies like AI,

- semiconductors, quantum computing, biotechnology, defence, and space
 - b) Focus on building AI infrastructure through a joint roadmap by end-2025, addressing financing, data centres, and access to computing power
 - c) Aims to reduce regulatory barriers and ensure protections for sensitive technologies
- 2) **Defence & Security Cooperation**
- a) Plans to expand US military sales to India, including advanced systems like **F-35 stealth jets**
 - b) Strengthened counter-terrorism efforts, with US agreeing to **extradite Tahawwur Rana**, a 2008 Mumbai attacks suspect
 - c) New initiatives for joint defence production and autonomous systems

- b) Strengthened supply chains for semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and advanced materials to counter over-reliance on China
- 7) **Multilateral Cooperation**
- a) **New Quad initiatives** for disaster response and maritime patrols in the Indo-Pacific
 - b) Launch of **Indian Ocean Strategic Venture** to bolster partnerships in the Western Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific
- 8) **Innovation & Academia**
- a) **INDUS Innovation Platform** to foster industry-academic partnerships in space, energy, and emerging tech
 - b) Joint research programs between **US NSF and India's ANRF** in AI, semiconductors, and biomanufacturing

Some Key Takeaways From India-US Statement

<p>DEFENCE</p> <p>A NEW TEN-YEAR Framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership in 21st Century to be signed</p> <p>US PLATFORMS rising in Indian services: US would expand defence sales and co-production with India to strengthen interoperability and defence industrial cooperation. Javelin and Stryker to be pursued</p> <p>REVIEW OF International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), in order to streamline defence trade, technology exchange and maintenance, spare supplies and in-country repair and overhaul of US-provided systems</p>	<p>OPENING NEGOTIATIONS this year for a Reciprocal Defence Procurement pact</p> <p>ACCELERATE DEFENCE technology cooperation across space, air defence, missile, maritime and undersea technologies</p> <p>US ANNOUNCING a review of its policy on releasing fifth gen fighters and undersea systems to India</p> <p>NEW INITIATIVE: The Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) – scale industry partnerships and production in Indo-Pacific. ASIA refers to India-US cooperation in the area of undersea domain awareness technology</p>	 <p>US-INDIA COMPACT – Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology for the 21st Century – to drive transformative change across key pillars of cooperation – defence, investment and trade, energy security, technology and innovation, multilateral cooperation, people to people connection</p>	<p>TRADE AND INVESTMENT</p> <p>NEW GOAL for bilateral trade – “Mission 500” – aiming to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030</p> <p>FIRST TRANCHE of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement by fall of 2025</p> <p>ENERGY SECURITY</p> <p>RE-COMMITTED to the US-India Energy Security Partnership, including in oil, gas, and civil nuclear energy</p> <p>US SUPPORT for India to join the International Energy Agency as a full member</p> <p>FULLY REALISE the US-India</p>	<p>Demonstrate mutual commitment to address bilateral trade barriers</p> <p>RECOGNITION OF Indian investments in US – Indian companies ongoing investments worth over \$7.355 billion – 3,000 high-quality jobs for local families</p> <p>123 Civil Nuclear Agreement by moving forward with plans to work together to build US-designed nuclear reactors in India through large scale localisation and possible technology transfer</p> <p>ENABLE COLLABORATION to develop, deploy and scale up nuclear power generation with small modular reactors</p>	<p>TECH AND INNOVATION</p> <p>LAUNCH OF US-India TRUST initiative will catalyse govt-to-govt, academia and private sector collaboration to promote application of critical and emerging technologies in areas like defence, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum, biotechnology, energy and space</p> <p>FORWARD A US-India Roadmap on Accelerating AI Infrastructure by end of year</p> <p>US AND India will work together to enable industry partnerships and investments in next generation data centers, cooperation on development and access to compute and processors for AI</p> <p>LAUNCH OF INDUS Innovation – an innovation bridge modelled after the successful INDUS-X platform, that will advance industry and academic partnerships and foster investments in space, energy, and other emerging tech</p> <p>PHARMA: expand Indian manufacturing capacity, including in US, for active pharmaceutical ingredients for critical medicines</p> <p>LAUNCH OF the Strategic Mineral Recovery Initiative – a new US-India cooperative program to recover and process critical minerals</p>
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- 3) **Trade & Economic Partnerships**
- a) **Mission 500:** Target to boost bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030
 - b) Resolve trade disputes, ease tariffs, and increase market access in pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and industrial goods
 - c) Focus on reducing the **\$50 billion trade deficit** through US energy exports
- 4) **Energy Security**
- a) US to become a key **supplier of oil and gas** to India, enhancing energy security
 - b) Collaboration on **strategic petroleum reserves** and nuclear energy
- 5) **Space Exploration**
- a) **NASA-ISRO collaboration** to send India's first astronaut to the ISS by 2025
 - b) **Joint NISAR satellite mission** to map Earth's surface and advance space tourism
- 6) **Critical Minerals & Supply Chains**
- a) **Strategic Mineral Recovery Initiative** launched to process lithium, cobalt, and rare earths from industries like mining and oil

Opinion by: Ashutosh Varshney

In Trump-Modi Summit, benefits for the US are greater

Trump's desire to demand subservience to power was expected. That Modi would succumb so easily came as a surprise

IE The Editorial Page; By Ashutosh Varshney
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? The recent Trump-Modi summit highlighted a transactional approach to India-US relations, with Trump leveraging US power to secure trade concessions and Modi agreeing to tariff reciprocity and addressing immigration issues.

Key Outcomes

- 1) **Trade Agreements**
- a) India agreed to adopt reciprocal tariffs, matching US tariff rates (e.g., 30% on specific goods)
 - b) Aim to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, requiring India to balance

imports/exports (currently a \$46B US deficit)

- c) Critics argue India's tariff reductions are driven by US pressure, not economic strategy
- 2) **Immigration Policy:** Modi pledged to repatriate 220,000–700,000 undocumented Indians in the US, attributing migration to job shortages and human trafficking.
- 3) **Defence & Tech Collaboration**
 - a) Strengthened defence ties to reduce reliance on Russian arms, focusing on co-production and tech upgrades
 - b) Partnerships in AI and quantum computing to counter China's advancements in critical technologies

Power Dynamics in Modi-Trump Meet

- 1) Trump framed the relationship through a hierarchy of power, treating India as a junior partner
- 2) Modi's concessions (tariffs, immigration) reflect acquiescence to US demands rather than mutual negotiation
- 3) US benefits disproportionately through trade terms and immigration concessions
- 4) India gains in defence diversification and tech collaboration but faces economic risks from tariff reciprocity

India, Qatar sign strategic partnership agreement, discuss Israel-Palestinian crisis

TH Frontpage; By Kallol Bhattacharjee;
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? India and Qatar signed a strategic partnership agreement on February 18, 2025, deepening ties in trade, energy, and security, amid discussions on the Gaza crisis.



Strategic Partnership Details

- 1) **Elevated cooperation:** Focus on trade, investment, energy, security, and collaboration in international forums.
- 2) **Key agreements:**
 - a) Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty signed.
 - b) Exploration of a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) alongside ongoing India-GCC FTA negotiations.
- 3) **Energy ties:** Qatar is a major LNG supplier to India, with plans to strengthen energy collaboration.

Regional Geopolitical Discussions

- 1) **Israel-Palestine conflict:**
 - a) India reiterated support for a two-state solution and welcomed the January 2025 ceasefire.
 - b) Qatar shared its stance, though specifics were not disclosed.
- 2) **U.S. proposal:** Qatar's Amir attended the Riyadh Arab summit (February 20, 2025) to discuss U.S. suggestions, including relocating Palestinians, which India has not publicly endorsed.

Economic and Trade Goals

- 1) **Trade target:** Aim to double bilateral trade to \$28 billion.
- 2) **Business engagement:** 38 Qatari firms (retail, energy, hospitality) participated in a Joint Business Forum.

Indian Diaspora and Legal Issues

- 1) **Indian workers:** Largest expatriate community in Qatar; ~600 Indians in Qatari prisons, with 85 pardoned in 2024.
- 2) **Commander Tiwary case:** Former Indian Navy officer remains detained; seven others repatriated in 2024.

Other Strategic Partnerships in GCC: India has similar partnerships with Kuwait, Oman, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

Significance of Qatar to India	Hurdles in India-Qatar Relations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Energy Security: Major LNG supplier (20-year \$78B deal) 2) Trade Growth: Aim to double bilateral trade to \$28B by 2030 3) Indian Diaspora: ~830,000 expatriates, largest workforce in Qatar 4) Strategic partnership: Defence cooperation, counter-terrorism collaboration 5) Investments: \$10B Qatari commitment in Indian infrastructure, tech 6) Regional Diplomacy: Qatar's role as mediator in Israel-Hamas talks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Detention of Ex-Navy Personnel: Commander Purnendu Tiwary's unresolved case 2) Cultural Sensitivities: 2022 Prophet remarks controversy 3) Labour Issues: Welfare concerns for migrant workers 4) Geopolitical Misalignment: Qatar's stance vs. India's ties with Saudi-led bloc 5) Zakir Naik Controversy: Fugitive's presence in Qatar 6) Delayed Agreements: Slow progress on FTA and investment treaty

News / Express Investigations / Team Musk flags, Trump waves, but a fact-check: \$21 million did not go to India for 'voter turnout', was for Bangladesh

Team Musk flags, Trump waves, but a fact-check: \$21 million did not go to India for 'voter turnout', was for Bangladesh

Donald Trump himself, in a speech in Miami Wednesday, said: "Why do we need to spend \$21m for voter turnout in India? Wow, \$21m! I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected."

IE Frontpage; By Jay Mazoomdaar;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

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Why in News? The Trump administration and Elon Musk-led DOGE canceled a **\$21 million USAID grant** mistakenly attributed to India for "voter turnout," triggering political clashes in India over alleged foreign interference.

About the Funding

- 1) **Actual Destination:** Sanctioned in 2022 for **Bangladesh's Nagorik Program** (Citizen Program), not India.
- 2) **Purpose:** Aimed at enhancing youth political engagement and electoral integrity ahead of Bangladesh's January 2024 elections.
- 3) **Implementation:**
 - a) Managed by CEPPS (Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening), split among IFES, IRI, and NDI.
 - b) Funded 544 youth events, 170 democracy sessions, and pre-election assessments critical of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.
- 4) **Disbursement:** \$13.4 million of the \$21 million already spent by October 2024.

Implications of Funding

- 1) **Political Shift in Bangladesh:** Activists linked the program to youth-led protests and Hasina's August 2024 ouster.
- 2) **Election Critique:** NDI-IRI reports accused Bangladeshi authorities of biased law enforcement favouring the Awami League during elections.
- 3) **Global Scrutiny:** Highlighted USAID's role in international democracy programs, drawing comparisons to alleged Russian interference in U.S. polls.

Why the Funding Was Cancelled Now?

- 1) **Trump's Policy Shift:** Part of broader cuts (\$750 million) to USAID projects, citing inefficiency and geopolitical realignment.
- 2) **Allegations of Interference:** Trump labelled the grant "election meddling," questioning U.S. taxpayer spending abroad.
- 3) **DOGE's Mandate:** Musk's department prioritized cost-cutting, cancelling \$486 million in CEPPS grants globally, including \$29.9 million for Bangladesh's "political landscape".

Reactions and Responses

- 1) **In India:**
 - a) **BJP:** Accused Congress of collusion with foreign entities, demanding investigations into historical USAID projects.
 - b) **Congress:** Sought a white paper on USAID's past funding in India, denying involvement.
- 2) **In Bangladesh:** Interim government expressed hope for continued U.S. partnerships despite policy shifts.
- 3) **International:** Trump's remarks sparked debates on foreign aid ethics, while experts

questioned the grant's impact on Bangladesh's turmoil.

Factsheet: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Establishment & Mandate

- 1) Created in 1961 under President John F. Kennedy via the Foreign Assistance Act
- 2) Independent federal agency operating under State Department guidance
- 3) Primary goals: Promote socioeconomic development, provide humanitarian aid, advance U.S. foreign policy

Key Areas of Work

- 1) **Global Health:** Disease prevention, maternal/child health, HIV/AIDS programs
- 2) **Democracy & Governance:** Support free elections, civil society, and anti-corruption efforts
- 3) **Economic Growth:** Market development, trade partnerships, poverty reduction
- 4) **Humanitarian Aid:** Disaster relief, food security (world's largest food assistance provider)
- 5) **Environment & Education:** Climate resilience, biodiversity, and education access

Budget & Scale

- 1) **FY 2024 budget:** \$21.7 billion (0.3% of U.S. federal spending)
- 2) Managed over **\$40 billion in FY 2022**, including international food aid
- 3) Operates in **100+ countries**, primarily in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe

Opinion by C. Raja Mohan

C Raja Mohan writes: In Trump's world, India and Europe need each other

India's strategy had assumed that the globalised economic order is irreversible. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's visit to India provides an opportunity for Delhi and Brussels at a pivotal moment

IE The Ideas Page; By C Raja Mohan
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** chose India as her first international destination in her second term, signalling renewed EU-India collaboration

amid global turbulence caused by Trump's policies.

Global Context driving India & EU close

- 1) **Geopolitical flux:** Trump's abrupt withdrawal of Ukraine aid, direct talks with Russia (excluding EU/Ukraine), and NATO burden-sharing demands force Europe to diversify partnerships.
- 2) **Economic recalibration:** EU seeks to de-risk from China (\$100B India-China trade deficit) via India's market; India aims to leverage EU's tech, capital, and green transition expertise.
- 3) **Tech-security convergence:** Shared focus on resilient supply chains (semiconductors, AI) and countering Chinese dominance in critical technologies.

India-EU Strategic Imperatives

- 1) **Trade agreements:** Accelerating FTA negotiations (stalled since 2013) to address EU's tariff demands (cars, wines) and India's push for textile parity with Bangladesh/Vietnam.
- 2) **Tech partnerships:** Operationalizing the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) for green hydrogen, EV infrastructure, and joint R&D in AI/quantum computing.
- 3) **Connectivity projects:** Reviving the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- 4) **Defence collaboration:** Exploring submarine co-production and C-295 aircraft deals to reduce India's Russia dependence.
- 5) **Science mobility:** Expanding Marie Skłodowska-Curie grants (600+ Indian researchers) and Horizon Europe projects (88 joint initiatives)

Challenges Ahead

- 1) **Trade barriers:** EU insists on stringent environmental standards (CBAM) and IPR norms; India resists tariff cuts on agriculture and wines.
- 2) **Strategic divergences:** EU's Ukraine stance vs. India's Russia ties; EU's China trade reliance (\$247B FDI) vs. India's border disputes.
- 3) **Domestic hurdles:** India's infrastructure gaps (port congestion, urban flooding) deter EU investors; EU's internal political fractures (AfD rise) complicate unified policymaking.
- 4) **Human rights friction:** EU's concerns over India's minority policies risk stalling deeper engagement.

Way Forward

- 1) **Finalize FTA by 2025-end** with phased tariff reductions and CBAM exemptions for Indian steel.
- 2) **Launch EU-India Critical Minerals Partnership** for lithium/rare earths to reduce China dependency.
- 3) **Institutionalize defence dialogues** and fast-track approvals for joint ventures in drone/space tech.
- 4) **Expand Global Gateway funding** for Indian infrastructure (ports, smart grids) to boost investor confidence.

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 Prelims

'Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of negotiations held between India and

- (a) European Union
- (b) Gulf Cooperation Council
- (c) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- (d) Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- 5) **Balance strategic autonomy** with "multi-alignment" to navigate US-China-EU-Russia rivalries.

The visit lays groundwork for a 2025 EU-India Summit, aiming to adopt a post-2025 roadmap focused on tech sovereignty, defence interoperability, and climate-resilient growth.

SPOTLIGHT: 2010 PYQ

In the context of bilateral trade negotiations between India and European Union, what is the difference between European Commission and European Council?

- 1) The European Commission represents the EU in trade negotiations whereas European Council participates in the legislation of matters pertaining to economic policies of the European Union.
- 2) The European Commission comprises the Heads of State or government of member countries whereas the European Council comprises of the persons nominated by European Parliament.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Key Aspect	European Commission	European Council
Role	EU's executive arm ; proposes/enforces laws, manages budget, represents EU internationally	EU's supreme political authority ; sets strategic priorities, resolves crises, defines foreign policy
Composition	27 Commissioners (1 per member state), acting independently of national interests	Heads of state/government of EU countries + Commission President + European Council President (Charles Michel)
Leadership	Led by President Ursula von der Leyen (elected by Parliament)	Led by President Charles Michel (elected by members for 2.5-year term)
Key Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposes legislation - Manages EU budget/policies (e.g., trade, competition) - Enforces EU law (e.g., initiates infringement procedures) - Represents EU in trade negotiations (e.g., EU-India BTIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sets EU's political agenda (e.g., response to Trump's policies) - Defines foreign policy (e.g., Ukraine strategy) - Nominates key roles (Commission President, High Representative) - Addresses crises (e.g., economic coordination via European Semester)
Decision-Making	Decisions by simple majority vote	Decisions by consensus (unanimity/qualified majority for specific cases)
Term	5-year term (aligned with European Parliament elections)	Members' terms align with national elections; Council President serves 2.5 years (renewable once)

News / Explained / How Trump's 'Gold Card' US visa could work, what concerns it raises

How Trump's 'Gold Card' US visa could work, what concerns it raises

The scheme, the details of which would be known in two weeks, would replace the EB-5 immigrant investor visa program, Trump said.

IE Explained; By Ravneet Kaur Brar
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? President Donald Trump announced a **\$5 million "Gold Card" visa program** on February 25, 2025, aiming to replace the EB-5 investor visa and provide a direct path to U.S. citizenship for wealthy foreigners.

Proposed Structure of the Gold Card Visa

- \$5 million flat fee:** Direct payment to the U.S. government without mandatory job creation or business investment
- Green Card + Citizenship pathway:** Grants permanent residency and a route to naturalization

- Streamlined processing:** Administered by USCIS with faster approvals to incentivize uptake
- Replacement of EB-5:** Intended to phase out the existing EB-5 program, criticized for fraud and lower investment thresholds (\$800k–\$1.05M)



Comparison: EB-5 vs. Gold Card

Criteria	EB-5 Visa	Gold Card
Investment	\$800k–\$1.05M in businesses/jobs	\$5M direct payment

Job Creation	Mandatory (10 jobs)	Not required
Legal Basis	Established by Congress in 1990	Executive action (pending details)
Fraud Risks	History of misuse and loopholes	Claims of reduced fraud

Key Benefits Highlighted

- 1) **Economic stimulus:** Attracts high-net-worth individuals likely to spend, invest, and pay taxes in the U.S.
- 2) **Revenue generation:** Projected to raise trillions to reduce national debt.
- 3) **Simplified process:** Removes bureaucratic hurdles associated with EB-5.

Major Concerns Raised

- 1) **Legal and Constitutional Challenges**
 - a) Trump lacks authority to unilaterally replace Congressionally created EB-5
 - b) Likely lawsuits over executive overreach and citizenship commodification
- 2) **Ethical and Security Risks**
 - a) "Selling citizenship" criticized for prioritizing wealth over merit or diversity
 - b) Potential for money laundering or exploitation by foreign oligarchs (e.g., Russians)
- 3) **Economic and Social Impact**
 - a) Passive investors may contribute less to job markets compared to EB-5
 - b) Could deepen inequality in U.S. immigration policies
- 4) **Global precedents:** Similar "golden visa" schemes in Europe were scrapped due to corruption risks
- 5) **Indian applicants:** Unlikely to benefit widely due to the high cost (₹43.5 crore) and low EB-5 uptake historically

The Gold Card proposal reflects a contentious shift toward wealth-based immigration, facing legal, ethical, and practical hurdles before implementation.

News / Explained / With European Commissioners delegation in New Delhi, significance of India-Europe partnership

With European Commissioners delegation in New Delhi, significance of India-Europe partnership

Led by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the delegation's visit marks a new phase in the bilateral relationship between India and Europe.

IE Explained; By Shubhajit Roy;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations
[Link](#)

Why in News? A historic first collective visit by 22 EU Commissioners to India signals deepened strategic partnership, occurring against the backdrop of strained US-Europe relations under President Trump.

Key Partnership Developments

- 1) **Strategic Framework**
 - a) 3rd decade of India-EU Strategic Partnership (established 2004)
 - b) 2nd Trade & Technology Council (TTC) meeting underway
 - c) Resumed FTA negotiations after 9-year hiatus
- 2) **Economic Engagement**
 - a) \$135B bilateral goods trade (2023-24)
 - b) EU: India's largest trading partner & 2nd-largest export destination
 - c) \$117.4B EU FDI inflow to India (2000-2024)
 - d) Ongoing negotiations on carbon tax compatibility
- 3) **Technology Collaboration**
 - a) Joint R&D in semiconductors (2023 MoU)
 - b) High-Performance Computing partnership (2022)
 - c) AI governance cooperation through Global Partnership on AI
- 4) **Green Energy Initiatives**
 - a) €1B EU funding for Indian hydrogen projects
 - b) Joint roadmap for 2030 green hydrogen ecosystem
 - c) Co-hosted International Green Hydrogen Conference (2024)
- 5) **Defence & Space**
 - a) First India-EU naval exercises (Gulf of Guinea, 2023)
 - b) PROBA-3 satellite launch via ISRO (2024)

- c) ESA collaboration on Chandrayaan-3 and Gaganyaan missions
- 6) **Geopolitical Alignment**
 - a) Coordination on Ukraine crisis management
 - b) Countering China's tech dominance and maritime expansion
 - c) Strengthening Indo-Pacific maritime security under ESIWA+
- 7) **People-Centric Ties**
 - a) 20%+ EU Blue Cards issued to Indians (2023-24)

- b) 6,000+ Erasmus scholarships awarded since 2004
- c) 2,700+ Indian researchers funded by Horizon Europe

This comprehensive engagement positions India and the EU as crucial partners in reshaping technology standards, sustainable development, and multilateral security architectures.



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4-Mar	hFST-2502	8-Apr	hFST-2522	
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6-Mar	hFST-2504	10-Apr	hFST-2524	
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11-Mar	hFST-2506	14-Apr	hFST-2526	
17-Mar	hFST-2507	15-Apr	hFST-2527	
18-Mar	hFST-2508	16-Apr	hFST-2528	
19-Mar	hFST-2509	17-Apr	hFST-2529	
20-Mar	hFST-2510	18-Apr	hFST-2530	
24-Mar	hFST-2511	21-Apr	hFST-2531	
25-Mar	hFST-2512	22-Apr	hFST-2532	
26-Mar	hFST-2513	23-Apr	hFST-2533	
27-Mar	hFST-2514	24-Apr	hFST-2534	
28-Mar	hFST-2515	25-Apr	hFST-2535	
31-Mar	hFST-2516	28-Apr	hFST-2536	
1-Apr	hFST-2517	29-Apr	hFST-2537	
2-Apr	hFST-2518	30-Apr	hFST-2538	
3-Apr	hFST-2519	1-May	FLT-2539	
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Economy and Agriculture

February 2025

News / Explained / Explained Economics / What the Economic Survey says: key takeaways from the govt's report on India's economy

Premium

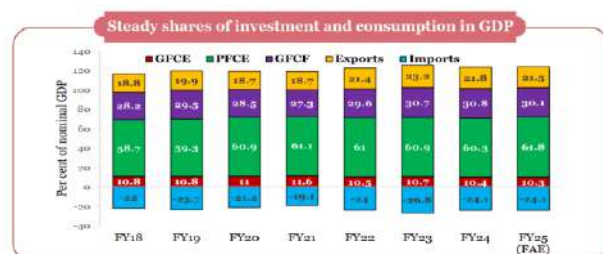
What the Economic Survey says: key takeaways from the govt's report on India's economy

The Survey is a report of the state of the Indian economy in the financial year that is coming to a close. It is prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs in the Union Finance Ministry, under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA)

IE Explained, By Udit Misra

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#) [Link](#)

Why in News? The Economic Survey 2024-25 outlines India's economic resilience amid global headwinds while projecting 6.4% GDP growth for FY25 and 6.3-6.8% for FY26.



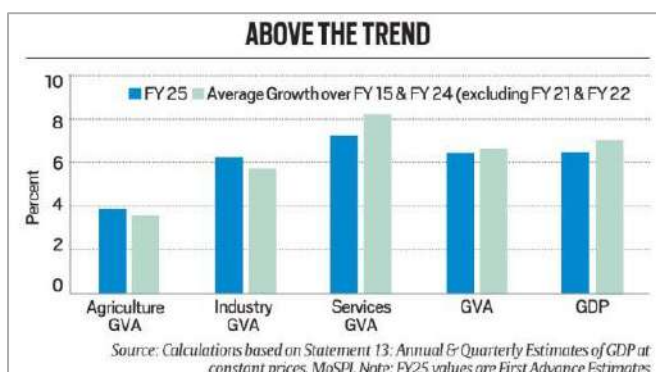
Global Economic Context

- 1) **Protectionism Surge:** Global trade growth slowed to 1.6% in 2024 due to geopolitical fragmentation and trade barriers. Key drivers include:
 - a) **24,000 new trade/investment restrictions** imposed globally between 2020–2024, driven by strategic competitiveness concerns.
 - b) **Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs)** now affect 67.1% of global trade, with Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) impacting 31.6% of product lines.
 - c) **Climate-linked trade barriers:**
 - i) EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Deforestation

Regulation (EUDR) could widen India's current account deficit by restricting exports.

- ii) Compliance costs for Indian exporters may rise by 15–20% due to sustainability standards.
- d) **Sectoral impacts:**
 - i) Agriculture and manufacturing face 19.3% export restrictions globally.
 - ii) Freight costs surged 300% in 2024 due to Red Sea disruptions and Suez Canal rerouting.
- e) **G20 trade curbs** now cover 12.7% of imports (vs. 4% in 2015), signalling a shift toward "friend-shoring".
- 2) **China's Dominance:** Strategic control over global supply chains poses systemic risks:
 - a) **Manufacturing supremacy:**
 - i) Accounts for 28.8% of global manufacturing output (India: 2.8%) and projected to reach 45% by 2030.
 - ii) Produces 80% of solar panels, 70% of EV batteries, and 63% of rare earth minerals.
 - b) **Critical mineral monopoly:**
 - i) Processes 65% of global nickel, 68% cobalt, and 60% lithium – key for energy transition.
 - ii) Controls 90% of rare earth mineral processing, creating dependencies for EVs and renewables.
 - c) **Trade leverage:**
 - i) Record \$1 trillion trade surplus in 2024, driven by excess industrial capacity and weak domestic demand.
 - ii) Supplies 75% of India's lithium-ion batteries and 80% of solar equipment components.
 - d) **Energy transition risks:**
 - i) India's renewable goals rely on Chinese polysilicon (80% global share) and wafers (negligible domestic production)

- ii) 24 of 33 critical minerals for India's economy face high supply disruption risks due to Chinese control.



Domestic Economic Performance

Growth Metrics

- 1) **Real GDP Growth:**
 - a) **Estimated at 6.4% for FY25**, highest among major economies despite global headwinds
 - b) **Projected 6.3–6.8% for FY26**, contingent on domestic reforms and global stability
 - c) **Private consumption share** in GDP rose to 61.8% (highest since FY03), signaling strong domestic demand
- 2) **Gross Value Added (GVA):**
 - a) **Overall GVA growth** at 6.2%, driven by services (+7.2%) and agriculture (+3.8%)
 - b) **Manufacturing GVA growth** slowed to 4.3% YoY due to weak global demand (-3.1% YoY)
- 3) **Sectoral Contributions:**
 - a) **Agriculture:** Record Kharif production (+4.5%), but Rabi crops impacted by uneven monsoon
 - b) **Industry:** Electricity (+8.1%) and construction (+9.2%) offset manufacturing slowdown
 - c) **Services:** Contributed 55.3% of GVA, led by IT (+15%) and tourism revival (+18.5% foreign arrivals)



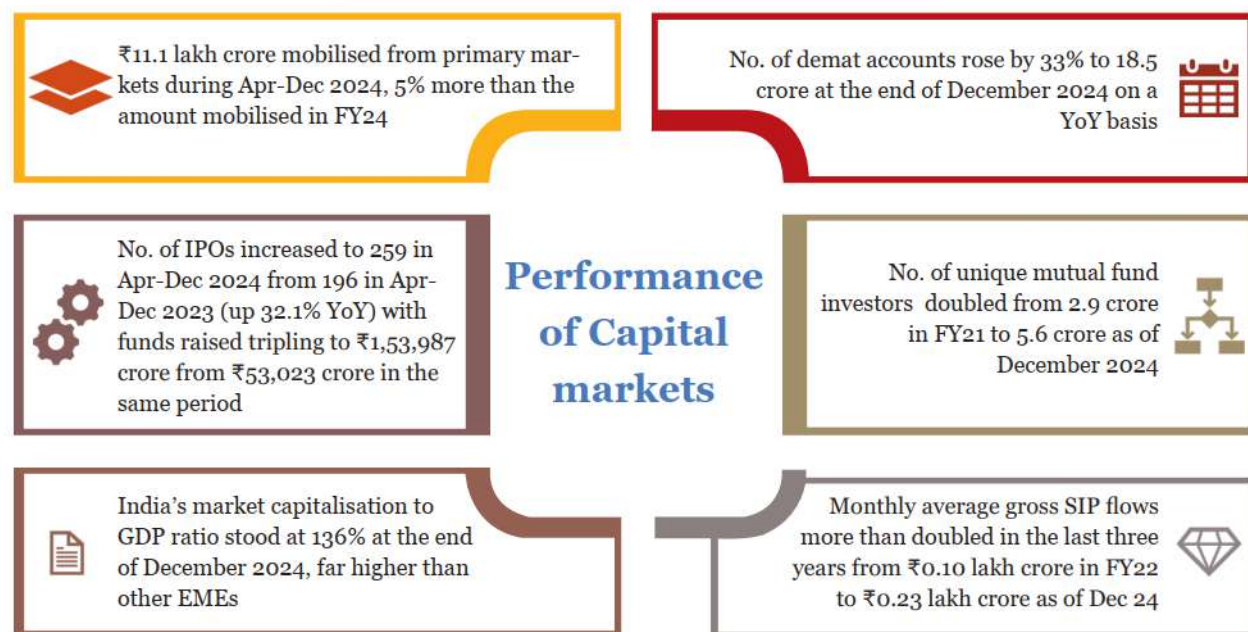
Inflation & Employment

- 1) **Price Trends:**
 - a) **Headline inflation** moderated to 4.9% (Apr–Dec 2024), but food inflation spiked to 8.4% (vegetables +28%)
 - b) **Core inflation** eased to 3.8%, reflecting stable fuel and manufactured goods prices
- 2) **Labour Market:**
 - a) **Unemployment rate fell** to 3.2% (from 6% in 2017–18); WPR improved to 52.1%
 - b) **Formalization:** EPFO subscriptions doubled since FY19, with 12.5 million youth enrolled in FY24

Fiscal Management

- 1) **Capital Expenditure**
 - a) **Allocation:** ₹11.1 lakh crore (+8.2% YoY post-elections), focusing on railways (₹2.5 lakh crore) and highways.
 - b) **Multiplier effect:** 2x GDP impact compared to revenue spending; created 1.2 million jobs in FY25.
 - c) **State capex:** 6 states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, etc.) contributed 60% of industrial GVA.
- 2) **Fiscal Consolidation**
 - a) **Deficit containment:** Fiscal deficit at 5.8% of GDP despite welfare schemes like PM-KISAN (+₹20,000 crore)
 - b) **Debt challenges:**
 - i) State debt: Debt-to-GDP ratio at 31.3% (vs. FRBM limit of 20%)
 - ii) Central debt: 57% of GDP; target to reduce to 60% by FY27
- 3) **Tax Structure**
 - a) **Household burden:** 64% of taxes from individuals vs. 33% from corporates
 - b) **GST collections:** ₹10.62 lakh crore in FY25 (+11% YoY), but growth slowed in Q3
- 4) **Banking Health**
 - a) **NPAs:** Gross NPAs at 2.6% (12-year low); net NPAs at 0.6% due to improved recoveries
 - b) **Profitability:** PAT surged 22.2% YoY in H1 FY25; CRAR at 16.7% (above Basel III norms)
 - c) **MSME credit:** Loans grew 13% YoY, aided by collateral-free schemes like CGTMSE

Developments in capital markets



Source: SEBI

Key Challenges

1) Manufacturing Stagnation

- Subdued global demand:** Manufacturing exports slowed to -3.1% YoY due to weak demand from Europe/Asia and aggressive trade policies in advanced economies
- Ineffective PLI utilization:** Despite Production-Linked Incentive schemes, manufacturing contributes only 17% to GDP (unchanged since 2015-16), highlighting structural inefficiencies
- Sectoral volatility:**
 - Steel/Cement:** Faced price pressures and monsoon-related demand slowdown
 - Oil refining:** Inventory losses and reduced margins due to geopolitical disruptions
- Supply-chain bottlenecks:** Heavy monsoon disrupted mining/construction inputs, delaying production cycles
- MSME constraints:** High compliance costs (time + financial) deter formalization; 88% of workforce in low-competency roles limits scalability

2) Climate Vulnerabilities

- Physical risks:** 12% of GDP (\$360 billion) at risk from extreme weather (floods, cyclones, heatwaves)
- Agricultural stress:** Uneven monsoon impacted Rabi crops despite Kharif record production; food inflation surged to 8.4%

c) Energy transition gaps:

- Solar dependency:** 80% of solar panels imported from China, creating supply-chain risks
 - Coal reliance:** No viable alternatives for 70% of energy needs; stranded assets risk if phased out prematurely
- Water stress:** 40% of districts face declining groundwater, threatening irrigation and industrial use
 - Funding shortfall:** Only 15% of climate finance from international sources; domestic funding dominates adaptation efforts

3) Fiscal Pressures

- State debt crisis:** Debt-to-GDP ratio at 31.3% (vs. FRBM limit of 20%), straining welfare spending
- Pay Commission impact:** 8th Pay Commission (effective 2026) risks inflating salaries/pensions, worsening fiscal deficit
- Tax stagnation:** Households contribute 64% of taxes vs. corporates' 33%, limiting revenue diversification
- Middle-class burden:** Stagnant wages amid rising inflation (CPI at 4.9%) erode disposable income, curbing consumption

Administrative measures to control food inflation

Policy Recommendations
1) Deregulation Focus

- Simplify compliance:** Target 1,536 processes for MSMEs (e.g., single-window approvals, decriminalizing minor violations)
- Risk-based regulation:** Adopt UK's "one-in, two-out" model to eliminate redundant laws
- Land/labour reforms:**
 - Relax zoning norms for industrial clusters
 - Amend Factories Act to allow flexible labour hours for export units
- Forest Conservation Act 2023:** Simplify land-use norms for infrastructure projects

2) Skill Development

- NEP 2020 expansion:** Target 50M workers by 2030 via:
 - Digital literacy: Integrate AI/ML courses in 5,000 colleges
 - Apprenticeships: Scale PM Internship Scheme to 1 crore youth by 2028-29
- Industry partnerships:** Mandate corporate skilling programs (e.g., FutureSkills Prime trained 1.27L in AI)
- Teacher training:** Deploy AI-driven platforms like TeacherApp for 10M educators by 2026

3) Green Transition

- Renewable push:** Allocate ₹2.4 lakh crore for:
 - Solar/Wind: Expand capacity to 500 GW by 2030
 - Battery storage: Develop 50 GWh facilities to stabilize grids
- EV infrastructure:**
 - Separate electricity connections for EV charging stations
 - FAME-III incentives for commercial vehicles

- CCUS technology:** Mission-mode R&D for carbon capture in steel/cement sectors
- Circular economy:** Scale LiFE initiative to cut 1 billion tonnes of CO₂ via waste recycling

A country counts its cows, camels, and quail

The once-in-five-year Livestock Census' 21st edition is underway, to count the number of animals across 219 breeds of 16 species. Enumerators use a software to upload the details of livestock and the number of people engaged in rearing animals. The government claims this will help them frame better policies; the farmers want financial aid. A.M. Jigeeesh travels to Haryana to track developments on ground

TH News, By A M Jigeeesh

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? India's 21st Livestock Census (2024–25) is underway, aiming to shape policies for sustainable livestock development and rural livelihoods.

21st Livestock Census: A Factsheet

- Frequency:** Conducted every 5 years since 1919 (quinquennial)
- 21st Edition:** October 2024 – February 2025
- Conducted by:** Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (MoFAHD)
- Species Covered:**
 - 16 livestock species:** Cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, horse, camel, dog, rabbit, etc
 - 8 poultry types:** Fowl, duck, quail, ostrich, etc.
 - Breeds Documented:** 219 indigenous breeds across 16 species (e.g., Sahiwal, Hariyanwi)
- 1 lakh enumerators** and 17,000 supervisors engaged.
- Android app** for real-time data upload (breed, age, milch status, geotagging)

Green and clean: on India and a critical minerals framework

India must formulate a critical minerals framework that is just and equitable

IE Editorial

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? India's push for renewable energy and challenges in localizing production highlight the need for a socially equitable critical minerals framework.

Key Challenges in Renewable Energy Transition

- 1) **Budgetary growth vs underutilization**
 - a) Allocation rose from ₹1,535 crore (2015) to ₹32,626 crore (2025), but revised estimates remain low due to underutilization.
 - b) Coal dominance: 70% power generation despite renewables constituting 46% of installed capacity (Oct. 2024)
- 2) **Policy Implementation Gaps**
 - a) **PM-KUSUM scheme (2019):** Only 0.5 GW installed against ₹34,422 crore outlay for solar pumps and grid plants.
 - b) **Supply chain disruptions** during COVID-19 exposed fossil fuel dependency.
- 3) **Import Reliance & Inflation**
 - a) 40% customs duty on solar modules and 25% on cells slowed installations and raised costs.
 - b) Dependence on China for lithium-ion tech persists despite PLI schemes.

Government Interventions

- 1) **PLI schemes:** ₹18,100 crore (2021) for battery storage and ₹19,500 crore (2022) for solar modules.
- 2) **Customs duty exemptions:** 12 critical minerals and 35 capital goods to boost local manufacturing.

Way Forward: Strategic Imperatives

- 1) **Critical Minerals Framework**
 - a) Prioritize ethical mining practices and equitable distribution to reduce geopolitical risks.
 - b) Address environmental justice in extraction (e.g., tribal land rights, pollution control)
- 2) **Grid Modernization**
 - a) Scale battery storage to manage intermittent renewable output (e.g., solar/wind variability)
- 3) **Reduce Reliance on China:** Develop domestic processing and join Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

Factsheet: Critical Minerals

Definition

Critical Minerals: Non-fuel minerals vital for economic growth, national security, and clean energy transitions, with supply chains vulnerable to disruption.

Examples: Lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, copper, rare earth elements (REEs), and titanium

Global Importance

- 1) **Clean Energy Transition:**
 - a) EV Batteries: Lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite are essential for lithium-ion batteries
 - b) Renewables: Solar panels (silicon, silver), wind turbines (REEs for magnets), and grid infrastructure (copper, aluminum)
 - c) Demand for lithium could grow 40x by 2040 under net-zero scenarios
- 2) **Strategic Sectors:**
 - a) Defense & Aerospace: Used in jets, satellites, and advanced weaponry
 - b) Electronics: Semiconductors (gallium, germanium) and smartphones (cobalt, tin)
- 3) **Economic Impact:**
 - a) Price volatility (e.g., lithium prices surged 8–9x post-COVID)
 - b) Supply chain disruptions during COVID-19 and Russia-Ukraine war affected coal, nickel, and titanium

Mineral	Primary Uses	Top Producers
Lithium	EV batteries, energy storage	Australia, Chile, China
Cobalt	Batteries, aerospace alloys	DR Congo (70% global supply), China
Nickel	Stainless steel, EV batteries	Indonesia, Philippines, Russia
Rare Earths (REEs)	Wind turbines, EVs, electronics	China (60% mining, 90% processing)
Copper	Grid infrastructure, EVs, renewables	Chile, Peru, China

Global Challenges

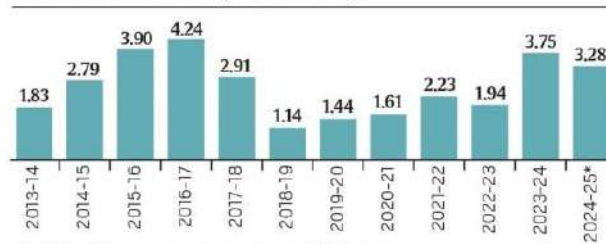
- 1) **Supply Chain Risks:**
 - a) Geopolitical Concentration: China refines 60–90% of lithium, cobalt, and REEs
 - b) Resource Nationalism: Export restrictions in Indonesia (nickel) and Chile (lithium)
- 2) **Environmental & Social Costs:**

- a) Water-intensive mining (e.g., lithium in Chile's Atacama Desert)
- b) Human rights issues in cobalt mining (DR Congo)
- 3) **Market Volatility:** Limited exchange trading and speculative hoarding inflate prices

India's Position

- 1) 30 Critical Minerals: Includes lithium, cobalt, graphite, and REEs
- 2) **Initiatives:**
 - a) **PLI Schemes:** ₹18,100 crore for battery storage (2021) and ₹19,500 crore for solar modules
 - b) **KABIL:** Joint venture to secure overseas mineral assets (e.g., lithium in Argentina)

IMPORTS OF PULSES (IN \$ BILLION)



*April-November.

Source: Department of Commerce.

Key Challenges to Aatmanirbharta in Pulses

1) Rising Imports Amid Production Goals:

- a) Pulses imports surged to \$3.28 billion (April–Nov 2024), projected to reach \$5.9 billion in FY25, surpassing the 2016-17 peak.
- b) Recent drought (2023-24) worsened reliance on imports, with tur/arhar imports crossing 10 lt for the first time in FY25.
- c)
- d) **Tur/Arhar:** Traditional 250–270-day crop with low yields (15–16 q/ha); confined to rainfed regions (e.g., Maharashtra, Karnataka).
- e) **Need for Hybrid Varieties:** Requires high-yielding, short-duration (140–150 days) hybrids amenable to mechanical harvesting.

2) Policy Ambiguity

- a) **Duty-Free Imports:** Extended until March 2026 for tur/arhar, masoor, urad, and matar, disincentivizing domestic production.
- b) **MSP vs. Market Prices:** Tur/arhar MSP (₹7,550/quintal) barely exceeds current market rates (₹7,300–7,400/quintal).

3) Past Successes vs. New Targets

- a) **Chana & Moong:** Achieved self-reliance via short-duration varieties and MSP procurement (e.g., chana procurement: 25.56 lt in 2022-23).
- b) **Replicating Success:** Requires similar breakthroughs in breeding (e.g., photo-thermo-insensitive moong) and procurement for tur, urad, and masoor.

Way Forward

- 1) Develop high-yielding, climate-resilient pulse varieties.
- 2) Balance import policies with incentives for domestic farmers.
- 3) Strengthen MSP procurement infrastructure for target crops.

News / Explained / Explained Economics / Budget announcement: Why aatmanirbharta in pulses is a challenge

Budget announcement: Why aatmanirbharta in pulses is a challenge

The Union Budget's Rs 1,000-crore mission for achieving self-reliance in pulses comes even as India's imports are set to hit a new high in the current fiscal.

IE Explained, By Harish Damodaran

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture

[Link](#)

Why in News? The 2025-26 Union Budget allocated ₹1,000 crore for a six-year mission to achieve self-reliance in pulses (tur, urad, masoor), despite India's pulses imports hitting record highs in 2024-25.

IMPORTS OF MAJOR PULSES (IN LAKH TONNES)

	Peas (Matar)	Chickpea (Chana)	Lentil (Masoor)	Pigeonpea (Tur/Arhar)	Urad & Moong**
2014-15	19.52	4.19	8.16	5.75	6.23
2015-16	22.45	10.31	12.60	4.63	5.82
2016-17	31.73	10.81	8.29	7.04	5.75
2017-18	28.77	9.81	7.97	4.13	3.47
2018-19	8.51	1.86	2.49	5.31	5.74
2019-20	6.67	3.71	8.54	4.50	3.82
2020-21	0.46	2.95	11.16	4.43	4.17
2021-22	0.01	2.02	6.67	8.40	8.07
2022-23	0.01	0.63	8.58	8.94	5.57
2023-24	11.76	2.85	16.76	7.71	6.29
2024-25*	15.77	2.92	5.91	10.00	5.30

*April–November; **Black Gram; Green Gram.

Source: Department of Commerce.

Why the tax cuts are a one way gamble

In a world where expenditure by the government is directly linked to tax revenue, any shortfall on the tax side will show up on the expenditure side as well. Despite the fall of 8% in the effective tax rate, the Budget has estimated direct tax collection to go up by 14%.

TH Text & Context, By Rohit Azad, Indranil Chowdhury

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? The 2025 Union Budget introduced significant income tax cuts for middle-class taxpayers, projected to reduce revenue by ₹1 lakh crore while relying on optimistic revenue growth targets.

Box 1

$$T = t \cdot Y$$

$$\frac{\Delta T}{T} = \frac{\Delta t}{t} + \frac{\Delta Y}{Y} + \left(\frac{\Delta t}{t} * \frac{\Delta Y}{Y} \right)$$

$$\therefore \frac{\Delta T/T}{0.14} = \frac{\Delta t/t}{-0.08} + \frac{1 + \Delta t/t}{0.92} \frac{\Delta Y}{Y}$$

$$100 * \frac{\Delta Y}{Y} = 23.9\%$$

where,

T = income tax revenue

t = average income tax rate

Y = total taxpayers' income

Box 2

$$G - T = d \cdot Y$$

$$G = T + d \cdot Y$$

$$G = (t + d) \cdot Y$$

where,

G = total government expenditure

T = total tax revenue

Y = Output (GDP)

d = FRBM deficit target

t = total tax-GDP ratio

Revenue Projections and Risks

- Targets vs. reality:** Direct tax collections are projected to rise by 14% despite an 8% effective tax rate cut.
- Growth dependency:** Achieving this requires a 24% income growth among taxpayers, double the nominal GDP growth rate (10.1%).
- Risks:**
 - Optimistic scenario:** Relies on income concentration among high earners or upward mobility, exacerbating K-shaped growth.
 - Pessimistic scenario:** Revenue shortfalls could force expenditure cuts, disproportionately affecting welfare schemes for the poor.

Tax Reforms in Budget 2025

- Rebate extension:** Taxpayers earning ₹7-12 lakh/year receive a full rebate (previously limited to ₹7 lakh).
- Higher exemption limits:** Increased from ₹3 lakh to ₹4 lakh for incomes above ₹12 lakh, with adjusted tax slabs and reduced marginal rates.
- Beneficiaries:** Only 2-3% of India's population (upper-income groups) stand to gain.

Chart 1: Delivery versus promises in fiscal expenditure

(in ₹ crore)

	RE 2024 minus BE 2024	BE 2025 minus RE 2024
Total expenditure	-1,04,025	3,48,858
Capital expenditure	-92,682	1,02,661
Rural development	-75,133	76,142
Urban development	-18,907	33,107
Education	-11,584	14,596
Agriculture	-10,992	30,578
Food subsidy	-7,830	6,000
Health	-1,255	10,279

RE: Revised Estimate; BE: Budget Estimate

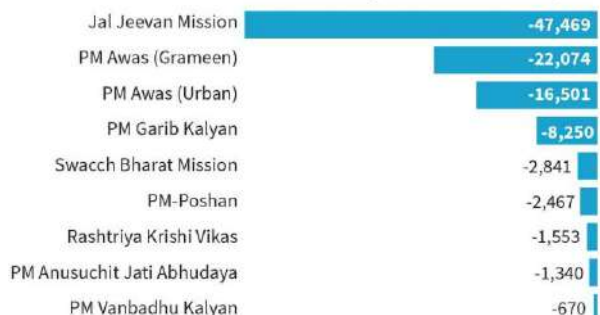
Expenditure Cuts and Fiscal Policy

- FRBM constraints:** Deficit targets (revised down to 4.8% in 2024 and 4.4% in 2025) limit spending flexibility, making fiscal policy procyclical.

- 2) **Past cuts:** ₹1 lakh crore reduction in 2024 expenditure, including flagship schemes like PM-KISAN and MGNREGA (Chart 1).
- 3) **2025 promises:** Higher allocations depend entirely on meeting revenue targets.

Chart 2: Cut in expenditure of some flagship schemes

Difference between Revised Estimate and Budget Estimate of 2024-25 (in ₹ crore)

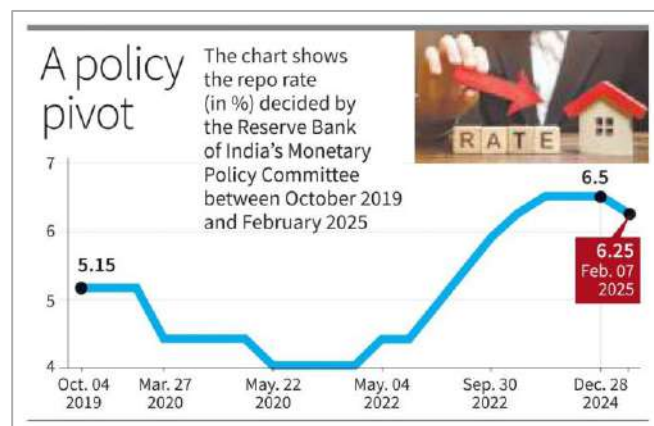


Impact on Economic Growth

- 1) **Gamble on private sector:** With exports and government spending constrained, the Budget bets on tax-cut-driven consumption to spur corporate investment.
- 2) **Historical context:** Previous corporate tax cuts (2019) and capex hikes failed to revive private investment.

The tax cuts represent a high-stakes gamble, prioritizing fiscal consolidation over countercyclical stimulus. Failure to meet revenue targets risks deepening inequality and stalling growth.

Why in News? The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25% on February 7, 2025, its first rate reduction in five years, aiming to stimulate economic activity amid moderating inflation and slowing growth.



Rationale Behind the Rate Cut

- 1) **Growth Stimulus:** To boost consumption and investment by making borrowing cheaper for individuals and businesses, aligning with fiscal measures like income tax cuts in the Union Budget 2025.

News / Explained / Explained Economics / Rationale behind RBI's repo rate cut by 25 bps, possible impact on interest rates, investment and consumption

Premium

Rationale behind RBI's repo rate cut by 25 bps, possible impact on interest rates, investment and consumption

RBI Repo Rate Cut Explained: EMIs on home and vehicle loans will come down, making it easier for individuals to repay their debts. A lower repo rate makes borrowing cheaper for individuals and businesses, which can lead to increased spending and investment. However, there are concerns, too.

IE Explained, By Hitesh Vyas , George Mathew
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

RBI GOVERNOR ON EXCHANGE RATE, JALAN PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS AND INFLATION


RBI IS CARRYING OUT AN INTERNAL REVIEW of the economic capital framework announced by the Bimal Jalan-led committee. The review of the framework determining the RBI's surplus transfers to the government is being undertaken because the six-member panel had recommended a review every five years, Malhotra said. "It's an internal review which was required to be done because the time is over," he said.

THE RESERVE BANK'S exchange rate policy has remained consistent over the years. Our stated objective is to maintain orderliness and stability, without compromising market efficiency... our interventions in the forex market focus on smoothening excessive and disruptive volatility rather than targeting any specific exchange rate level or band. The exchange rate of the Indian rupee is determined by market forces

SUPPORTED BY A FAVOURABLE OUTLOOK on food and continuing transmission of past monetary policy actions, it is expected to further moderate in 2025-26, gradually aligning with the target of 4 +/- 2 per cent." The growth-inflation dynamics "opens up policy space for the MPC to support growth" he said.

SANJAY MALHOTRA
RBI GOVERNOR

- 2) **Inflation Control:** Retail inflation eased to 5.2% in December 2024 (within RBI's 2-6% target band), creating room for monetary easing.
- 3) **Global Trends:** Aligns with accommodative stances by other central banks to counter global economic uncertainties, including US-China trade tensions.
- 4) **Liquidity Injection:** RBI infused ₹1.5 trillion liquidity to ease credit flow and support economic expansion.

- 3) **Policy Flexibility:** Experts (e.g., Crisil, Axis Securities) foresee additional cuts (50-75 bps in FY26) if inflation stays subdued.
- 4) **Risks:** Currency volatility (rupee at ₹87/USD) and global shocks (e.g., oil price spikes, trade wars) could disrupt RBI's plans.

The RBI's move balances growth revival and inflation control, but sustained success hinges on global stability and effective policy transmission.

Economic Impacts
Positive Impacts

- 1) **Lower Borrowing Costs:** EMLs on repo-linked home/vehicle loans to drop (e.g., ~₹8,417 savings per lakh on 20-year loans).
- 2) **Increased Credit Access:** Banks likely to reduce lending rates, spurring consumer spending and business investments.
- 3) **Job Creation:** Cheaper credit could revive stalled projects and expand industries, supporting employment.

Negative Impacts and Challenges

- 1) **Inflation Risks:** Excess liquidity and higher demand may push prices upward, especially if global commodity prices rebound.
- 2) **Reduced Savings Incentive:** Lower deposit rates could discourage savers, impacting household financial planning.
- 3) **Transmission Lag:** Past rate hikes (250 bps since 2022) saw incomplete transmission via MCLR-linked loans, raising concerns about effectiveness.

Future Outlook

- 1) **Growth Projections:** GDP growth estimated at 6.7% for FY26, up from 6.4% in FY25, supported by rate cuts and fiscal measures.
- 2) **Inflation Forecast:** Retail inflation projected at 4.2% for FY26, assuming stable food prices and global commodity trends.

News / Explained / Explained Economics / What's new in the Income Tax Bill, 2025

W Premium

What's new in the Income Tax Bill, 2025

The Income-tax Bill cuts some clutter of the existing Act and introduces new illustrative tables, while maintaining continuity in most aspects. There are no major tweaks in penalty or compliance provisions

IE Explained; By Aanchal Magazine
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? The Income Tax Bill 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on February 13, 2025, to replace the 64-year-old Income Tax Act, 1961, aiming to simplify tax laws and reduce complexity, with implementation expected from April 1, 2026.

Key Features of the Income-tax Bill, 2025
Structural Simplification

- 1) **Shorter & Simplified:** Reduced from 823 pages (1961 Act) to 622 pages, halving word count (5.12 lakh to 2.60 lakh)
- 2) **Streamlined Chapters/Sections:** 23 chapters (vs. 47 earlier) and 536 sections (vs. 819 effective sections)
- 3) **Clearer Language:** Removed 1,200 provisos, 900 explanations, and redundant provisions. Tables/formulae replace complex clauses.

INSIDE BILL INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT

Particulars	Income-tax Act, 1961	Bill tabled in LS
Chapters	47	23
Sections	819*	536
Words	5.12 lakh	2.60 lakh

*Effective sections. About 1,200 provisions and 900 sections have been removed in the new Bill.

SCHEDULE II (16 ROWS) Incomes exempt, such as agricultural income

SCHEDULE III (39 ROWS) Certain persons eligible for exemption on certain income such as partners of firms and HUF, etc.

SCHEDULE IV (14 ROWS) Exemptions to non-residents

SCHEDULE V (8 ROWS)

Exemption to business trusts, Sovereign Wealth Funds, etc.

SCHEDULE VI (12 ROWS) Exemptions to IFSC units

SCHEDULE VII (48 ROWS) Persons exempt from tax

News / Explained / Everyday Explainers / What Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana aims to achieve, how PMDKY will be implemented

What Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana aims to achieve, how PMDKY will be implemented

The scheme was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 during her Budget speech

IE Explained; By Harikishan Sharma

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture

[Link](#)

Tax Year Concept

- 1) Replaces "assessment year" and "previous year" with a unified "tax year" aligned with the financial year (April 1–March 31)
- 2) Eliminates dual tracking of income years, simplifying compliance.

Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs)

- 1) Cryptocurrencies, NFTs classified as "property" under capital assets, subject to capital gains tax.
- 2) Definition aligns with amendments in Finance Bill 2025.

Compliance & Penalties

- 1) **Digital Administration:** Faceless jurisdiction for remote tax processes
- 2) **Dispute Resolution:** Clearer guidelines for Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP)
- 3) **Taxpayer's Charter:** Outlines rights and responsibilities

Deductions & Exemptions

- 1) **Salary Deductions:** Standard deduction, gratuity, and leave encashment consolidated
- 2) **Capital Gains:** Outdated exemptions (e.g., pre-1992 transfers under Section 54E) removed
- 3) **Presumptive Taxation:** Thresholds raised for small businesses (₹3 crore turnover), professionals (₹75 lakh receipts)

Why in News? Launched by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025, Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY) seeks to address low agricultural productivity and rural underemployment.

Key Objectives: The scheme focuses on:

- 1) **Productivity enhancement** via advanced farming techniques and technology adoption
- 2) **Crop diversification** and sustainable agricultural practices to ensure long-term gains
- 3) **Post-harvest infrastructure development** at panchayat/block levels to reduce wastage
- 4) **Improved irrigation facilities** for better water-use efficiency
- 5) **Access to credit** for short-term and long-term agricultural investments

Implementation Strategy

- 1) **District selection:** Targets 100 districts with low productivity, moderate crop intensity, and below-average credit access
- 2) **Convergence approach:** Integrates existing central/state schemes (e.g., irrigation missions, credit programs) with specialized measures
- 3) **Phased rollout:** Initial focus on 100 districts, with technical and financial support from multilateral development banks
- 4) **Stakeholder collaboration:** Partnership between central/state governments and local bodies

Additional Initiatives in Budget 2025-26

Rural Prosperity and Resilience Program: A parallel scheme focusing on skilling rural women, youth, and marginal farmers

Makhana Board: To be established in Bihar for promoting niche crops

National missions for pulses, hybrid seeds, and cotton technology

 **Opinion** by Ashok Gulati, Raya Das

Can India replicate the Amul success story for the food and vegetables' sector?

It is challenging but not impossible. What we need is scale, policy backing, and a champion to drive this growth

IE Opinion; By Ashok Gulati, Raya Das
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture

[Link](#)

Why in News? India's fruits and vegetables (F&V) sector faces structural challenges, but models like Sahyadri Farms—inspired by Amul's dairy success—show potential for transformation with policy and institutional backing.

Challenges in the F&V Sector

- 1) **Post-harvest losses:**
 - a) 8.1% of fruits and 7.3% of vegetables lost annually, costing ₹1.53 trillion due to inadequate cold storage and fragmented supply chains
 - b) Only 2% of F&V produce is processed, worsening price volatility
- 2) **Fragmented value chains:**

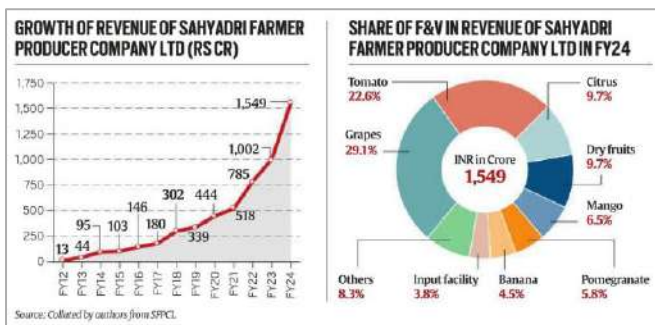
- a) Farmers receive ~30% of consumer prices due to intermediaries and unorganized markets
- b) Inequitable cold storage distribution: 59% capacity in 4 states, primarily for potatoes
- 3) **Climate vulnerability:** Extreme temperatures and erratic monsoons disrupt yields, with prices projected to stay high until June 2025

Amul vs. F&V Sector: Key Differences

Factor	Amul (Diary)	F&V Sector
Commodity Focus	Single product (milk)	Diverse crops (grapes, tomatoes, etc.)
Supply Chain	Centralized cooperatives	Fragmented, region-specific value chains
Processing	80% farmer price share	~30% farmer price share; needs processing
Policy Support	NDDDB-led institutional framework	Lacks dedicated national body

Sahyadri Farms: A Model for Replication

- 1) **Scale and farmer integration:**
 - a) Expanded from 10 farmers (2004) to 26,500+ farmers (2024), with ₹1,549 crore turnover (64.6% domestic, 35.4% exports)
 - b) Ensures farmers receive ~55% of export prices for grapes and stabilizes tomato prices via processing units
- 2) **Infrastructure and innovation:**
 - a) Operates 3,500 MT/day processing capacity, cold storage, and traceability tech to reduce losses
 - b) Generates 6,000+ jobs (32% women) through value-added products like ketchup, juices, and frozen goods



Policy Interventions Needed

- Strengthen FPOs:** Scale 10,000 FPOs with digital tools (e.g., ONDC) and working capital support to replicate Sahyadri's success
- Revive Operation Greens:** Address underfunding (₹500 crore allocation) and lack of leadership to stabilize prices for 22 perishables
- National F&V Board:** Streamline value chains akin to NDDB, targeting 55–60% farmer share in consumer prices
- Climate-Resilient Strategies**
 - Promote Sahyadri's patented climate-resistant grape/citrus varieties and regenerative farming to counter heatwaves and pests
 - Expand cold chain infrastructure to reduce losses, as India's average warehouse capacity (20,000 cubic meters) lags behind the US (100,000+ cubic meters)

While replicating Amul's success is challenging, Sahyadri's blueprint—paired with scaled FPOs, infrastructure investment, and a national board—offers a viable pathway to transform India's F&V sector.

News / Explained / Explained Economics / Middle Class 2.0: Changing employment sector in India, and its one big challenge

Premium

Middle Class 2.0: Changing employment sector in India, and its one big challenge

The top 5 IT firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL and Tech Mahindra) employ more Indians today than the Railways or the armed forces. Similarly, private sector banks have more employees compared with their state-owned counterparts. But India still has a major job challenge beyond services

IE Explained; By Harish Damodaran
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? India's top IT firms and private banks now employ more people than railways/defence, signalling a major shift in organized sector employment, yet face

challenges in quality job creation beyond services.

Shift to Private Sector Dominance: Accelerating Trends

1) Employment projections:

- 97% of firms surveyed by CII plan to increase hiring in 2024-25 and 2025-26, with 42-46% targeting 10-20% workforce expansion
- TeamLease reports 7.1% workforce growth in H2 FY25, led by logistics (14.2% hiring surge) and EVs

2) Public sector stagnation:

- Government jobs constituted only 21% of salaried employment (2024), down from 24% pre-pandemic
- Union Budget 2024-25's "employment-linked incentives" aim to create 4.1 crore private jobs but face gaps in high-value roles

IT & Banking: Dual Engines of Middle Class 2.0

1) IT sector rebound:

- 15-20% job growth expected in 2025 across AI/ML, cybersecurity, and cloud roles
- GCCs (Global Capability Centres) accounted for 50%+ IT job openings in 2024, with Tier-2 cities like Coimbatore seeing 27% hiring growth

2) Banking expansion:

- BFSI sector leads with 7.21% net employment growth (H1 FY25), driven by private banks and NBFCs
- Fintech employment grows at 4.89% (2024), propelled by UPI adoption and open banking ecosystems

Structural Employment Challenges: Beyond Services

1) Sectoral imbalances:

- Agriculture employs 46.2% (2023-24 PLFS), while manufacturing stagnates at 11.4% – trailing construction (12%)
- Only 25% IT roles target freshers (2024), with delayed campus onboarding due to project uncertainties

2) Quality vs. quantity:

- 58% workforce self-employed (Citibank 2024 report), while gig economy roles dominate (Uber: 10L drivers; Zomato/Swiggy: ~12L delivery partners)

- b) Mid-senior roles (7-10 years) stagnate, while entry-level hiring grows modestly at 3% (2024)

Way Forward: Bridging Gaps for Viksit Bharat

1) Skill Development:

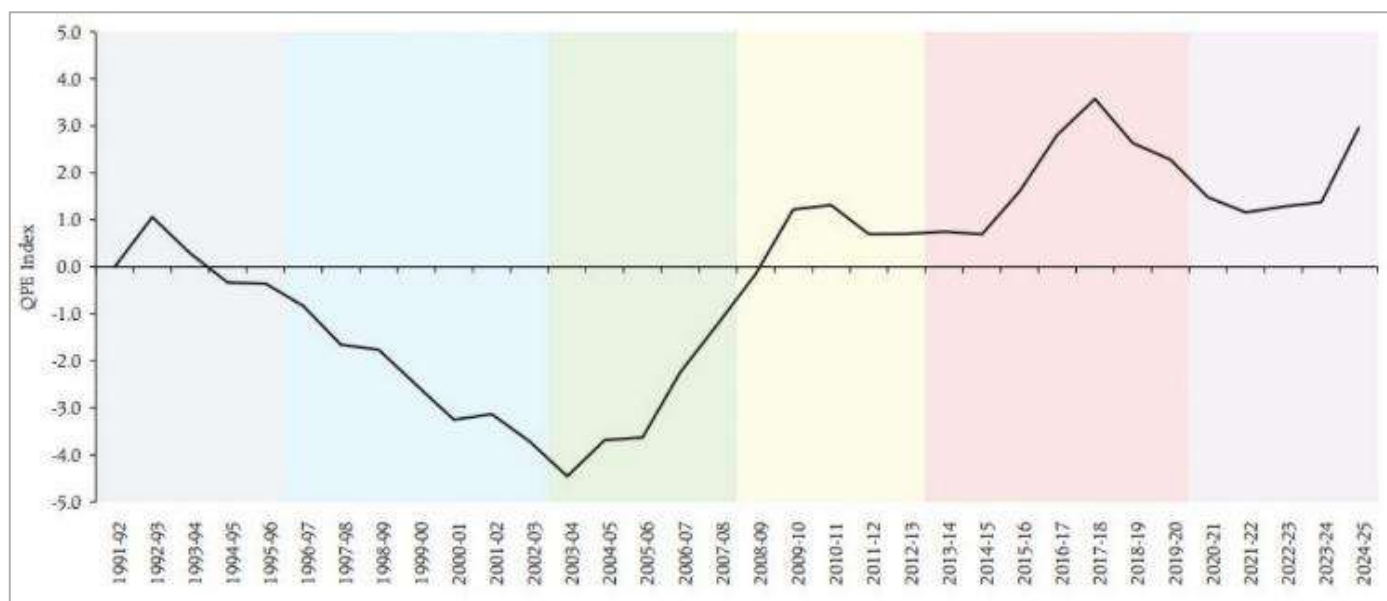
- Expand "Skill India" to address tech talent shortages, with 30-35% demand surge predicted for AI/ML roles
- Increase upskilling budgets by 15-20% (2025) for emerging tech domains like quantum computing and edge tech

2) Manufacturing Push: Redirect 2 lakh crore from govt salary budgets to fill 18 lakh public sector vacancies and boost labour-intensive industries

3) Formalizing Informal Jobs: Extend social security to gig workers as the IT gig economy triples to 24 million by 2030

4) Policy Reforms:

- Implement PPP models for infrastructure projects to achieve 12M annual job targets vs current 8-9M
- Enhance export competitiveness in electronics, EVs, and green tech to drive manufacturing employment



News / Explained / Explained Economics / What is deposit insurance, and how will raising it help you?

 Premium

What is deposit insurance, and how will raising it help you?

The government is considering increasing the insurance cover for bank deposits from the current limit of Rs 5 lakh. Here is what to know.

IE Explained; By Hitesh Vyas , Aanchal Magazine;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? The Indian government is considering raising the deposit insurance cover from ₹5 lakh to protect bank depositors, following RBI's restrictions on New India Co-operative Bank.

What is deposit insurance?

1) Historical context:

- a) Insurance **introduced in 1962**; coverage raised 6 times (from ₹1,500 to ₹5 lakh in 2020).
- b) Last hike followed PMC Bank collapse (2019), impacting thousands of depositors.
- 2) Managed by **DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation)**, an RBI division.
- 3) Covers deposits **up to ₹5 lakh per depositor across all accounts in a bank** (savings, fixed, current, recurring).
- 4) **Excludes:** Deposits by governments, inter-bank deposits, and primary co-operative societies.

How does the ₹5 lakh insurance limit work?

- 1) **Covers principal + interest**, but only up to ₹5 lakh.
 - a) Example: ₹4.99 lakh (principal + interest) = fully covered.
 - b) ₹5.1 lakh (principal ₹5 lakh + interest ₹10k) = interest excluded.
- 2) **Interim payouts** within 90 days if RBI restricts a bank (via Section 18A of DICGC Act).

Why revise the insurance limit?

- 1) **Current coverage:** 97.8% of accounts fully insured (above global 80% benchmark).
- 2) **Future needs:** Economic growth, inflation, and rising incomes necessitate periodic revisions.
- 3) **Trust-building:** Higher limits strengthen depositor confidence in banks.

New India Co-operative Bank case

- 1) RBI restricted operations due to losses and governance issues (₹2,436 crore deposits as of March 2024).

- 2) Depositors must submit claims by March 30, 2025; DICGC to pay insured amounts by May 14, 2025.

News / Explained / Explained Economics / ExplainSpeaking: How India improved the quality of its govt expenditure — and why that matters

 Premium

ExplainSpeaking: How India improved the quality of its govt expenditure — and why that matters

The RBI has used data since 1991 to create the 'Quality of Public Expenditure' index to assess how well the government is spending its [read: 'your'] money. Spoiler alert: things are as good as they have ever been

IE Explained; By Udit Misra;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently highlighted in its monthly bulletin that India's Quality of Public Expenditure (QPE) has reached its highest level since economic reforms began in 1991, driven by improved fiscal discipline and capital expenditure focus.

Key Components of RBI's Quality of Public Expenditure (QPE) Index

The index evaluates government spending quality using five parameters:

- 1) **Capital outlay-to-GDP ratio** (higher = better infrastructure investment).
- 2) **Revenue-to-capital expenditure ratio** (lower = reduced wasteful spending).
- 3) **Development expenditure-to-GDP ratio** (higher = better long-term welfare).
- 4) **Development expenditure's share in total spending** (higher = better prioritization).
- 5) **Interest payments-to-expenditure ratio** (lower = reduced debt burden).

Historical Trends in Public Expenditure Quality

- 1) **1991–2003:** Modest improvement post-reforms, but fiscal pressures limited gains.
- 2) **2003–2008:** Sharp decline due to Fifth Pay Commission hikes and rising debt costs.
- 3) **2008–2014:** Recovery driven by FRBM Act discipline, derailed by Global Financial Crisis stimulus.
- 4) **2014–2020:** States improved via higher fiscal devolution; Centre lagged due to GST teething issues.
- 5) **2020–2025:** Post-COVID recovery focused on capital expenditure, boosting QPE to record highs.

Current Status (2025)

- 1) **Infrastructure Push:** Central/state governments allocated **₹1.79 lakh crore (22% of UP's budget)** for roads/energy, plus a **₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund** for city PPP projects.
- 2) **Education Focus:** National budget rose to **₹1.28 trillion (6.5% YoY)**, prioritizing AI labs, medical seats, and **UP's ₹1.06 lakh crore school upgrades**.
- 3) **Healthcare Expansion:** **UP doubled medical colleges (80+)**, allocated ₹50,550 crore for facilities, and Union health budget surged 10.8% for rural insurance.
- 4) **Fiscal Discipline:** Interest payments fell as fiscal deficit narrowed to **4.4% of GDP** (FY26 target); RBI cut repo rate to **6.25% to boost investments**.
- 5) **QPE Index Record High:** Post-COVID recovery driven by **17% YoY capital outlay** and **21% development expenditure** share in social sectors.
- 6) **State-Centre Coordination:** States like UP prioritized agriculture (₹89,353 crore) and medical seats (1,500+), aided by GST reforms.
- 7) **Employment Initiatives:** ₹10,000 crore startup fund and MSME credit guarantees launched to counter private investment lag (**₹54 lakh crore govt capex since 2014**).
- 8) **Growth Projections:** FY26 GDP growth pegged at **10.1%**, backed by nuclear energy targets (100 GW by 2047) and green infrastructure.

SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICE PYQ

The Reserve Bank of India's Quality of Public Expenditure (QPE) Index assesses fiscal efficiency through multiple parameters. Consider the following factors:

- 1) Capital Outlay-to-GDP Ratio
- 2) Tax-to-GDP Ratio
- 3) Development Expenditure-to-GDP Ratio
- 4) Fiscal Deficit-to-GDP Ratio
- 5) Interest Payments-to-Total Expenditure Ratio

Which of the above factors are considered in the QPE Index?

- (a) 1, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 2, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 3, 4 and 5 only

News / Explained / Explained Economics / Leader in fibre production, but growth, exports lagging: What ails India's textile industry

W/ Premium

Leader in fibre production, but growth, exports lagging: What ails India's textile industry

In textile exports, India is behind countries like China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, which benefit from vertically integrated supply chains, lower production costs, and simpler regulations. What are India's problems, and how can they be fixed?

IE Explained; Aggam Walia

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? India's textile exports stagnated at **\$34.1 billion in FY24 (vs \$33.4 billion in FY20)**, trailing China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh due to fragmented supply chains and high production costs.

Key Challenges in Growth & Exports

- 1) **Post-pandemic contraction:** Textile sector shrank 1.8% annually (FY20-24); apparel sector declined 8.2% annually
- 2) **Muted export growth:**
 - a) Apparel exports fell to \$14.5 billion in FY24 (from \$15.5 billion in FY20)
 - b) Only cotton textiles grew (\$12.3 billion in FY24 vs \$10.2 billion in FY20)
- 3) **Labour-intensive clusters:** 80% MSME-dominated, vulnerable to global demand shocks (e.g., Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur)

Low Export Competitiveness

- 1) **Fragmented supply chain:** Cotton logistics spread across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana raise costs
- 2) **Cost disadvantages:**
 - a) Polyester fibre 33-36% costlier than China (Jan 2025)
 - b) Viscose fibre 14-16% pricier
- 3) **Regulatory hurdles:** Complex export procedures vs competitors' FTA benefits and simplified customs

Sustainability Pressures

- 1) **EU compliance:** 16 new regulations (2021-24) affect 20% of India's textile exports
- 2) **Recycling gap:** <25% global textile waste recycled; PM Modi projects \$400M domestic recycling market
- 3) **Cost escalation:** Small firms struggle with renewable energy adoption and material traceability norms

Potential Solutions & Government Focus

- 1) **Vertical integration:** Economic Survey pushes “fibre-to-fashion” models to rival China/Vietnam
- 2) **MMF boost:** Increase per capita MMF consumption (current: 3.1kg vs China’s 12kg)
- 3) **Policy reforms:** Simplify export procedures and incentivize sustainable production

News / Explained / Explained Economics / How can Indian farmers be weaned away from urea, DAP and potash?

How can Indian farmers be weaned away from urea, DAP and potash?

All these three fertilisers are imported, whether directly or as inputs for domestic manufacturing. Capping or even reducing their consumption has become a strategic imperative of sorts for India. Can their use go down? If yes, how? We explain.

IE Explained; Harish Damodaran

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture

[Link](#)

Why in News? India’s heavy reliance on imported urea, DAP, and potash (MOP) has made reducing their consumption a strategic priority to address supply risks, fiscal strain, and inefficient nutrient use amid global disruptions.

Need to Reduce Urea, DAP, and MOP Use

- 1) **Import dependency:**
 - a) MOP is entirely imported (**Canada, Russia, Jordan**), while DAP requires imported raw materials (rock phosphate, sulphur).
 - b) Urea production depends on imported LNG, despite **~85% domestic output**.
- 2) **Nutrient imbalance:** High-analysis fertilisers (urea: **46% N**, DAP: **46% P**, MOP: **60% K**) exceed crop needs, causing soil degradation and poor nutrient absorption.

CONSUMPTION/SALE OF MAJOR FERTILISER PRODUCTS

	UREA	DAP	20:20:0:13@	SSP	MOP	NPKS*
2013-14	306	73.57	33.37	38.79	22.8	72.64
2014-15	306.1	76.26	38.02	39.89	28.53	82.78
2015-16	306.35	91.07	37.82	42.53	24.67	88.21
2016-17	296.14	89.64	37.14	37.57	28.63	84.14
2017-18	298.94	92.94	35.47	34.39	31.58	85.96
2018-19	314.18	92.11	36.9	35.79	29.57	90.28
2019-20	336.95	101	42.25	44.03	27.87	98.57
2020-21	350.43	119.11	51.63	44.89	34.25	118.11
2021-22	341.8	92.72	50.7	56.81	24.56	114.79
2022-23	357.25	104.18	50.42	50.17	16.32	100.74
2023-24	357.8	108.12	53.94	45.44	16.45	110.73
Apr-Jan '23-24	317.5	101.47	49.1	42.37	13.96	100.12
Apr-Jan '24-25	345.73	87.13	65	45.12	18.76	128.38

fig. in (lakh tonnes) *Includes 20:20:0:13; @Includes 20:20:0:0
 Source: The Fertiliser Association of India.

Substituting DAP with Alternatives

- 1) **Ammonium Phosphate Sulphate (APS):**
 - a) Contains 20% N, 20% P, and 13% sulphur; sales surged 32.4% (2024-25) as a DAP substitute for oilseeds, pulses, and cotton.
 - b) **Cost-effective:** Uses half the phosphoric acid of DAP, lowering import reliance.
- 2) **Other alternatives:**
 - a) **Single Super Phosphate (SSP):** 16% P + 11% sulphur.
 - b) **NPK complexes:** 10:26:26 or 12:32:16 for balanced potassium application.

Government Policy Interventions

- 1) **Subsidy restructuring:** Capped DAP MRP at ₹27,000/tonne with ₹21,911 subsidy to stabilize farmer costs.
- 2) **Promoting alternatives:**
 - a) Incentivized APS production; sales likely to hit 7 MT in FY25.
 - b) Pushed nano urea adoption (8 crore bottles sold in 2023-24) to cut conventional urea use.
- 3) **Domestic production boost:** New urea plants (e.g., Assam’s 12.7 LMT facility) and rock phosphate mining initiatives.

Challenges Ahead

- 1) **Farmer preferences:** Reluctance to shift from high-analysis fertilisers due to perceived efficacy.
- 2) **Cost gaps:** DAP imports cost ₹65,000/tonne (unviable vs. subsidized ₹52,411).
- 3) **Supply chain bottlenecks:** Ground-level shortages despite sufficient stocks.

Way Forward: Promoting Balanced Fertilisation

- 1) **Expand NPKS complexes:** Target 14 MT annual sales with tailored ratios (e.g., 14:35:14:0).
- 2) **Policy reforms:**
 - a) Deregulate non-subsidised fertilisers to boost innovation.
 - b) Incentivize domestic rock phosphate mining and phosphoric acid production.
- 3) **Awareness campaigns:** Educate farmers on crop-specific nutrient needs and sustainable practices.

News / Explained / Explained: NAKSHA scheme, mooted in Union Budget, which will update urban land records

Explained: NAKSHA scheme, mooted in Union Budget, which will update urban land records

The programme addresses the issue of updation of land records in urban areas – while land records have improved in rural areas, several cities lack maps even today. Here is what to know about the scheme.

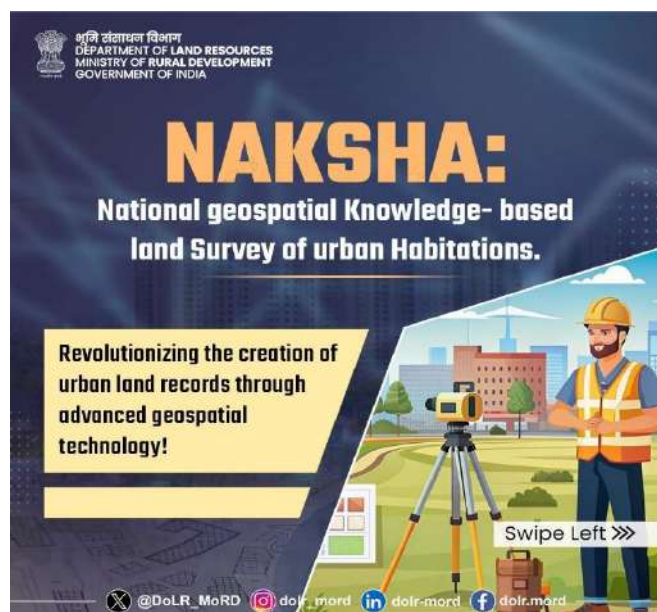
IE Explained; By Harikishan Sharma

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy [Link](#)

Why in News? The NAKSHA scheme was recently launched to modernize urban land records through geospatial mapping, addressing outdated or missing records in most Indian cities.

Key Objectives of NAKSHA Scheme

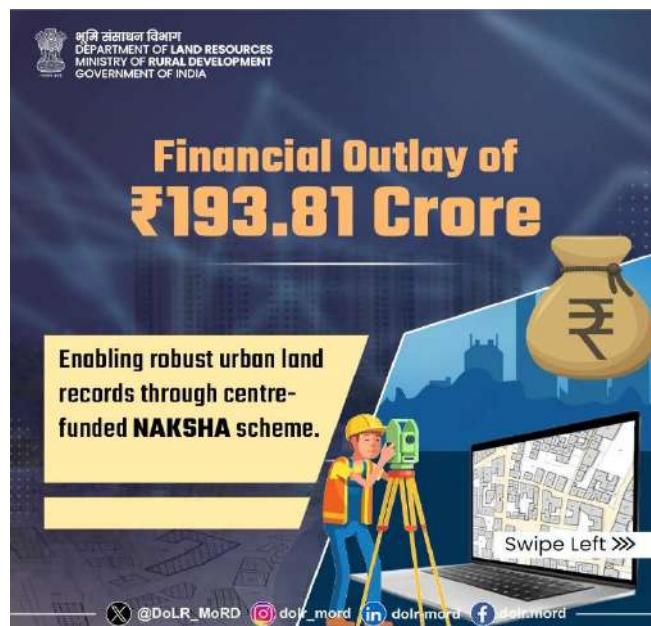
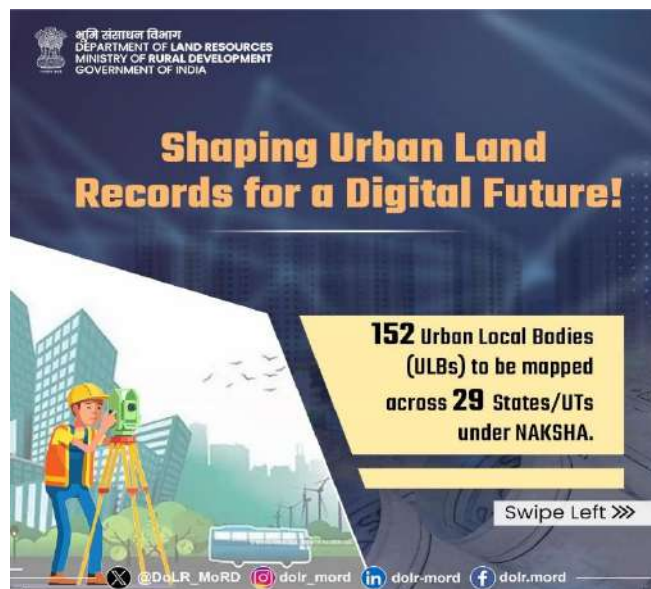
- 1) Create a comprehensive geospatial database for urban areas using aerial/field surveys and GIS technology.
- 2) Streamline property ownership records and improve land governance efficiency.
- 3) Facilitate urban planning, infrastructure design, and smoother property transactions.



Implementation Strategy

- 1) **Pilot Phase:**
 - a) Covers 152 urban local bodies across 26 states (cities with <2 lakh population and <35 sq km area).
 - b) Estimated cost: ₹194 crore (₹25,000–60,000 per sq km based on camera type).
- 2) **Survey Methodology:**
 - a) Aerial photography via drones equipped with 5 cm resolution cameras (outperforming ISRO/ESA satellites).

- b) Combines LiDAR sensors and 3D modelling for precision.
- 3) **Three-Stage Process:**
 - a) Drone-based aerial survey and data extraction.
 - b) Field verification of property tax, ownership, and registration details.
 - c) Public grievance redressal before finalizing maps.



Significance & Expected Outcomes

- 1) Reduce land disputes and enable faster urban planning.
- 2) Improve property tax collection and credit access for homeowners.
- 3) Scale-up plan: Expand to 4,912 urban local bodies post-pilot

Science and Technology

February 2025

Union Budget 2025: Reactor plan not enriched with funds

Union Budget proposes that five of them will be ready by 2033 but no financial commitment made towards building them; Atomic Energy Department to spend ₹24,049 cr. in 2025-26; amendments to Atomic Energy Act, Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, says Sitharaman

TH Science, By Jacob Koshy

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology
[Link](#)

Why in News? The Union Budget 2025 announced a ₹20,000 crore Nuclear Energy Mission to develop indigenous Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) but made no immediate financial commitments.

Key Announcements

- 1) **Nuclear Energy Mission**
 - a) ₹20,000 crore allocated for indigenous SMR development.
 - b) Target: Operationalize 5 reactors by 2033.
- 2) **Legislative Amendments:** Proposed amendments to
 - a) Atomic Energy Act
 - b) Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act
 - c) Aim: Facilitate private sector participation and meet 100 GW nuclear energy target by 2047.

About Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

- 1) **Definition:** Compact reactors (<300 MW) with modular design for factory fabrication and on-site assembly
- 2) **Advantages**
 - a) **Cost Efficiency:** Lower upfront capital investment; economies of scale through mass production
 - b) **Deployment Speed:** 3–7 years construction time vs. 10+ years for conventional reactors
 - c) **Safety:** Passive safety systems; reduced radioactive inventory
 - d) **Flexibility:** Suitable for remote areas, grids with limited capacity, and industrial use
- 3) **Global Trends:**
 - a) 80+ SMR designs under development globally (US: 22, Russia: 17, China: 10)

- b) Operational SMRs: Russia's KLT-40S (70 MW) and China's HTR-PM (210 MW)
- c) Bharat SMRs: Indigenous designs based on modified Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)

Newly discovered asteroid 2024 YR4 may hit Earth in 2032. How worried should you be?

The 2024 YR4 was first discovered in December last year by a telescope in Chile. The near-Earth asteroid is as big as a football field, measuring 40 to 100 metres across.

IE Explained, By Alind Chauhan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology
[Link](#)

Why in News? Asteroid 2024 YR4, discovered on December 27, 2024, by NASA's ATLAS telescope in Chile, has a 1.2% chance of impacting Earth on December 22, 2032 – with a 98.8% probability of missing our planet.



Current Risk Assessment

- 1) **Size:** Estimated between 40–100 meters (130–330 feet) in diameter – comparable to a football field.
- 2) **Torino Scale:** Rated Level 3 (out of 10), indicating a close encounter warranting attention but not public concern. This is the second-highest rating ever given, after Apophis in 2004.

- 3) **Palermo Scale:** Rated -0.56 , meaning the impact hazard is $3.6\times$ less than the background risk of similar-sized asteroids.

Potential Impact

- 1) **Energy Release:** If it strikes, the asteroid could release 8–10 megatons of energy – equivalent to hundreds of nuclear bombs, causing localized devastation.
- 2) **Impact Zones:** Northern India, central Africa, and the Atlantic Ocean are preliminary risk areas. Damage could resemble the 1908 Tunguska event, which flattened 2,000 km² of Siberian forest.
- 3) **Airburst vs. Crater:** Likely to cause an atmospheric explosion (airburst) or crater formation, depending on composition.

Monitoring and Mitigation

- 1) **Tracking Updates:** Observations from global telescopes will refine its trajectory through mid-2025, when it becomes too faint to observe until its 2028 flyby.
- 2) **Deflection Options:**
 - a) **Kinetic Impactors:** Tested successfully in NASA's 2022 DART mission, which altered asteroid Dimorphos' orbit.
 - b) **Nuclear Detonation:** A last-resort option for larger or short-warning threats.
- 3) **International Coordination:** ESA and NASA are leading efforts under the UN's SMPAG framework to assess response strategies.

Historical Context

- 1) **Low Probability, High Vigilance:** Over 37,000 near-Earth asteroids are tracked, but 2024 YR4 is the only one currently with $>1\%$ impact odds. Most initially high-risk asteroids are later downgraded (e.g., Apophis).
- 2) **Comparison to Past Events:**
 - a) **Chelyabinsk Meteor (2013):** 20-meter asteroid caused 500+ injuries via airburst
 - b) **Chicxulub Impact:** The 10-km asteroid that caused mass extinction 66 million years ago

Should You Be Worried?

- 1) **No Immediate Panic:** A 99% chance of missing Earth makes catastrophic outcomes unlikely.
- 2) **Ongoing Vigilance:** Continued observation will likely reduce risk estimates, as seen with past asteroids.
- 3) **Planetary Defense Readiness:** Missions like DART and global monitoring networks

demonstrate growing capability to deflect threats.

For now, 2024 YR4 serves as a reminder of the importance of asteroid detection programs, but not a reason for alarm. Updates from space agencies in 2025–2028 will provide clearer answers.

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

What are asteroids? How real is the threat of them causing extinction? Discuss mitigation strategies. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

 Opinion by C. Raja Mohan

C Raja Mohan writes: The story of India's atomic slide – and an opportunity to bounce back

Budget decision to amend laws governing atomic energy was overdue. It is a chance to open up the sector and exploit its potential.

IE The Ideas Page, By C Raja Mohan
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech, IR [Link](#)

Why in News? Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced amendments to the Atomic Energy Act (1962) and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA, 2010) in the 2025 budget to revive India's nuclear energy sector, targeting 1,00,000 MW capacity by 2047.

Proposed Reforms in Budget 2025

- 1) **Amend CLNDA (2010):** Align liability norms with international standards, ensuring only plant operators bear full liability (vs. current provisions allowing operators to sue suppliers). This aims to attract foreign collaboration and private investment.
- 2) **Revise Atomic Energy Act (1962):**
 - a) Allow private sector participation in building nuclear plants using Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) technologies.
 - b) Transition DAE's role from production to R&D, mirroring reforms in India's space sector.

Rationale Behind the Proposed Reforms

- 1) **Overcoming Structural Barriers:** The 1962 Act's government monopoly stifled innovation and funding. Private firms like L&T and Tata historically supplied critical equipment but were barred from leading projects.

- 2) **Addressing Liability Disincentives:** The CLNDA's supplier liability clauses deterred foreign partnerships (e.g., with U.S., France, South Korea) and domestic private investment since 2010, stalling reactor deployments.
- 3) **Energy Transition Imperative:** Achieving 1,00,000 MW by 2047 requires \$150–200 billion investment and rapid scaling, impossible under current legal frameworks.
- 4) **Learning from Sectoral Success:** Recent space sector liberalization spurred private innovation (e.g., startups like Skyroot); similar reforms could unlock nuclear energy's potential.

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / Story of NavIC: crucial indigenous SatNav system, a few hurdles in development path

Story of NavIC: crucial indigenous SatNav system, a few hurdles in development path

The partial failure of its NVS-02 navigation satellite on Sunday was the latest in a series of setbacks suffered by the Navigation with India Constellation (NavIC) system. We explain

IE Explained, By Johnson T A
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? The partial failure of India's NVS-02 navigation satellite (IRNSS-1K) in February 2025 marks the latest setback for the NavIC system, highlighting persistent challenges in sustaining its satellite constellation.

Background and Objectives

- 1) **Origins:** Conceived in 1999 after the Kargil War, NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) aimed to reduce reliance on foreign GPS systems for defence and civilian use.
- 2) **Initial Plan:** A 7-satellite constellation (IRNSS) was proposed by 2016, with the first satellite (IRNSS-1A) launched in 2013.
- 3) **Cost:** Budgeted at ₹2,250 crore, the program has launched 11 satellites since 2013, but only 5 remain fully operational as of 2025.

Development Challenges

- 1) **Atomic Clock Failures:**

- a) **IRNSS-1A:** All 3 rubidium atomic clocks failed by 2016, rendering it non-operational.
 - b) **Subsequent Satellites:** Clocks on IRNSS-1C, 1D, 1E, and 1G also malfunctioned, mirroring issues in Europe's Galileo system.
 - c) **Replacement Efforts:** Modified clocks were introduced in later satellites (e.g., IRNSS-1I, 1J), but 6 of 11 satellites launched faced partial failures.
- 2) **Launch Failures:**
 - a) IRNSS-1H (2017) failed to reach orbit due to a heat shield malfunction.
 - b) NVS-02 (2025) suffered an engine failure, leaving it in a sub-optimal orbit.

Importance of NavIC

- 1) **Strategic Autonomy:** Ensures secure positioning data for India's military, avoiding dependence on foreign systems like GPS.
- 2) **Dual Services:**
 - a) **Standard Positioning Service:** For civilian/commercial use (e.g., disaster management, transport).
 - b) **Restricted Service:** Encrypted, defense-exclusive signals with <20m accuracy.
- 3) **Global Integration:** Qualcomm partnered to embed NavIC in chipsets (2023), boosting civilian adoption.

Current Status and Future Plans

- 1) **Operational Satellites:** 4–5 fully functional satellites (IRNSS-1B, 1F, 1I, 1J/NVS-01, and possibly 1C).
- 2) **Next-Gen Satellites:**
 - a) NVS-03, 04, 05 planned to enhance coverage and replace aging satellites.
 - b) Feature indigenous clocks alongside foreign components to mitigate past failures.

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

Which one of the following countries has its own Satellite Navigation System?

- (a) Australia
- (b) Canada
- (c) Israel
- (d) Japan

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

With reference to the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), consider the following statements:

- 1) IRNSS has three satellites in geostationary and four satellites in geosynchronous orbits.
- 2) IRNSS covers entire India and about 5500 sq. km beyond its borders.
- 3) India will have its own satellite navigation system with full global coverage by the middle of 2019.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) None

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

Why is the Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS) needed? How does it help in navigation? (150 Words, 10 Marks)

Should India build a sovereign, foundational AI model?

Premium

IE Explained, By Aron Deep

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology
[Link](#)

Why in News? The IT Ministry's IndiaAI Mission has announced plans to develop a sovereign foundational AI model, sparking debates about its necessity and feasibility.

Key Debates & Perspectives**1) Sovereignty vs. Practicality**

- a) Sovereignty arguments center on avoiding sanctions (e.g., U.S.-imposed chip/software restrictions) and national pride.
- b) Counterarguments highlight India's lack of advanced chip manufacturing capabilities and reliance on foreign hardware (e.g., TSMC, Huawei Ascend 910C chips)

2) Cost & Resource Challenges

- a) Training foundational models (e.g., DeepSeek V3) costs millions (~\$5.6M per run), with high failure rates in research
- b) India's AI market is smaller than the U.S., limiting revenue potential for local models

3) Government Initiatives

- a) Subsidized GPU clusters for startups/academia aim to reduce infrastructure costs
- b) Critics argue the allocated budget is insufficient compared to global players (e.g., Meta's \$80B annual infrastructure spend)

Recommendations

- 1) **Focus on AI Applications:** Prioritize building tools atop existing models (e.g., IndicTrans2 for Indian languages) over foundational models.
- 2) **R&D Ecosystem Reforms:** Address systemic gaps in research funding and private investment.
- 3) **Open-Source Leverage:** Use open-weight models (e.g., DeepSeek R1) to avoid dependency on proprietary systems.

News / Explained / PM Modi's message at AI Action Summit: Open source, sustainability, job optimism

Premium

PM Modi's message at AI Action Summit: Open source, sustainability, job optimism

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday emphasised the need to build quality data sets that are "free from biases" and embrace open-source models. He also carried a rather hopeful message on the potential impact of AI on jobs.

IE Explained; By Soumyarendra Barik

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology
[Link](#)

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the AI Action Summit in Paris, emphasizing key aspects for responsible AI development.



Open Source and Bias-Free AI

- 1) **Call for Open Source:** PM Modi advocated for embracing open-source architecture in AI, similar to China's DeepSeek model, contrasting with closed-source Western models like OpenAI and Google.
- 2) **Need for Bias-Free Data:** He stressed the importance of building quality, unbiased datasets, especially relevant for capturing the Indian context and nuances often missed by current AI models.
- 3) **Indian Context Focus:** India aims to fund foundational models that understand the Indian context, including its diverse languages and rich, underrepresented cultural literature.

Sustainability and Energy

- 1) **Energy Intensity of AI:** PM Modi acknowledged the high energy demands of AI and highlighted the necessity for green and clean energy sources to power AI's future.
- 2) **Sustainable AI Models:** He emphasized that sustainable AI means not only using clean energy but also developing efficient AI models in terms of size, data needs, and resource consumption.
- 3) **Nuclear Energy:** French President Macron promoted nuclear energy as a viable solution for powering energy-intensive AI, contrasting it with reliance on fossil fuels, referencing a contrast with US energy policies.

Job Optimism and Skilling

- 1) **Job Evolution, Not Disappearance:** PM Modi presented an optimistic view on AI's impact on jobs, stating that technology changes the nature of work rather than eliminating it.
- 2) **Emphasis on Skilling and Re-skilling:** He advocated for focusing on skilling and re-skilling initiatives to prepare the workforce for the evolving job market in the AI era.
- 3) **Contrasting Views with Economic Survey:** This optimistic stance differs from earlier concerns raised in India's Economic Survey, which highlighted potential job uncertainty and vulnerability, especially for low-skill workers, due to AI.

Opinion by Narendra Modi

Narendra Modi Writes: India will ensure that the AI future is for good, and for all

Some people worry about machines becoming superior in intelligence to humans. But, no one holds the key to our collective future and shared destiny other than us humans

IE Opinion; By Narendra Modi
 Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology
[Link](#)

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's commitment to shaping an inclusive, ethical, and sustainable AI future at the Paris AI Summit on February 11, 2025.

Key Priorities for AI Governance

- 1) **Global Cooperation:** Need for collective efforts to establish governance standards that uphold shared values, address risks, and build trust.
- 2) **Democratizing Access:** Ensure equitable access to AI benefits, especially in the Global South, by bridging gaps in computing power, data, and resources.

Addressing AI Challenges

- 1) **Bias Mitigation:** Build unbiased, high-quality datasets and develop open-source systems for transparency.
- 2) **Job Disruption:** Invest in skilling/reskilling programs to adapt to AI-driven job transformations.
- 3) **Sustainability:** Prioritize energy-efficient AI models and green power to reduce high energy intensity.

India's Contributions to AI

- 1) **Digital Public Infrastructure:** Affordable, open-access frameworks for governance and economic modernization, serving 1.4 billion people.
- 2) **National AI Mission:** Focuses on public-private partnerships, developing India-specific Large Language Models (LLMs), and sharing expertise globally.
- 3) **G20 Leadership:** Advocated responsible AI use during India's G20 presidency, promoting techno-legal data privacy solutions.

Vision for AI's Role

- 1) **Social Impact:** Deploy AI to accelerate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in health, education, and agriculture.

- 2) **Human-Centric Approach:** Ensure technology remains rooted in local ecosystems and prioritizes people's welfare over machines.

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / Scientists discover 'Einstein ring' around nearby galaxy: What it is, its significance

Scientists discover 'Einstein ring' around nearby galaxy: What it is, its significance

The first Einstein ring was discovered in 1987, and since then, several more have been discovered. However, it remains unclear how many such rings exist. Notably, they are extremely rare.

IE Explained; By Alind Chauhan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology

[Link](#)

Why in News? The European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope discovered a rare Einstein ring around the galaxy NGC 6505, located 590 million light-years away, marking a significant milestone in gravitational lensing research.

What is an Einstein Ring?

- 1) **Definition:** A luminous ring formed when light from a distant galaxy bends around a massive foreground object (e.g., galaxy or dark matter) due to gravitational lensing.
- 2) **First Observation:** Predicted by Einstein's general relativity, the first Einstein ring was discovered in 1987.

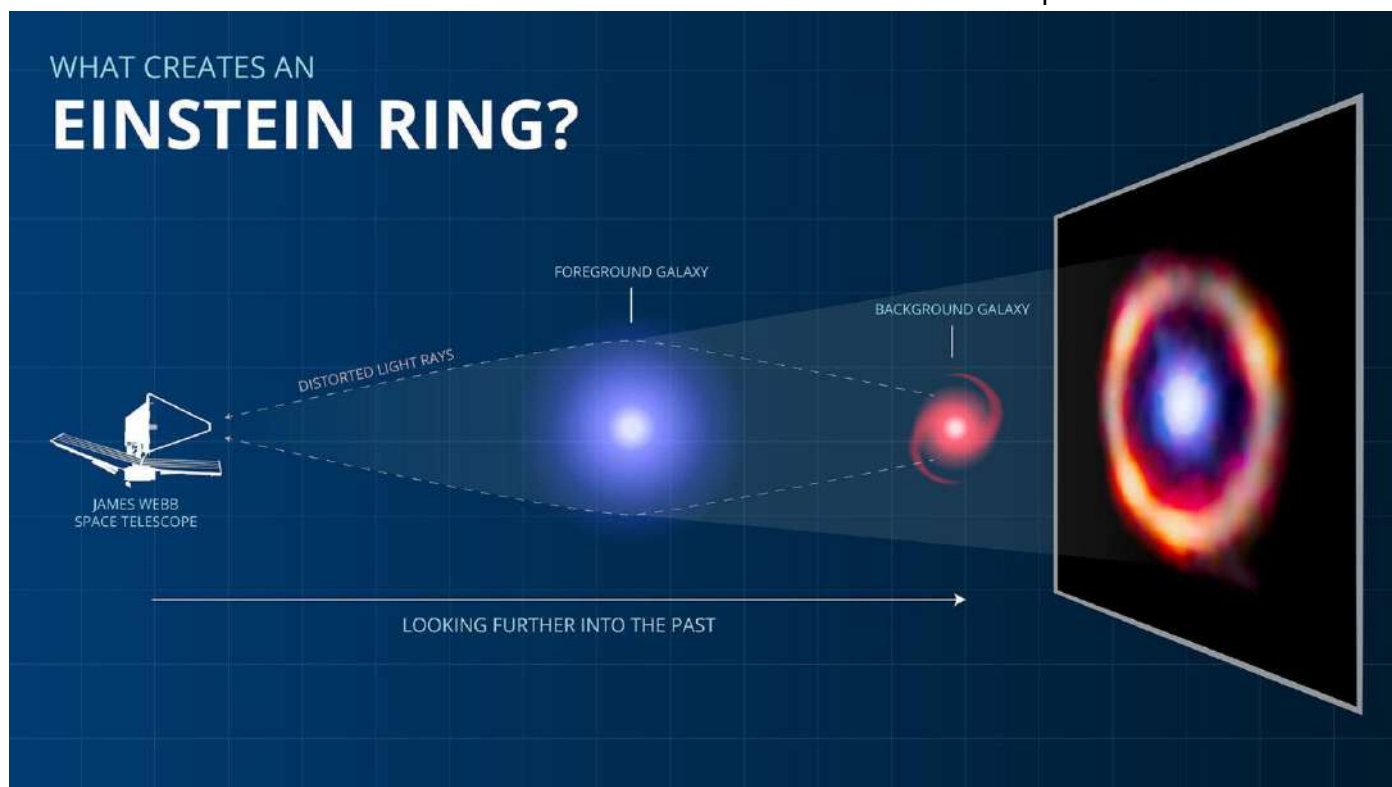
- 3) **Formation:** Occurs when the observer, foreground galaxy, and background galaxy align perfectly, warping spacetime and creating a ring-like distortion.

Significance of the Discovery

- 1) **Dark Matter Insights:**
 - a) Allows indirect detection of dark matter, which constitutes ~85% of the universe's mass but does not emit light.
 - b) Revealed dark matter accounts for ~11% of NGC 6505's central mass, contrasting with its overall cosmic prevalence
- 2) **Cosmic Magnification:** Magnifies light from a background galaxy (4.42 billion light-years away), enabling study of otherwise invisible distant objects.
- 3) **Validating Instruments:** Euclid's high-resolution imaging detected the ring in a well-studied galaxy, showcasing its capability to uncover hidden cosmic phenomena.

About Euclid Space Telescope

- 1) **Mission:** Map over a third of the sky to study dark energy and dark matter by observing billions of galaxies.
- 2) **Key Features:**
 - a) Captures wide-field, high-resolution images in visible and near-infrared light.
 - b) First to detect the Einstein ring around NGC 6505 despite prior observations by other telescopes.



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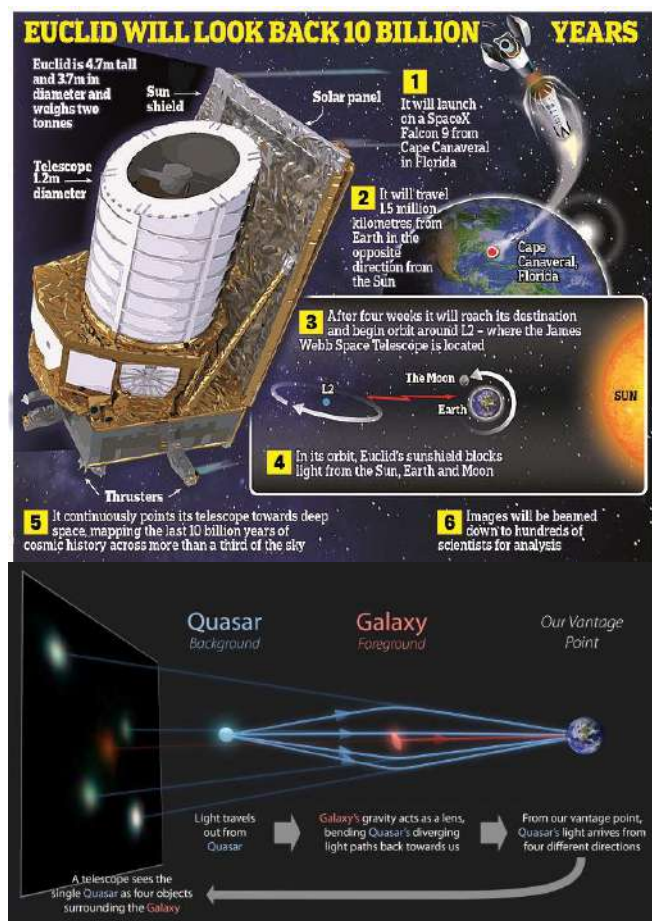
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Gravitational Lensing

- Mechanism:** Massive objects warp spacetime, bending light from background sources
- Types:**
 - Strong Lensing:** Produces Einstein rings or arcs (e.g., NGC 6505's ring)
 - Weak Lensing:** Subtly distorts galaxy shapes for large-scale dark matter mapping
- Applications:** Measures galaxy masses, studies universe expansion, and probes early galaxies

Dealing with China's weaponisation of e-supply chains

TH Premium

With large-scale electronics manufacturing important to India, New Delhi needs to speed up its future-proofing

TH Editorial; By Anand P Krishnan
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech, IR [Link](#)

Why in News? China has imposed restrictions on its citizens working as engineers and technicians in Foxconn's Indian facilities, while also curbing exports of critical specialized manufacturing equipment to India.



Key Developments

1) Current Situation

- Foxconn is bringing in Taiwanese workers to address the manpower gap
- The stoppage of specialized equipment is particularly damaging to production
- Apple-Foxconn assembled \$14 billion worth of iPhones in India in fiscal year ending March 2024

2) China's Strategic Moves

- Weaponizing supply chain networks to slow Indian production
- Preventing tacit knowledge transfer between Chinese and Indian technicians
- Aiming to limit India's rise as a geopolitical rival

India's Manufacturing Landscape: Current Progress

- iPhone manufacturing established in multiple locations:
 - Foxconn facility in Sunguvarchatram, Tamil Nadu
 - Tata Electronics' plant in Hosur, Karnataka
- First-time assembly of iPhone 16 Pro models in India in 2024

Government Support

- Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme allocation increased to ₹8,885 crore
- Removal of basic customs duties on mobile phone components
- Apple's contract manufacturers received ₹6,600 crore under PLI scheme

Challenges Ahead

1) Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

- Critical dependence** on Chinese machinery/components for electronics (70% of smartphone components imported)
- Disruptions** from China's retaliatory export curbs on gallium, germanium, lithium tech, and manufacturing equipment

- c) **10-20% higher production costs** compared to global benchmarks due to import reliance
- 2) **Geopolitical Pressures:** China weaponizing trade to stall India's manufacturing growth through:
 - a) Visa bans for technical staff
 - b) Port delays for specialized equipment (150+ Foxconn shipments held at Chennai)
 - c) Restrictions on EV/solar technology transfers
- 3) **Infrastructure & Workforce Gaps**
 - a) Inadequate component ecosystems beyond final assembly lines
 - b) **54% skill mismatch** in advanced manufacturing sectors
 - c) **Land acquisition delays** and fragmented logistics networks
- 4) **Competitive Disadvantages**
 - a) **Limited domestic R&D capabilities** in semiconductor design
 - b) **Smaller manufacturing scale** compared to China's \$3.6 trillion exports
 - c) **Retaliatory risks** from China controlling 60% of global rare earth supply

Way Forward

- 1) **Immediate Mitigation**
 - a) Leverage Apple/Foxconn's China operations for **diplomatic negotiations**
 - b) **Fast-track customs clearance** for stuck shipments via IT Ministry intervention
 - c) **Expand sourcing from Japan/S.Korea** for high-precision components
- 2) **Strategic Industrial Development**
 - a) **Accelerate SPECS 2.0 scheme** for PCB/lithium-ion battery production
 - b) **Implement National Manufacturing Mission** with ₹1.3 lakh crore cluster funding
 - c) **Triple PLI allocations** for electronics to ₹26,000 crore by 2026
- 3) **Future-Proofing Measures**
 - a) **Adopt Industry 5.0 frameworks** combining AI/automation with workforce upskilling
 - i) Predictive maintenance for equipment
 - ii) AR-assisted assembly line training
 - b) **Develop 8-10 semiconductor design centres** via 50% R&D tax credits
 - c) **Establish dedicated EV component parks** near Bengaluru/Chennai ports
- 4) **Global Partnerships**

- a) **Negotiate tech-transfer agreements** with Taiwanese contract manufacturers
- b) **Join Minerals Security Partnership** to secure lithium/cobalt supplies
- c) **Align with EU's CBAM framework** for green manufacturing exports
- 5) **Policy Reforms**
 - a) **Simplify land pooling mechanisms** through state-industry SPVs
 - b) **Introduce production tax credits** for local component makers
 - c) **Implement single-window clearance** for MNCs in electronics/EV sectors

What's a DDoS cyberattack that hit Karnataka's Kaveri 2.0 portal?

 Premium

The Kaveri 2.0 portal, a critical application for property registrations, experienced performance issues in December 2024 and January 2025

TH Text & Context; By John Xavier

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? The Kaveri 2.0 portal, Karnataka's property registration system, recently faced a disruptive DDoS cyberattack, causing widespread service outages in December 2024 and January 2025.

What caused the service disruption?

- 1) **Malicious DDoS attacks** flooded the portal with fake traffic, overwhelming its servers using 62 email accounts and 14 IP addresses to create fraudulent database entries.
- 2) In January 2025, attackers generated **6.2 lakh requests in two hours** via random keyword searches for encumbrance certificates—eight times the usual traffic.

What is a DDoS attack?

A Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack disrupts services by bombarding servers with excessive traffic from multiple compromised systems (a botnet). Unlike simpler DoS attacks, DDoS exploits distributed networks to crash targets.

How did it impact Karnataka's services?

- 1) Property registrations and document services **came to a standstill**, drastically reducing daily transactions.
- 2) The Revenue Department confirmed the attack was **"motivated"** but did not specify perpetrators.

- 3) A police **FIR was filed under the IT Act, 2000**, with investigations ongoing.

What mitigation steps were taken?

- 1) Traffic filtering and rate limiting to block malicious requests.
- 2) Collaboration with cybersecurity agencies like the Centre for Smart Governance (CSG).
- 3) Plans for CAPTCHA integration, behavioural analysis, and regular security audits.

What's next for Kaveri 2.0? The portal resumed operations on February 5, 2025, but the attack underscores the need for robust cybersecurity protocols in government digital services. Authorities aim to strengthen incident response teams and public awareness about phishing risks.

Other notable DDoS attacks

- 1) **X (Twitter):** A 2024 attack disrupted Elon Musk's live conversation with Donald Trump.
- 2) **GitHub:** Targeted in 2015 by China-based botnets to censor anti-surveillance tools.

This incident highlights the growing vulnerability of critical public infrastructure to cyber warfare, demanding proactive defence strategies.

Researchers link a gene to the emergence of spoken language

Why did humans start speaking

IE The World; By Laura Ungar

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? A 2025 study identified the human-specific **NOVA1 gene variant (I197V)** as a potential driver of spoken language evolution, distinguishing modern humans from **Neanderthals and Denisovans**.

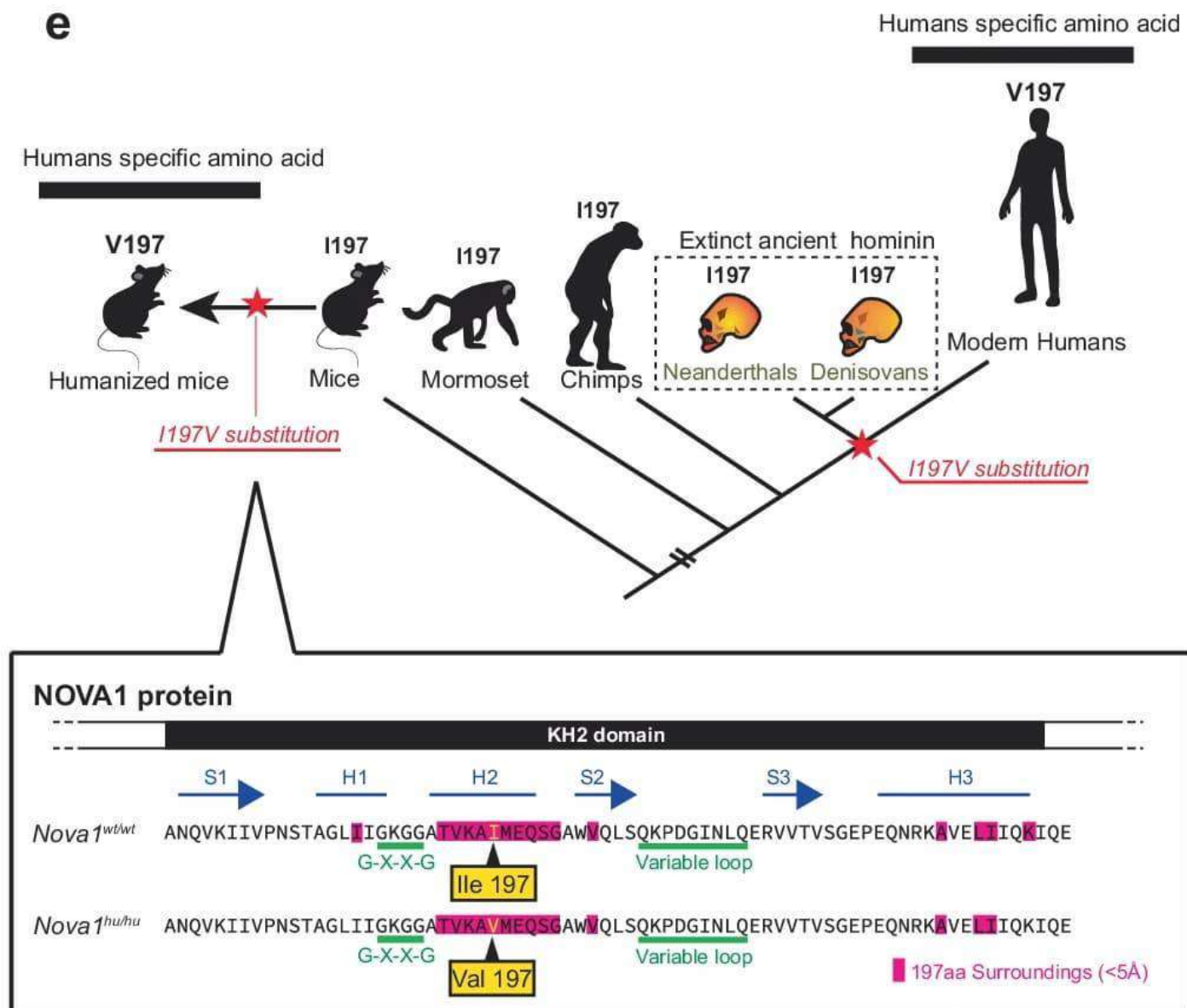
Key Findings

- 1) **Vocalization Changes in Mice:** Mice engineered with the human NOVA1 variant exhibited altered vocal patterns, including modified "letters" in pup-to-mother ultrasonic calls and adult mating chirps.
- 2) **Exclusive to Modern Humans:** The **I197V variant is absent in Neanderthals and**

Denisovans but present in nearly all modern humans, suggesting rapid evolutionary fixation ~250,000–500,000 years ago.

- 3) **Focused Impact:** Unlike **FOXP2 (shared with Neanderthals)**, NOVA1's mutation specifically influenced vocalization-related RNA binding without affecting broader neural development.





Methodology

- 1) **CRISPR-edited mice** with the human NOVA1 variant showed no developmental issues, enabling isolated study of vocal changes.
- 2) Analyzed 650,000+ human genomes, finding the variant in 99.999% of individuals, highlighting its selective advantage.

Implications

- 1) **Language Evolution:** The variant may have enhanced vocal communication, aiding survival and cultural transmission in early Homo sapiens.
- 2) **Clinical Potential:** Linked to speech delays and autism spectrum disorders, NOVA1 research could inform therapies for language-related conditions.
- 3) **Future Directions**

- a) Investigating NOVA1's role in neurodegenerative diseases and nonverbal autism.
- b) Early genetic screening for speech disorders using such variants

This study bridges genetics and linguistics, offering insights into humanity's unique capacity for complex language.

News / Long Reads / The great tech rush: After DeepSeek wake-up call, how India plans to get a seat at AI high table

The great tech rush: After DeepSeek wake-up call, how India plans to get a seat at AI high table

With the recent arrival of DeepSeek setting off AI ambitions in India, including an audacious bid to develop its own large language model, The Indian Express meets some of the top AI researchers as they map the country's road to a seat at technology's high table.

IE Big Picture; By Alind Chauhan, Amitabh Sinha, Vidhatri Rao

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? India accelerated its AI ambitions after China's DeepSeek demonstrated affordable large language model (LLM) development, triggering a ₹10,372-crore IndiaAI Mission and plans for a sovereign AI model within 10 months.

Key Developments

- 1) **Global Context:** DeepSeek's cost-efficient LLM disrupted Western tech dominance, likened to a **"Sputnik moment" in AI geopolitics**.
- 2) **Policy Action:** Government received 67 proposals for India-specific LLMs under the **IndiaAI Mission**, targeting linguistic diversity and sovereignty.
- 3) **Infrastructure Push:** 18,000 high-end GPUs already deployed, with plans to procure 10,000 more for shared public access.
- 4) **Global Leadership:** PM Modi co-chaired the **2025 AI Action Summit**, advocating ethical AI and positioning India as a global AI hub.

Challenges

- 1) **Resource Gaps:**
 - a) Severe GPU shortages and reliance on NVIDIA for critical chips
 - b) Training LLMs like **GPT-3 costs ~1,300 MWh of power**, straining India's infrastructure
- 2) **Data Constraints:**
 - a) Scarcity of datasets for India's 22 languages and mixed-language contexts
 - b) Risks of data leakage to foreign entities due to dependency on proprietary models like GPT-4
- 3) **Ethical Risks:** Proliferation of deepfakes and misinformation, necessitating robust governance frameworks

- 4) **Skill Deficit:** Limited AI-ready workforce; **only 3%** of global AI talent resides in India

Strategic Initiatives by India

- 1) **IndiaAI Mission:**
 - a) **Seven Pillars:** Compute access, datasets, innovation centers, application development, skills, startup funding, and trusted AI
 - b) **Centralized GPU infrastructure** to democratize AI research for startups and academia
- 2) **Sovereign AI Model:**
 - a) **Indigenous LLM** tailored to Indian languages, biases, and cultural nuances, slated for 2025 launch
 - b) **BharatGPT** (multilingual ChatGPT-like tool) and Reliance's JioBrain in development
- 3) **Global Collaboration:**
 - a) Partnerships with **France, Japan, and Denmark** for AI research and infrastructure
 - b) **Hosting the next AI Action Summit** to shape global AI ethics
- 4) **Sectoral Focus:**
 - a) AI applications in **agriculture** (crop prediction), **healthcare** (diagnostics for learning disabilities), and **climate resilience**
 - b) **Defence applications** for cyber counterterrorism and robotics

Way Forward

- 1) **Infrastructure:** Complete 10,000-GPU procurement within 18–24 months and establish AI compute clusters
- 2) **Data Sovereignty:** Expand the **IndiaAI Datasets Platform** to include regional-language datasets and non-personal public data
- 3) **Ethical Frameworks:** Implement PM Modi's call for **"bias-free AI"** via open datasets and international cooperation
- 4) **Skill Development:**
 - a) **Launch AI courses in 200 universities** and data labs to **train 1 million data annotators by 2030**
 - b) **Fellowships for AI researchers** and subsidized compute access (₹100/hour)
- 5) **Public-Private Partnerships:** Accelerate startups via IndiaAI Innovation Centre funding and global R&D collaborations

India's AI success hinges on **balancing rapid innovation with ethical safeguards**, reducing foreign dependency, and leveraging its digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar, UPI) for inclusive AI solutions.

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / How doctors treated a genetic disorder in the womb for the first time

How doctors treated a genetic disorder in the womb for the first time

The scientists treated spinal muscular atrophy, a debilitating genetic condition which affects motor neurons that control movement, and leads to progressive muscle weakening

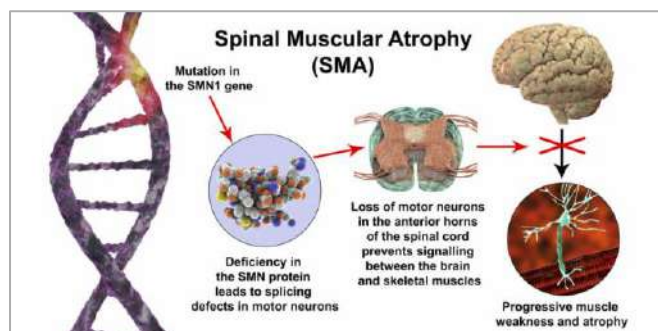
IE Explained;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? First-ever successful **in-utero treatment of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)** using the **drug risdiplam** prevented disease progression in a child.



What is Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA)?

- 1) **Genetic cause:** Mutations in SMN1 gene reduce survival motor neuron (SMN) protein, critical for spinal cord motor neuron function.
- 2) **Impact:** Affects 1 in 10,000 births, causing muscle wasting, respiratory failure, and early death (2–3 years for severe SMA-1).



Treatment Approach

- 1) **Drug used: Risdiplam** (oral SMN2 gene modifier) administered to the mother starting at 32 weeks of pregnancy for 6 weeks.
- 2) **Postnatal care:** Child continued risdiplam from one week old, likely lifelong.
- 3) **Parent initiative:** Parents proposed prenatal treatment after losing a previous child to SMA-1.

Outcome

- 1) **SMN protein levels:** Higher than typical SMA patients, enabling normal nerve signaling.
- 2) **Development:** At 30 months, the child showed normal muscle function, mobility, and no atrophy.

Significance

- 1) **Pioneering step:** Demonstrates feasibility of in-utero gene therapy for genetic disorders.
- 2) **Early intervention:** Prenatal treatment may prevent irreversible neuron damage before birth.

This breakthrough highlights the potential to transform outcomes for SMA and other genetic conditions through early therapeutic intervention.

THE HINDU QUESTION CORNER

QUESTION CORNER

Leaping through time



Q: While leap years get an extra day, why are century years left out unless divisible by

400?

A: A tropical year is the time (365.242199 days) the earth takes to revolve around the sun once. By having just 365 days in a calendar year, 0.242199 days are lost each year. To correct this error, Julius Caesar introduced a four-year cycle. The first three years had 365 days each and the fourth year had 366 days.

This correction was later found to be an overestimation of the year by 11 minutes and 14 seconds, amounting to 5.1204 days in 400 years. A course correction was brought about: to drop three days in 400 years. As a result, century years are not leap years unless divisible by 400.

Time measurements and calendars have often been refined over the years. The one followed now is the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII of the 16th century. The pope promulgated an order in 1582 that only century years divisible by 400 would be leap



Time measurements and calendars have often been refined over the years. ALEXEY SAVCHENKO/UNSPLASH

years whereas 1700, 1800, 1900, 2100, etc. even though divisible by 4 would be normal years with just 365 days.

Accurate atomic clocks have recently detected a slowing down of the earth due to the moon's drag, by about 0.06 microseconds per year. It is not easy to account for such changes even though they affect our calculations of the date and time of the equinoxes. Nonetheless, the present system is working satisfactorily.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'

2) Unravelling cosmic inflation

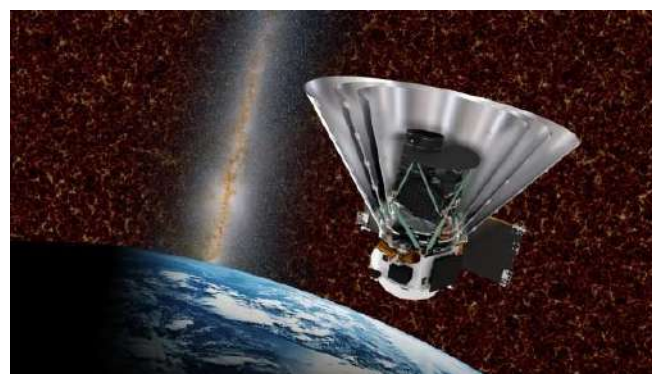
- Investigates the universe's **rapid expansion** (faster than light) moments after the Big Bang.
- Uses 3D mapping of **450 million galaxies** across cosmic time to test theories about the universe's flatness and structure.

3) Tracking life-forming molecules

- Identifies **water and biogenic molecules** (carbon, hydrogen, oxygen) in icy regions of the Milky Way.
- Provides a **complete census** of these molecules to study how they reached Earth and enabled life.
- Extends observations to **nearby galaxies** to understand molecular distribution patterns.



SPHEREx Observatory at Astrotech Corporation Facility at Vandenberg Space Force Base. (Photo: NASA/JPL)



Sectional view of the SPHEREx with cosmic structures in the background. (Photo: NASA/JPL)

Three things to know about SPHEREx, NASA's new space telescope

During its short two-year mission, the observatory will help better understand things about the formation of the universe, the growth of all galaxies across cosmic history, and the location of water and life-forming molecules in the Milky Way galaxy

IE Explained; By Alind Chauhan;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech [Link](#)

Why in News? NASA will launch SPHEREx on February 28, 2025, to study cosmic history and life-forming molecules in the Milky Way.

Three key aspects of SPHEREx

1) Most detailed cosmic map

- Will create the **first full-sky map** in 102 infrared colors, imaging the entire sky every six months.
- Detects **infrared light** (unlike Hubble's optical focus) to reveal hidden galactic structures and star-forming regions.
- Complements JWST by providing **wide-field surveys** instead of localized observations.

Geography and Environment

February 2025

Maps in News: The escalating conflict in Congo, why its neighbours are involved [Link](#)

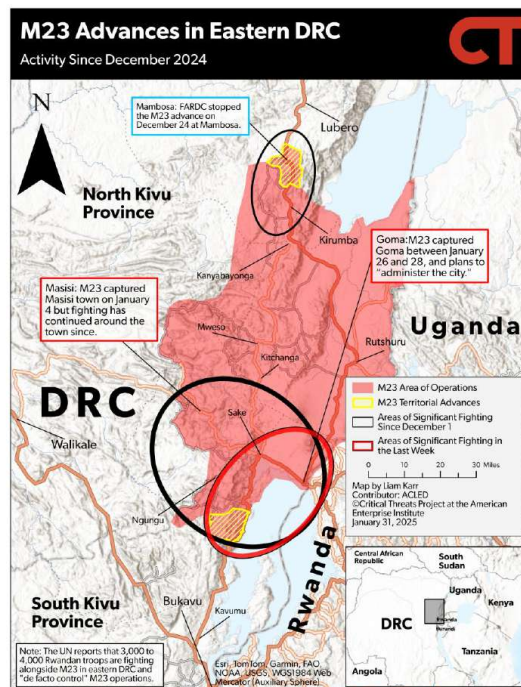
Why in News? M23 rebels captured Goma (North Kivu, DRC) on January 28, 2025, escalating regional tensions and displacing over one million people.

Core Conflict

- 1) **Objective:** M23 seeks territorial control in eastern DRC, aiming to expand south toward Bukavu (South Kivu)
- 2) **Root Cause:** Post-2009 peace accord grievances, alleging marginalization of Congolese Tutsis and failure to integrate them into governance/security
- 3) **Casualties:** Hundreds killed; FARDC (DRC army) troops surrendered en masse

Regional Implications

- 1) **Escalation Risk:** Burundian troops deployed in DRC; Rwandan forces reportedly in South Kivu
- 2) **Humanitarian Crisis:** 1M+ displaced since 2022; Goma's infrastructure devastated
- 3) **UN Role:** Documented Rwandan support for M23; coltan mining (\$800K/month revenue) funds rebels



Resource Angle

- 1) **Coltan Mining:** M23 controls Rubaya's coltan mines, critical for electronics
- 2) **Economic Impact:** Resource exploitation fuels conflict; global supply chains implicated



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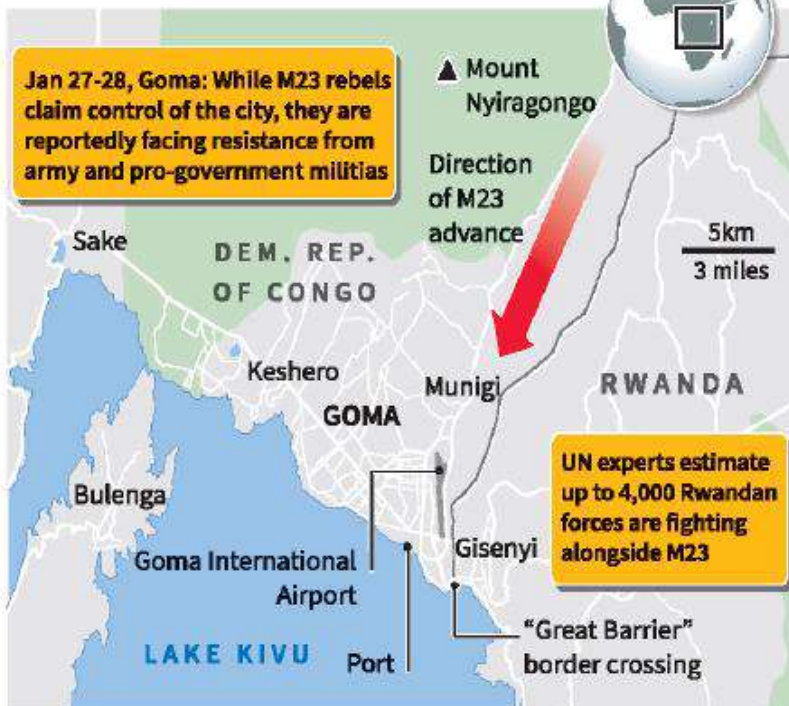
Maps in News: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [Link](#)

A city under siege

The M23 militia, backed by eastern neighbour Rwanda, captured the mineral-rich city of Goma, which lies on the border between Rwanda and the DRC. The region has been beset with conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis since colonial times

THE M23 MILITIA

- One of about 100 armed factions vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern DRC
- Rwandan-backed group which consists primarily of Tutsis who failed to integrate into the Congolese army
- Led major insurgency against the DRC government in 2012, took up arms again in 2022. The group is estimated to have 6,500 fighters



- Latest rebel advance has forced thousands to flee Goma. The city of two million people is a vital humanitarian aid hub for the region
- The UN and other global powers fear that the conflict could spiral into a regional war similar to those of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003



Effects of war: A displaced woman walks back to her home village, in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, on February 12. GETTY IMAGES

Sources: Associated Press, Institute for the Study of War, Reuters

© GRAPHIC NEWS

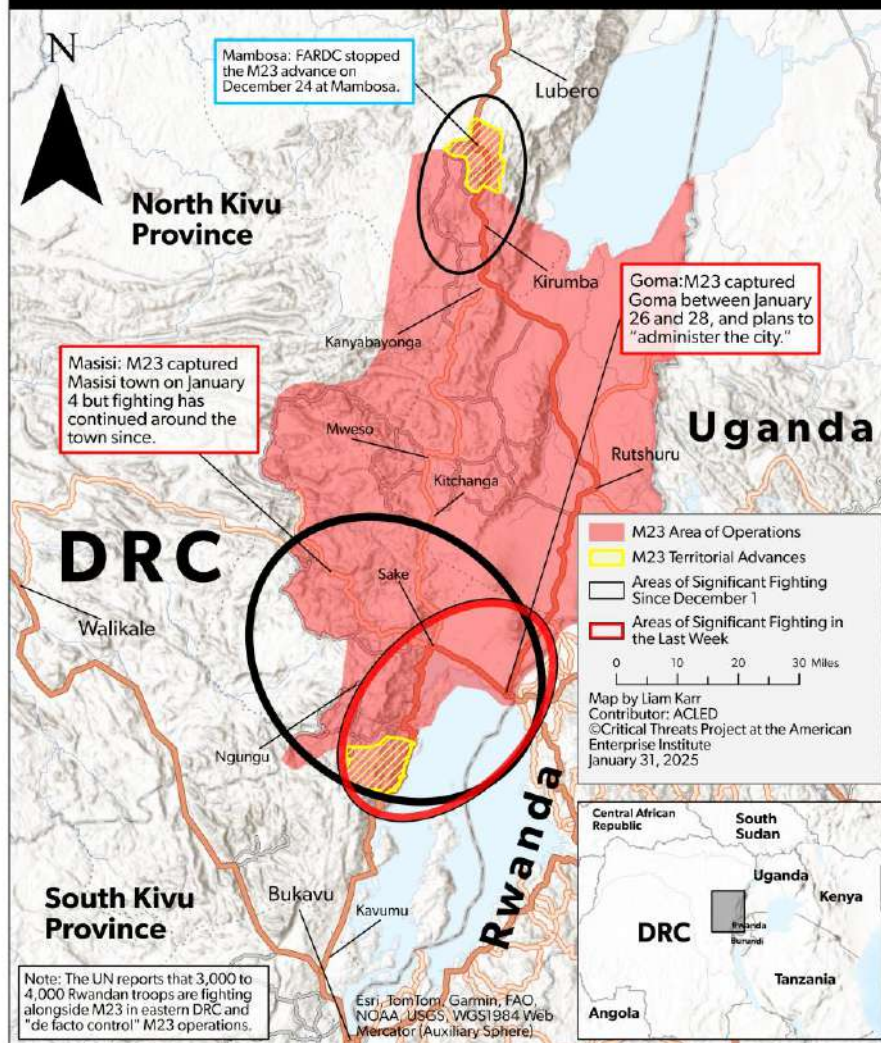
Why in News? The M23 militia's capture of Goma in eastern DRC, backed by Rwanda, has escalated conflict causing over 2,900 deaths and 700,000 displacements, reviving tensions rooted in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

About M23 Militia

- 1) Formed in 2012 from former CNDP rebels who had been integrated into the DRC army
- 2) Claims to protect Tutsi interests in the region
- 3) Led by Sultani Makenga and based in North Kivu province
- 4) Previously captured Goma in 2012 before retreating

M23 Advances in Eastern DRC

Activity Since December 2024



Rwanda's Role

- 1) Rwanda is accused of backing M23 rebels
- 2) President Kagame denies direct involvement but supports M23's legitimacy
- 3) Rwanda claims to protect Tutsi interests across the border

Regional Impact

- 1) DRC President Tshisekedi calls the capture "an act of war"
- 2) Burundi warns of potential regional war escalation
- 3) Uganda maintains a middle position, helping DRC while allowing M23 to use its territory



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Places in News: Guinea's Simandou mine [Link](#)
TH - 'Simandou mine can end or start Australia's golden iron ore age'

The imminent launch of Guinea's Simandou mine – set to become the world's largest untapped high-grade iron ore deposit – threatens to disrupt global trade dynamics while creating new opportunities for Australia to pivot toward green steel production.

Why in News? The Simandou mine's 120 million-ton annual capacity (targeting China's steel sector) could displace Australian exports and accelerate industry shifts toward decarbonized steelmaking, forcing Australia to rethink its iron ore strategy.

Strategic Importance of Simandou Mine

- 1) **Scale:** 120 million metric tons/year capacity (10% of China's seaborne imports).
- 2) **Infrastructure:** Requires 620 km rail line + offshore port with trans-shipment vessels.
- 3) **Chinese dominance:** 75% ownership by Chinese firms (Baosteel, etc.), 25% by Rio Tinto.
- 4) **High-grade ore:** 65.3% iron content vs. Australia's lower grades, making it ideal for electric arc furnaces (EAFs) in decarbonized steelmaking.


Implications for Australia's Iron Ore Industry

- 1) **Market displacement:** Simandou's high-grade ore may push out 5–10% of Australia's current exports to China.
- 2) **Price pressure:** Potential oversupply could depress iron ore prices (currently ~\$108/tonne).
- 3) **Stagnant demand:** China's steel output has plateaued at ~1B tons/year since 2019, limiting growth.

Pathway for Australia's Decarbonization Opportunity

- 1) **Green steel potential:**
 - a) **Renewable energy edge:** Australia can leverage solar/battery infrastructure to produce green hydrogen for steelmaking.
 - b) **Direct Reduced Iron (DRI):** Use hydrogen to convert iron ore into DRI/HBI for export or domestic EAF-based steel production.
- 2) **Government role:** Federal/state support needed for R&D, infrastructure, and industry partnerships.



News / Explained / Explained Climate / Why temperatures at north pole reached 20 degrees Celsius above average

Why temperatures at north pole reached 20 degrees Celsius above average

Since 1979, the Arctic has warmed four times faster than the global average. This is an issue because the region acts as a refrigerator for the rest of the world — it helps cool the planet

IE Explained, By Alind Chauhan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? On February 2, 2025, temperatures at the North Pole surged to 20°C above average (−1°C absolute temperature), triggering ice melt during peak polar winter, with Norway's Svalbard region recording an 18°C anomaly on February 1.



Causes of the Extreme Warming Event at Arctic

- 1) **Atmospheric River from Lower Latitudes**
 - a) A deep low-pressure system over Iceland (January 31–February 2) funnelled warm, moist air from the mid-Atlantic into the Arctic, overriding cold polar air.
 - b) This "heat gate" mechanism is linked to North Atlantic Oscillation shifts, which increasingly drive erratic winter weather patterns.
- 2) **Record-High Sea Surface Temperatures**
 - a) The northeast Atlantic registered unusually hot sea surface temperatures (3–4°C above normal), intensifying heat transfer via southerly winds.
- 3) **Feedback Loops from Arctic Amplification**
 - a) **Albedo Effect Collapse:** Melting sea ice (reflectivity loss) exposed dark ocean, absorbing 90% more solar radiation.

- b) **Convection Limitation:** Weak vertical heat mixing in the Arctic traps greenhouse warming near the surface, unlike tropical regions.
- c) **Rate:** The Arctic has warmed 3.8× faster than the global average since 1979, per a 2022 study.

Global Implications

1) Immediate Threats

- a) **Polar Jet Stream Destabilization:** Warming weakens the temperature gradient driving jet streams, causing prolonged extreme weather (e.g., heatwaves, cold snaps) in mid-latitudes.
- b) **Sea-Level Rise Acceleration:** Greenland's ice sheet lost 5,100 billion tonnes of ice since 1992, contributing 13.7 mm to global sea levels.

2) Long-Term Risks

- a) **Methane Release:** Thawing permafrost could unlock 1,500 billion tonnes of carbon, exacerbating warming.
- b) **Ocean Current Disruption:** Freshening Arctic waters (from ice melt) may slow the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, altering global climate systems.

3) Socio-Economic Impact

- a) Coastal flooding risks for 680 million people living <10 m above sea level.
- b) Food/water insecurity in climate-vulnerable regions like South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

How do the melting of the Arctic ice and glaciers of the Antarctic differently affect weather patterns and human activities on Earth? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

Which of the following statements are correct about the deposits of 'methane hydrate'?

- 1) Global warming might trigger the release of methane gas from these deposits.
- 2) Large deposits of 'methane hydrate' are found in Arctic Tundra and under the seafloor.
- 3) Methane in atmosphere oxidizes to carbon dioxide after a decade or two.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

(a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
 (c) 1 and 3 only
 (d) 1, 2 and 3

What is the Supreme Court directive on sacred groves? | Explained

What are the implications of the December 18 order? What did T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India establish about the definition of 'forest land'? How are sacred groves traditionally conserved by communities?

TH Text & Context, By C R Bijoy

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? The Supreme Court ordered Rajasthan to map all sacred groves for classification as forests/community reserves under WLPA 1972, overriding Forest Rights Act 2006 provisions.

Case Background

- 1) **1996 TN Godavarman Case:** Expanded "forest land" definition beyond official records to include any area meeting ecological criteria.
- 2) **2004 Rajasthan Committee:** Used restrictive criteria (5ha with 200 trees/ha) to identify "deemed forests," excluding many groves.
- 3) **2018 SC Intervention:** Rejected Rajasthan's criteria as inconsistent with Godavarman principles.
- 4) **2023 Policy Shift:** Rajasthan omitted sacred grove protections from its Forest Policy despite earlier 2010 guidelines.

Key Directives from SC

- 1) Mandatory satellite/ground mapping of all sacred groves regardless of size.
- 2) Notification as "community reserves" under WLPA 1972 with Forest Department oversight.
- 3) Formation of Community Reserve Management Committees including Forest Department representatives.
- 4) Union Environment Ministry tasked with nationwide sacred grove mapping and policy formulation.

Implications

- 1) Transfers 25,000 sacred groves (6 lakh hectares) from community to Forest Department control.
- 2) Conflicts with FRA 2006 which grants gram sabhas authority over community forest resources.

- 3) Centralizes governance despite FRA's decentralized model.
- 4) Risks eroding traditional conservation practices and oral knowledge systems linked to groves.

About Sacred Groves

Community-managed forest patches with cultural/ecological significance, called orans (Rajasthan), devara kadu (Karnataka), sarna (Chota Nagpur)

Key roles:

- 1) Biodiversity hotspots with endemic species
- 2) Water source preservation
- 3) Disaster mitigation (floods/landslides)
- 4) Cultural identity preservation through oral traditions

Community Reserves vs FRA

WLPA Community Reserves	FRA Community Resources
1) Managed by Forest Department	1) Managed by gram sabhas
2) Requires state approval for land-use changes	2) Gram sabhas approve management plans
3) Honorary Warden system	3) Community-led committees
4) Focus on wildlife protection	4) Integrates cultural conservation

News / Explained / Why the discovery of potash reserves in Punjab is significant

Why the discovery of potash reserves in Punjab is significant

Potash mining could reduce India's import dependence and bolster the domestic fertilizer industry. However, some concerns have been flagged. We explain.

IE Explained, By Raakhi Jagga

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geography [Link](#)

Why in News? Punjab plans to explore potash mining in Fazilka and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts after GSI surveys confirmed reserves, aiming to reduce India's import dependency.

Significance of the Discovery

- 1) **Reducing Import Dependency**
 - a) India currently imports 50 lakh tonnes of potash annually (primarily for fertilizers and industries).

- b) Domestic mining could cut reliance on imports, saving foreign exchange and enhancing fertilizer security.
- 2) **Boosting Agricultural Productivity:**
 - a) Potash is a critical component of fertilizers (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium triad).
 - b) Sulphate of Potash (SOP), a premium chloride-free variant, supports high-value crops like fruits and vegetables, while Muriate of Potash (MOP) benefits wheat and carbohydrate crops.
- 3) **Economic and Employment Opportunities**
 - a) Mining operations are projected to create jobs and drive regional development.
 - b) States earn royalties from mineral extraction, benefiting Punjab's economy.



Challenges and Concerns

- 1) **Farmer Opposition:** Despite government assurances of zero land displacement through advanced drilling techniques, protests have risen.
 - a) **Public Trust Deficit:** Scepticism persists among farmers about the government's promises
- 2) **Environmental and Social Impact:** A comprehensive environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) is pending.
 - a) Mining activities, even with minimal surface disruption, could raise concerns about groundwater contamination, soil stability, and long-term ecological effects.
- 3) **Bureaucratic and Procedural Delays:**
 - a) The central government holds auctioning rights for minerals, while states earn royalties.
 - b) Yet to receive central approvals, systemic challenges persist.

Way Forward

- 1) **Farmer-centric solutions:** Provide legally binding agreements to farmers guaranteeing no land acquisition.

- a) **Compensation models:** Introduce revenue-sharing mechanisms for landowners, similar to Rajasthan's royalty frameworks.
- 2) **Sustainable Extraction Practices:** Implement brine injection techniques (used in Canada) to extract potash without surface disruption.
 - a) **Waste management:** Repurpose by-products like salt for industrial use (e.g., road de-icing) to avoid ecological harm.
- 3) **Expedited Project Execution:**
 - a) **Fast-Track Auctions:** Prioritize central government approvals for Punjab's Kabarwala block.
 - b) **Single-Window Clearances:** Streamline permits for mining and processing units to avoid delays.
- 4) **Environmental Compliance:**
 - a) **Third-Party Audits:** Engage independent agencies to monitor groundwater quality and soil stability during drilling.
 - b) **Emission Controls:** Adopt Canada's Potash Sector Sustainability Roadmap to limit PM2.5 emissions from processing plants.
- 5) **Economic Integration:**
 - a) **Fertilizer Manufacturing Hubs:** Establish localized SOP and MOP production units to reduce logistics costs and meet 30% of India's potash demand by 2030.
 - b) **Skill Development:** Partner with institutions like IIT Ropar to train workers in advanced drilling and automation technologies.
- 6) **Policy Reforms:**
 - a) **State Mining Policy:** Draft a dedicated potash policy outlining revenue allocation, community benefits, and environmental safeguards.
 - b) **Inter-State Collaboration:** Share geological data with Rajasthan to optimize resource mapping in the Satluj-Indus basin.
- 7) **Global Partnerships:**
 - a) **Technology Transfer:** Collaborate with firms like Nutrien (Canada) for AI-driven mining systems and energy-efficient processing.
 - b) **Export Potential:** Target markets in Southeast Asia and Africa once domestic demand is met, leveraging India's cost-competitive production.

News / Explained / Explained Climate / Why La Niña's cooling effect could not reduce January temperatures

Premium

Why La Niña's cooling effect could not reduce January temperatures

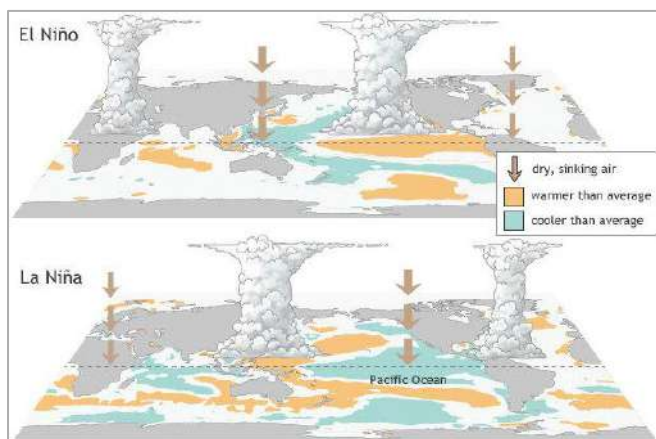
January 2025 was the 18th month in the last 19 when the global average surface air temperature breached the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold. Scientists had expected that the arrival of the La Niña phase, which emerged in December 2024, would bring some relief from the heat. However, this did not happen

IE Explained; By Alind Chauhan;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geography [Link](#)

Why in News? January 2025 recorded the highest global temperatures despite La Niña's emergence in December 2024, breaching the 1.5°C threshold for the 18th time in 19 months.

Why high temperatures in January?

- 1) **Weak La Niña Phase:**
 - a) The 2024–25 La Niña developed later (December instead of September) and was weaker than expected, reducing its cooling influence.
 - b) NOAA noted insufficient time for La Niña to strengthen before its typical winter peak.
- 2) **Persistent High Carbon Emissions:**
 - a) Atmospheric carbon levels remained elevated in 2024–25, countering La Niña's cooling effect.
 - b) Reduced carbon absorption due to weaker La Niña-linked rainfall and plant growth exacerbated warming.



- 3) **Declining Aerosol Levels:** Clean air policies reduced atmospheric aerosols, which normally scatter sunlight and cool the planet.

SPOTLIGHT: 2011 PYQ

La Nina is suspected to have caused recent floods in Australia. How is La Nina different from El Nino?

- 1) La Nina is characterised by an usually cold ocean temperature in equatorial Indian Ocean whereas El Nino is characterised by unusually warm ocean temperature in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- 2) El Nino has an adverse effect on the south-west monsoon of India but La Nina has no effect on monsoon climate.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

SPOTLIGHT: 2014 PYQ

Drought has been recognized as a disaster in view of its spatial expanse, temporal duration, slow onset and lasting effects on vulnerable sections. With a focus on the September 2010 guidelines from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), discuss the mechanisms for preparedness to deal with likely El Nino and La Nina fallouts in India? (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

Opinion by Syed Ata Hasnain

We need to tackle heatwaves with greater urgency

The NDMA under the Chairmanship of the PM has played an active role in developing Heat Action Plans.

IE The Editorial Page; By Syed Ata Hasnain
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geography, Disaster Management [Link](#)

Why in News? India faces urgent heatwave challenges as January 2025 marked the 18th month in 19 where global temperatures breached the 1.5°C threshold, prompting NDMA's national workshop on mitigation strategies.

What is heat wave?

According to NDMA guidelines, a heatwave is declared in India when temperatures exceed regional thresholds, posing severe health and environmental risks. The NDMA adopts **the**

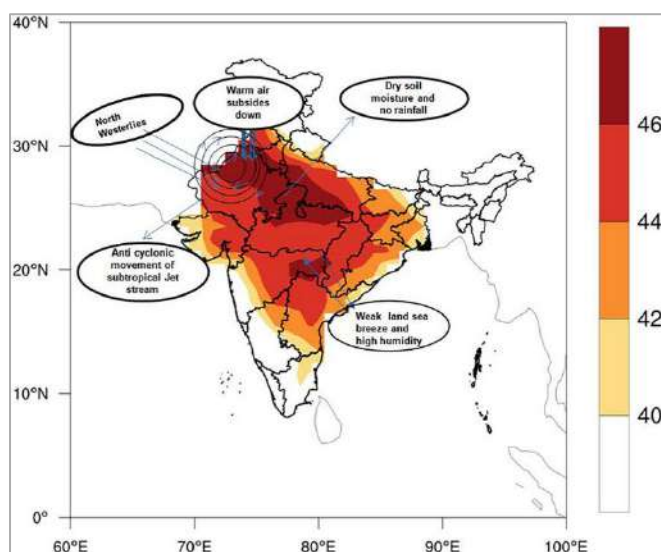
Indian Meteorological Department's (IMD) criteria for classification:

1) Plains:

- Heat Wave: Maximum temperature $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$ and departure from normal is $4.5\text{--}6.4^{\circ}\text{C}$.
- Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal exceeds 6.4°C or actual temperature $\geq 45^{\circ}\text{C}$.

2) Hilly Regions: Heat Wave: Maximum temperature $\geq 30^{\circ}\text{C}$ and departure from normal is $4.5\text{--}6.4^{\circ}\text{C}$.

3) Coastal Areas: Declared if maximum temperature $\geq 37^{\circ}\text{C}$ and departure from normal $\geq 4.5^{\circ}\text{C}$.



Heatwave Impact on Key Sectors

- Public Health:** 90% of Indians are vulnerable to heat-related illnesses, straining rural healthcare systems.
- Economy:** Heat-stress may cause 34 million job losses by 2030, affecting outdoor workers and productivity.
- Water Resources:** 54% of India faces high-to-extreme water stress, with demand outpacing supply (18% population vs. 4% freshwater). Elevated temperatures worsen evaporation and groundwater depletion.
- Energy:** 70% of India's power comes from thermal plants, whose efficiency drops during heatwaves, risking energy shortages.

NDMA's Heat Action Initiatives

- Developed 250+ Heat Action Plans (HAPs) with states, focusing on decentralized strategies.
- Launched the National Framework for Heatwave Mitigation (2024) to shift from short-term response to long-term resilience.

- Issued guidelines for localized vulnerability assessments, cool roofs, and early warning systems via IMD-NDMA coordination.
- Promoted community participation, rainwater harvesting, and "cool rooms" in urban areas.

Implementation Challenges

- Awareness Gaps:** Limited understanding of HAP protocols in rural areas and among informal workers.
- Coordination Issues:** Poor inter-departmental synergy (healthcare, urban planning, labour).
- Resource Constraints:** Insufficient funding for cool roofs, green infrastructure, and water kiosks.
- Groundwater Overuse:** Declining water tables due to unregulated extraction during heatwaves.
- Uneven Execution:** 250+ HAPs exist, but implementation lags in cities with outdated urban planning.

Way Forward

- Cool Infrastructure:** Expand cool pavements, green roofs, and shaded bus stops in urban hotspots.
- Early Alerts:** Strengthen IMD's Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) for hyper-local SMS/APP warnings.
- Workplace Reforms:** Enforce shift timings (e.g., 4 AM–10 AM) for outdoor labour during peak heat.
- Healthcare Prep:** Train primary health centres on heatstroke triage and stock IV fluids.
- Water Solutions:** Scale rooftop rainwater harvesting and public water kiosks in slums.
- Crop Adaptation:** Pilot heat-resilient crop varieties (millets, drought-tolerant wheat).
- Policy Upgrades:** Mandate heat-resilient building codes and retrofit old structures with insulation.
- Community Networks:** Deploy ASHA workers for door-to-door heat-risk education in vulnerable districts.

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / Explained: The dawn quake in Delhi

Explained: The dawn quake in Delhi

The capital lies in the Aravalli-Delhi Fold Belt, where deformed layers of rock sometimes release stress in the form of earthquakes. This mechanism is different from the one that triggers quakes in the Himalayan region.

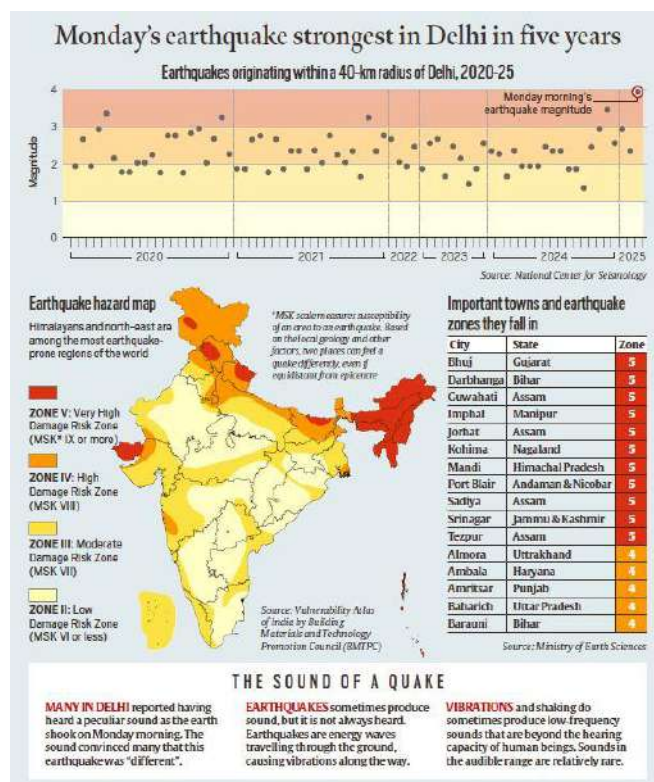
IE Explained; By Amitabh Sinha

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geography [Link](#)

Why in News? The magnitude 4 earthquake that originated near Dhaulakuan, Delhi, on February 17, 2025, marked the strongest local seismic event in the capital in five years.

Seismic Context

- 1) **Delhi lies in Zone 4** (second-highest seismic risk category in India), indicating vulnerability to MSK-8 intensity shaking capable of damaging buildings.
- 2) **Most Delhi tremors originate externally** (e.g., Afghanistan), but this quake's epicenter was local, part of recurring low-magnitude activity (2–3 magnitude) in the region.



Geological Background

- 1) **The Aravalli-Delhi Fold Belt** (stretching from Rajasthan to Haryana) features deformed rock layers from ancient tectonic activity, occasionally releasing stored stress as mild quakes.

- 2) Unlike Himalayan quakes (caused by active plate subduction), Delhi's seismic activity stems from **residual geological instability in older fault lines**.

Audible Sound Reports: Residents reported a "peculiar sound" during the quake, likely from building vibrations rather than the earthquake itself. Low-frequency seismic waves are typically inaudible to humans.

Large Earthquake Risk

- 1) Historical records cite major Delhi-region quakes in 1720 and 1803 (linked to Himalayan activity), but experts deem **large local earthquakes "extremely unlikely"** due to low tectonic stress accumulation.
- 2) **Annual averages:** ~25 quakes (≥ 2.5 magnitude) and ~5 quakes (~ 3.5 magnitude) occur in the Delhi area.

This event highlights Delhi's geological complexity but **does not indicate heightened risk** of severe earthquakes.

Parambikulam Tiger Reserve adds 15 new species to its biodiversity checklist

A faunal survey, conducted by Parambikulam Tiger Conservation Foundation in association with Travancore Nature History Society and other non-governmental organisations, spanned 11 base camps spread across the reserve's diverse habitats

TH States

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? Parambikulam Tiger Reserve recently added 15 new species to its biodiversity checklist through a faunal survey conducted in February 2025. This highlights the reserve's ecological richness and ongoing conservation efforts.



Rufus-bellied hawk-eagle



Key Findings from the Survey

1) **New Bird Species:** 7 additions, raising the total bird count to 302 species.

- Painted spurfowl (*Galloperdix lunulata*):** A pheasant-family bird inhabiting rocky hills and scrub forests of peninsular India, known for white-spotted plumage.
- Rufous-bellied hawk-eagle (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*):** A forest-dwelling raptor in tropical Asia, hunting birds and mammals mid-flight.
- Anamalai Sholakili:** Likely an endemic songbird to the Anamalai Hills.
- Taiga flycatcher:** First recorded in the Anamalai's Tiger Reserve; a migratory bird wintering in India.
- Indian grey hornbill:** Common in deciduous forests, recognized for its casqued bill.
- Plain prinia:** A small warbler found in grasslands and scrub habitats.
- Green leaf warbler:** Insectivorous bird inhabiting dense foliage.



Malabar tree nymph

- 2) **New Butterflies:** 5 species, increasing butterfly diversity to 273 species.
 - Long-brand bushbrown (*Mycalesis visala*):** South Asian satyrine butterfly with ochraceous wing markings
 - Shot silverline:** Silver-spotted species in scrub/semi-evergreen forests
 - Scarce shot silverline:** Rare silverline butterfly with distinct wing patterns
 - White-disc hedge blue:** Small lycaenid with white discal spots on wings
 - Palni dart:** Skipper butterfly endemic to the Palni Hills



Fraser's Torrent-Dart *Euphaea fraseri* (Laidlaw, 1920)

- 3) **New Odonates:** 3 dragonfly/damselfly species, taking total count to 69 species.
 - Brown darner (*Gynacantha dravida*):** Large dragonfly found in forested streams
 - Parakeet darner (*Gynacantha millardi*):** Forest-glory damselfly with vivid coloration
 - Vestalis submontana (Montane Forest-Glory):** Damselfly species inhabiting montane streams

Factsheet: Parambikulam Tiger Reserve

- 1) Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, located in Kerala's Palakkad and Thrissur districts, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** within the **Western Ghats' Anamalai sub-unit**.
- 2) Part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** and **Anamalai-Nelliampathy ecological corridor**.
- 3) **Establishment:** Wildlife Sanctuary (1973/1984); Tiger Reserve (2010)
- 4) **Biodiversity:**
 - Fauna:** 49 mammals (Bengal tigers, Indian elephants, Nilgiri tahr), 336 birds (Great Indian Hornbill, Shaheen falcon), 273 butterflies, and 69 odonates

- b) **Endemics:** Parambikulam Frog (Tomopterna parambikulamana), Garra surendranathanii fish
- 5) **Tribes:** Home to 4 indigenous communities: Kadar, Malasar, Muduvar, and Mala Malasar in 6 colonies
- 6) **Unique Features**
 - a) **Dams:** Parambikulam, Thunacadavu, Peruvuripallam reservoirs support freshwater ecosystems
 - b) **Kannimara Teak:** 400-year-old giant teak tree (40 m tall, 6.4 m girth)
 - c) **Habitats:** Evergreen forests, shola grasslands, and rare vayals (marshy grasslands)

What is the Aravali safari park project? | Explained

Across how many villages is the proposed project going to be spread across? Why have several retired Indian Forest Service officers written a letter to the Prime Minister urging him to scrap the project?

TH Text & Context; By Ashok Kumar

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? The project faces opposition from 37 retired Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers who wrote to the Prime Minister, urging its cancellation due to severe ecological risks in the fragile Aravali ecosystem.



What are the project's proposed features?

- 1) **Wildlife zones:** Big cat enclosures, herbivore sections, aviaries, and an exotic animal zone.
- 2) **Tourism infrastructure:** Nature trails, botanical gardens, underwater worlds, and cable cars.

- 3) **Employment goals:** Aims to generate jobs through tourism and the Home Stay Policy for locals.
- 4) **Current Status:**
 - a) **Phase 1 (2,500 acres):** A detailed project report (DPR) is underway, pending Supreme Court approval
 - b) **Design firms:** International companies like Tagbin and Logic Zoo are preparing the DPR
 - c) **Funding:** Supported by the Haryana government and Central Zoo Authority

Why have retired IFS officers opposed the project?

- 1) **Ecological damage:** Increased vehicular traffic and construction threaten the Aravalis' role as critical groundwater recharge zones for water-scarce Gurugram and Nuh.
- 2) **Legal violations:** The project falls under "forest" land protected by the Forest Conservation Act (1980) and Supreme Court orders, prohibiting deforestation and construction.
- 3) **Water scarcity:** The proposed "underwater zone" could exacerbate groundwater depletion in districts already classified as "overexploited" by the Central Ground Water Board.
- 4) **Low forest cover:** Haryana has India's lowest forest cover (3.6%), making conservation imperative.



News / Explained / Explained Climate / Why global sea ice cover has dipped to record low — what this means 

Why global sea ice cover has dipped to record low — what this means

Sea ice refers to the free-floating ice in the polar regions. While it generally expands during the winter and melts in the summers, some sea ice remains year-round. Note that this is different from icebergs, glaciers, ice sheets, and ice shelves, which form on land.

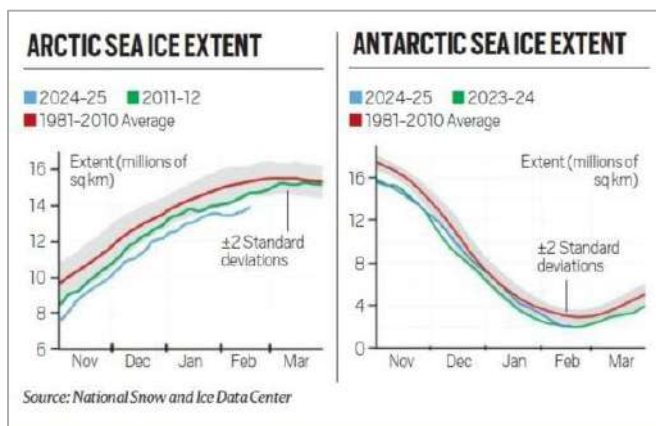
IE Explained; By Alind Chauhan
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? Global sea ice extent hit a five-day record low of **15.76 million sq km** (Feb 8–13, 2025), down from the previous 2023 low of 15.93 million sq km.

Historical Trends

- 1) **Arctic:** September ice extent (minimum) declined 12.2% per decade between 1981–2010.

- 2) **Antarctic:** Gained ice until 2015 but lost 2 million sq km between 2014–2017. Recent lows include a 10x UK-sized deficit in 2023 and a 1.55 million sq km shortfall in 2024.
- 3)



Causes of Decline

- 1) **Arctic Region**
 - a) Delayed freezing in Canada's Hudson Bay due to warmer ocean temperatures slowing cooling.
 - b) Storms fractured thinner, fragile ice in the Barents and Bering Seas.
 - c) Higher air temperatures in areas like Svalbard, Norway.
- 2) **Antarctic Region**
 - a) Warmer air and ocean temperatures during the southern summer (Dec–Feb) melted ice shelves.
 - b) Ice-breaking winds intensified due to Antarctic sea ice's surrounding ocean (unlike Arctic ice bordered by continents), making it thinner and more mobile.

Consequences of Reduced Sea Ice

- 1) **Accelerated warming:** Less ice reflects sunlight (albedo effect), exposing darker ocean water that absorbs more heat.
- 2) **Disrupted ocean currents:** Freshwater from melting ice reduces salinity, slowing deep-water circulation critical for marine ecosystems and global climate regulation.
- 3) **Threats to ice shelves:** Warmer waters erode ice shelves, destabilizing Antarctica's land-based ice sheets and raising sea levels.

This decline underscores the polar regions' vulnerability to climate change, with cascading effects on global weather and ecosystems.

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

How does the cryosphere affect global climate? (150 Words, 10 Marks)

SPOTLIGHT: 2021 PYQ

How do the melting of the Arctic ice and glaciers of the Antarctic differently affect the weather patterns and human activities on the Earth? Explain. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

What is black plastic — and should you get rid of it?

Here is a look at what black plastic is, the toxic chemicals it contains, and if one should be using black plastic spatulas and other utensils from it

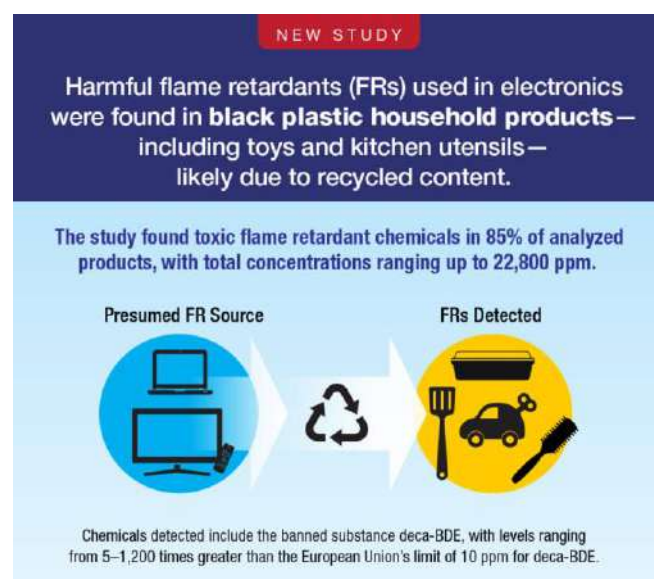
IE Explained;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? A 2024 study found toxic flame retardants in black plastic products, but later corrected its risk calculations, sparking debates about safety standards.

What is Black Plastic?

- 1) Made from recycled **electronic waste (e-waste)** like computers and appliances.
- 2) Contains hazardous substances:
 - a) **Flame retardants:** Bromine and antimony.
 - b) **Heavy metals:** Lead, cadmium, and mercury.
- 3) Banned in many countries but persists in recycled plastics due to legacy waste.



Key Findings of the Study

- 1) **Toxic content:** 203 tested products (utensils, containers, toys) contained BDE-209, a phased-out flame retardant.

- 2) **Initial risk:** Estimated daily exposure was 34,700 ng/day, nearing EPA's limit.
- 3) **Correction:** Miscalculation reduced exposure to <1/10th of EPA's limit.

Safety Concerns: No consensus on "safe" exposure levels; EPA's limits are outdated.

Way forward: Practical advice

- 1) Continue using existing products until unusable.
- 2) Avoid unnecessary replacements to reduce waste.
- 3) Opt for non-black plastic or alternatives (wood, stainless steel).

While risks appear lower post-correction, long-term effects remain unclear, warranting caution and sustainable choices.

Why gharials are endangered, how MP has emerged the leader in their conservation

What are gharials, and why are they important? What threats do they face, and what is Madhya Pradesh doing to protect them?

IE Explained; By Anand Mohan J;
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

Why in News? Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released 10 critically endangered gharials into the Chambal River, reinforcing the state's leadership in gharial conservation, which hosts over 80% of India's population.



About Gharials

- 1) **Species:** Long-snouted, fish-eating crocodilian (*Gavialis gangeticus*), named after the Hindi word ghara (pot), referencing males' bulbous snout tip.

- 2) **Significance:**
 - a) Mythological importance as the divine mount of Goddess Ganga.
 - b) Ecological role: Clean River ecosystems by consuming carrion.
- 3) **Physical Traits:**
 - a) Males: 3–6 meters; females: 2.6–4.5 meters.
 - b) Specialized teeth for trapping fish.
- 4) **Reproduction:** Nest communally on sandbanks (March–May); females guard hatchlings briefly.

Threats to Gharials

- 1) **Historical:** Overhunting for skins, eggs, trophies, and traditional medicine.
- 2) **Modern:**
 - a) Habitat loss from dams, irrigation canals, sand-mining, and river course changes.
 - b) Pollution, fishing (gill nets kill all age groups).
 - c) Global decline: 58% population drop (1997–2006); extinct in Myanmar/Bhutan, sparse in Pakistan/Nepal/Bangladesh.



Madhya Pradesh's Conservation Leadership

- 1) **Population Recovery:** 2,456 gharials recorded in 2024 census at the National Chambal Sanctuary.
- 2) **Key Measures:**
 - a) **Captive Breeding:** Programs since 1975–1982; reared hatchlings released into the wild.
 - b) **Habitat Protection:** Restoring sandbanks, curbing sand-mining, and reducing pollution.
 - c) **Community Engagement:** Awareness campaigns and involving locals in habitat preservation.

- d) **Translocations:** Sent gharials to revive populations in Punjab's Sutlej (2018) and Beas (2020) rivers.

- b) Hosts 290+ bird species, including 80% of India's rare Indian Skimmers.

- 2) **Ecosystem Impact:** Clean river conditions and sandbanks ideal for nesting and basking.

Significance of Chambal Sanctuary

1) Biodiversity Hub:

- a) Protects 435 km of the Chambal River across MP, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.



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Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

February 2025

Ethics News of the Day: Ragging deaths: Complaints spike, system stuck in grey zone, SC guidelines on paper [Link](#)

Why in News? Kerala police are investigating a violent ragging incident captured on video at a government nursing college in Kottayam.

A Spike in Ragging Complaints

- 1) UGC helpline recorded **208% increase in complaints (2012-2022)**, peaking at **1,115 cases in 2019**
- 2) 78 ragging-linked deaths reported since 2012, with Maharashtra (10), UP and Tamil Nadu (7 each) being worst-affected



Institution	Complaints	Authorities' Claim
BHU	72	Only 1% genuine ragging cases
MANIT Bhopal	53	90% complaints from non-freshers
MKCG Medical College	49	Just 1 verified case since 2012

Issues associated with Ragging in Educational Institutions

- 1) **Legal & Regulatory Failures**
 - a) **Unimplemented guidelines:** Supreme Court's 2009 anti-ragging directives remain largely on paper, with only 4.49% of students submitting mandatory affidavits.
 - b) **Regulatory loopholes:** UGC's Clause 9.4 (action against non-compliant colleges) unused since 2009; no centralized records of FIRs or anti-ragging squad actions.
 - c) **Institutional negligence:** Authorities often dismiss complaints as "internal disputes" or "frivolous," with top institutions like BHU and MANIT Bhopal downplaying cases.
- 2) **Psychological & Physical Impact**
 - a) **Mental trauma:** Victims suffer anxiety, depression, PTSD, and social withdrawal
 - b) **Academic decline:** Stress from ragging leads to poor concentration and performance
 - c) **Physical harm:** Instances of beatings, sexual abuse, and forced substance use reported
- 3) **Social & Systemic Consequences**
 - a) **Deaths and injuries:** 78 ragging-linked deaths since 2012, with Maharashtra (10), UP, and Tamil Nadu (7 each) as worst-hit states
 - b) **Family burden:** Families face emotional distress, financial strain, and stigma

The Raghavan Committee Guidelines

The Dr. R.K. Raghavan Committee appointed by the Supreme Court was tasked with monitoring ragging control measures in higher educational institutions and suggesting appropriate modifications to the law. Based on its recommendations, the Supreme Court has in a series of recent judgments approved a wide array of measures, including amendments to the Indian Penal Code:

Ragging should be made a cognizable, non-bailable, non-compoundable offence with punishment ranging from one year imprisonment and fine up to seven years rigorous imprisonment and fine. Broadly, acts of ragging and their corresponding terms of punishment can be categorized as follows:

Verbal: A senior who causes mental harassment, discomfort for the junior by forcing him/her to answer unacceptable/personal questions, dance, sing, etc. is said to rag the junior. Cyber ragging is also included in this category.
Punishment: 1 year imprisonment or fine or both.

Severe Verbal Ragging: Where the mental harassment, discomfort is to such an extent as to force the junior to withdraw from the college.
Punishment: 7 year imprisonment with fine.

Physical: Any act by the senior towards the junior which inflicts bodily injury on the junior, like beating the junior, hitting him/her with objects, etc.
Punishment: 7 year imprisonment with fine.

Sexual Ragging: Where the senior asks the junior to perform an act which damages the sexual dignity of the junior.
Punishment: 7 year rigorous imprisonment and fine.

- c) **Institutional reputation:** Colleges lose credibility, enrollment, and funding due to ragging prevalence
- 4) **Cultural & Behavioural Factors**
 - a) **Normalized violence:** Seniors justify ragging as "tradition" or "initiation," perpetuating cycles of abuse
 - b) **Power dynamics:** Acts driven by sadistic pleasure, dominance, or retaliation for past experiences
 - c) **Caste/regional bias:** 25+ cases linked to caste, religion, or regionalism in media reports
- 5) **Preventive Gaps**
 - a) **Lack of infrastructure:** Over 40,000 colleges lack CCTV coverage, secure complaint boxes, or ID-based reporting systems
 - b) **Weak enforcement:** Anti-ragging committees often inactive; police involvement delayed despite 24-hour FIR mandate

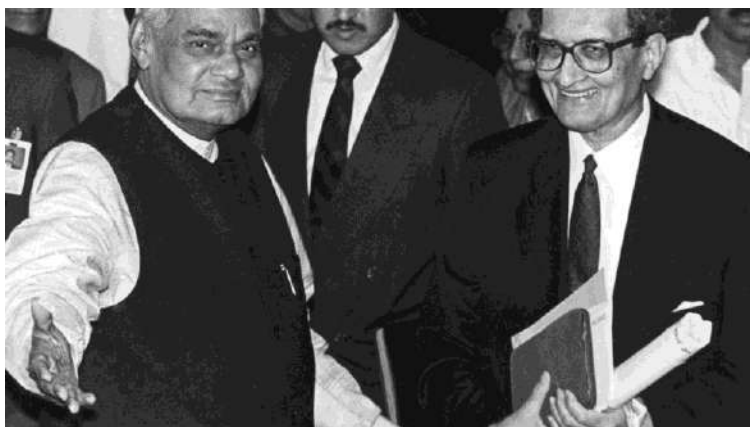
Way forward: Supreme Court Guidelines on Ragging

- 1) **Institutional Framework**
 - a) **Anti-Ragging Committees & Squads:** Mandatory formation in every institution to conduct surprise checks and address complaints
 - b) **Monitoring Cells:** Required at university and state levels to coordinate anti-ragging efforts
 - c) **Full-time hostel wardens:** Institutions must appoint wardens residing within/near hostels to ensure vigilance
- 2) **Preventive Measures**
 - a) **Joint orientation programs:** Freshers and seniors must attend sensitization sessions to foster mutual respect
 - b) **Affidavits:** Students and parents must submit annual affidavits pledging non-participation in ragging, stored in a centralized database
 - c) **CCTV surveillance:** Installation in hostels, canteens, and academic blocks to monitor high-risk areas
- 3) **Legal & Administrative Directives**
 - a) **FIR mandate:** Heads of institutions must file FIRs within 24 hours of ragging complaints, regardless of severity
 - b) **Exemplary punishment:** Expulsion, fines up to ₹10,000, and legal action under IPC sections (e.g., 323 for assault, 306 for abetment to suicide)
 - c) **Institutional accountability:** Penal consequences for negligent authorities, including departmental inquiries and funding cuts
- 4) **Support Systems**
 - a) **24/7 helpline:** Toll-free crisis hotline (1800-180-5522) managed by NGOs for anonymous reporting
 - b) **Counselling services:** Institutions must provide psychological support to victims
- 5) **Regulatory Compliance**
 - a) **UGC regulations:** Binding for all universities and colleges, including mandatory public declarations against ragging
 - b) **NGO monitoring:** Independent agencies to audit compliance and maintain complaint databases.

The guidelines emphasize a **zero-tolerance policy**, combining strict enforcement, victim support, and institutional accountability. Despite these measures, gaps in implementation persist, notably low affidavit compliance (4.49%) and underutilization of UGC's punitive clauses.

Ethics News of the Day: Theory and practice: the ethical core in Amartya Sen's Weltanschauung
[Link](#)

Why in News? Amartya Sen's ethical worldview emphasizes the inseparable bond between moral philosophy and practical economics, offering critical insights for addressing modern inequality. His work remains vital in understanding social justice through interdisciplinary lenses.


Core Principles of Sen's Weltanschauung
1) Early Influences & Praxis

- a) Conducted grassroots research as a student in Shantiniketan, studying Adivasi lives and gender-based deprivation using his bicycle.
- b) Later used this empirical approach to analyze the 1943 Bengal Famine.

2) Ethics & Economics Integration

- a) Views economics as "moral philosophy in action," reviving Adam Smith's original vision.
- b) Rejects narrow utilitarianism, advocating for Marxian ideas of positive freedom and Kantian ethics linking reason with moral responsibility.

3) Social Choice Theory & Philosophical Inspirations

- a) Nobel-winning work addressed limitations in traditional welfare economics and voting theories.

- b) Drew from Sanskrit play Mudrarakshasa to prioritize nyaya (ethical justice) over rigid niti (rules).

4) Legacy & Contemporary Relevance

- a) Identifies inequality as the root of global conflicts and deprivation.
- b) Provides frameworks to navigate modern complexities through ethical praxis, earning recognition as a guiding intellectual voice.

Key Takeaway: Sen's synthesis of ethical rigor and economic analysis offers transformative tools to address systemic injustice – a counterpoint to today's profit-driven paradigms.

AMARTYA SEN'S FOUR CONCEPTS OF ADVANTAGE


CONTRAST BETWEEN AGENCY + WELLBEING
 While they are different, an improvement in capability to attain one often means an improvement in capability to attain the other.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN FREEDOM + ACHIEVEMENT
 Freedom means the capability to achieve what one sets out to achieve by the means they choose to pursue it, regardless of whether that freedom is actually pursued. Achievement is the realization of that freedom.

S. Bevilacqua, Designing with Society, 2019



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Date	TESTS	Date	TESTS	PRELIMS SYLLABUS
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4-Mar	hFST-2502	8-Apr	hFST-2522	
5-Mar	hFST-2503	9-Apr	hFST-2523	
6-Mar	hFST-2504	10-Apr	hFST-2524	
10-Mar	hFST-2505	11-Apr	hFST-2525	
11-Mar	hFST-2506	14-Apr	hFST-2526	
17-Mar	hFST-2507	15-Apr	hFST-2527	
18-Mar	hFST-2508	16-Apr	hFST-2528	
19-Mar	hFST-2509	17-Apr	hFST-2529	
20-Mar	hFST-2510	18-Apr	hFST-2530	
24-Mar	hFST-2511	21-Apr	hFST-2531	
25-Mar	hFST-2512	22-Apr	hFST-2532	
26-Mar	hFST-2513	23-Apr	hFST-2533	
27-Mar	hFST-2514	24-Apr	hFST-2534	
28-Mar	hFST-2515	25-Apr	hFST-2535	
31-Mar	hFST-2516	28-Apr	hFST-2536	
1-Apr	hFST-2517	29-Apr	hFST-2537	
2-Apr	hFST-2518	30-Apr	hFST-2538	
3-Apr	hFST-2519	1-May	FLT-2539	
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