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**QUESTION & ANSWERS**

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# Polity and Governance

**Q1. The inclusion of 'secular' and 'socialist' in the Preamble through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment has reignited political debate. Examine its constitutional validity, major Supreme Court rulings, the challenges in interpretation, and suggest a balanced way forward. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Preamble of the Indian Constitution**

**Source:** Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/debate-heats-up-but-apex-court-always-upheld-preamble-amendment-10094914/>

<b>Introduction</b>	The Preamble serves as the soul of India's Constitution, reflecting its guiding values. The words 'secular' and 'socialist' were added through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976 during the Emergency, aiming to clarify India's commitment to religious neutrality and socio-economic equity. Recently, statements by key leaders questioning these terms have reopened discussions on their relevance and legitimacy. However, the Supreme Court's consistent stand and India's socio-political context have upheld these principles as integral to the constitutional ethos.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background: Why were these words added?</li> <li>• Constitutional Validity and Judicial Endorsement</li> <li>• Challenges in Interpretation and Practice</li> <li>• Contemporary Relevance</li> <li>• The Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The inclusion of 'secular' and 'socialist' reflects India's unique socio-cultural context and the framers' vision of an inclusive, pluralistic, and equitable society. Decades of judicial scrutiny and social realities confirm their continuing relevance. Rather than revisiting their legitimacy, the focus must shift towards realising these ideals through balanced policy, constitutional morality, and civic awareness, ensuring that India remains a truly inclusive democracy.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Preamble of the Indian Constitution</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Discuss each adjective attached to the word 'Republic' in the preamble. Are they defensible in the present circumstances stances? [2016]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The Preamble serves as the soul of India's Constitution, reflecting its

guiding values. The words 'secular' and 'socialist' were added through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976 during the Emergency, aiming to clarify India's commitment to religious neutrality and socio-economic equity. Recently, statements by key leaders questioning these terms have reopened discussions on their relevance and legitimacy. However, the Supreme Court's consistent stand and India's socio-political context have upheld these principles as integral to the constitutional ethos.

## Body

### Background: Why were these words added?

- The framers believed secularism and socialism were inherent in the Constitution through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- The 42nd Amendment explicitly inserted 'secular' and 'socialist' to the Preamble along with introducing **Fundamental Duties** (Part IVA) to promote responsible citizenship.
- The **44th Amendment (1978)**, while repealing several Emergency-era provisions, retained these words, showing post-Emergency consensus on their importance.

### Constitutional Validity and Judicial Endorsement

- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)**: Even before the Preamble amendment, the Supreme Court declared secularism a **basic feature** of the Constitution, immune from amendment.
- **Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980)**: Held that 'socialism' as a goal flows from Part IV (DPSPs), especially Articles 38 and 39, which guide the state towards an egalitarian order.
- **Recent Ruling (2024)**: A two-judge SC bench dismissed petitions challenging the inclusion, ruling that these terms have gained "widespread acceptance by 'We, the people of India'" and have not hindered democratic governance.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine**: Any attempt to dilute secularism or the broader socialist orientation violates the doctrine set in Kesavananda Bharati.

### Challenges in Interpretation and Practice

- **Ambiguity and Changing Context**: Critics argue that the term 'socialist' is vague in a liberalised economy. India's shift towards market-driven reforms since 1991 raises questions about reconciling welfare ideals with economic competitiveness.
- **Political Misuse**: The terms are often reduced to rhetoric, sometimes weaponised for political polarisation instead of meaningful policy alignment.

- **Socio-economic Indicators:** Reports like the Oxfam Inequality Report (2024) note that India's top 1% holds over 40% of national wealth, underlining the unfinished agenda of distributive justice envisioned by constitutional socialism.

### Contemporary Relevance

- **Secularism's Protective Role:** India's secularism is positive — the state respects all faiths equally. Amid rising communal tensions (as flagged by various reports, including NHRC data on communal incidents), the need to uphold secularism is vital for national integration.
- **Socialism's Practical Meaning:** It calls for inclusive growth, social welfare schemes, and bridging inequalities. Schemes like MGNREGA, PDS, and the Right to Education Act operationalise this vision.
- **International Examples:** Many European countries embed 'social democratic' ideals in governance while balancing free markets, showing that economic growth and social welfare can co-exist.

### The Way Forward

- **Constitutional Literacy and Duties:** Initiatives like the **Citizens' Duties Awareness Programme (2019)** should be strengthened to promote understanding of the Preamble's ideals.
- **Policy Alignment:** Governments must balance liberal economic reforms with welfare commitments — ensuring inclusive growth aligns with 'socialist' goals.
- **Political Consensus and Dialogue:** A healthy democracy requires mature debate on constitutional values without ideological distortion.
- **Judicial Vigilance:** The Supreme Court must continue to act as the guardian of secularism and social justice under the basic structure doctrine.

### Conclusion

The inclusion of 'secular' and 'socialist' reflects India's unique socio-cultural context and the framers' vision of an inclusive, pluralistic, and equitable society. Decades of judicial scrutiny and social realities confirm their continuing relevance. Rather than revisiting their legitimacy, the focus must shift towards realising these ideals through balanced policy, constitutional morality, and civic awareness, ensuring that India remains a truly inclusive democracy.

**Q2: In light of Assam's decision to arm select indigenous communities, critically examine the implications of delegating state coercive authority to civilians. Discuss the constitutional, legal, security, and human rights dimensions, and suggest alternative strategies for ensuring border area security. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Border area security mechanisms**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/wrong-call-on-assam-and-arming-civilians/article69646118.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	In May 2025, the Assam government announced its decision to issue arms licenses to “eligible” indigenous people in vulnerable border areas. This move, aimed at enhancing local security near international borders with Bangladesh, raises serious concerns regarding constitutional norms, security, and administrative efficacy. In modern democratic states, the monopoly on violence is reserved for the state, and deviating from this principle can have unintended consequences.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal and Constitutional Framework</li> <li>• Security and Strategic Implications</li> <li>• Administrative and Implementation Challenges</li> <li>• Human Rights and Ethical Concerns</li> <li>• Way Forward: Strengthening State Capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The Assam government’s decision to arm civilians may reflect intent to protect marginalized populations, but it risks undermining the rule of law, escalating violence, and weakening institutional accountability. Instead of delegating coercive powers to untrained civilians, the state must invest in building robust, rights-respecting, and accountable security infrastructure. Upholding constitutional norms while ensuring citizen safety should remain the cornerstone of internal security policy.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Border area security mechanisms</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. For effective border area management, discuss the steps required to be taken to deny local support to militants and also suggest ways to manage favourable perception among locals. [2020]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	In May 2025, the Assam government announced its decision to issue arms licenses to “eligible” indigenous people in vulnerable border areas. This move, aimed at enhancing local security near international borders with Bangladesh, raises serious concerns regarding constitutional norms, security, and administrative efficacy. In modern democratic states, the monopoly on violence is reserved for the state, and deviating from this principle can have unintended consequences.

## Body

### Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Arms Act, 1959 and Arms Rules, 2016:**
  - These provide for a highly regulated and individualized licensing regime.
  - They do **not allow mass distribution** of arms licenses to identified communities or groups.
- **Constitutional Authority:**
  - *Article 21* guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, but the *right to bear arms is not a fundamental right*.
  - Law and order is a **State Subject (List II, Schedule VII)**, but decisions must adhere to **rule of law and proportionality**.
- **Precedents:**
  - *Salwa Judum* in Chhattisgarh was declared **unconstitutional** by the Supreme Court in *Nandini Sundar vs. State of Chhattisgarh* (2011), stating arming civilians undermines the rule of law.

### Security and Strategic Implications

- **Arms Proliferation Risks:**
  - More arms in civilian hands may lead to grey market transactions and illicit trade.
  - Possibility of weapons being misused in inter-community tensions or by insurgents.
- **Threat from Insurgents:**
  - Assam still faces sporadic threats from ULFA (I) and other underground outfits.
  - Additional firearms among civilians could **escalate rather than deter** violence.
- **Undermining Police Forces:**
  - Encourages *vigilantism* and shifts the burden of policing from trained forces to untrained civilians.

### Administrative and Implementation Challenges

- **Licensing and Monitoring Gaps:**
  - Large-scale licensing makes it difficult to ensure individual compliance with Arms Rules.
  - State may lack capacity for *firearm tracking, renewal, and revocation*.
- **Group Identification Risks:**
  - Selectively arming “indigenous” communities can

*foment ethnic polarization* and administrative bias.

- **Accountability Issues:**

- Civilian groups, unlike formal forces, operate outside frameworks of *discipline and oversight*.

### **Human Rights and Ethical Concerns**

- **Risk of Human Rights Violations:**

- Past experiences like Salwa Judum highlight how civilian militias often **abuse power**.

- **Lack of Legal Recourse:**

- Victims of abuses by armed civilians may find **limited institutional redress**.

- **Violation of International Norms:**

- Goes against *UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990)*.

### **Way Forward: Strengthening State Capacity**

- **Boosting Formal Policing:**

- Recruit more police personnel under the *Border Area Development Programme (BADP)*.
- Establish permanent security outposts and rapid response teams.

- **Community Policing Initiatives:**

- Promote *non-lethal, cooperative community policing models* that build trust without arming civilians.

- **Surveillance and Intelligence:**

- Deploy **drones, CCTVs, and intelligence-sharing platforms** to improve border vigilance.

- **Inter-State and Border Coordination:**

- Coordinate with BSF and neighboring states to ensure **seamless security integration**.

### **Conclusion**

The Assam government's decision to arm civilians may reflect intent to protect marginalized populations, but it risks undermining the rule of law, escalating violence, and weakening institutional accountability. Instead of delegating coercive powers to untrained civilians, the state must invest in building robust, rights-respecting, and accountable security infrastructure. Upholding constitutional norms while ensuring citizen safety should remain the cornerstone of internal security policy.

**Q3. The recent policy measures for Ladakh reflect a partial response to the region's long-standing demands for identity, autonomy, and representation. In this context, examine the administrative, constitutional, and developmental challenges facing Ladakh. What further steps are needed to ensure inclusive governance and national integration? (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Centre-State Relations

Source: The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/act-north-on-the-needs-of-ladakh/article69652855.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Ladakh, a strategically vital and culturally unique region, has witnessed persistent public discontent since its bifurcation from Jammu & Kashmir in 2019 and subsequent transition into a Union Territory. Despite recent policy measures notified by the Centre in June 2025, concerns over identity protection, political representation, and employment remain largely unresolved.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent Policy Measures by the Centre</li> <li>• Demands of the People of Ladakh</li> <li>• Administrative and Developmental Challenges</li> <li>• Strategic and Geopolitical Significance</li> <li>• Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Ladakh's concerns must not be viewed merely through a security lens. A <b>balanced approach</b> combining constitutional safeguards, administrative empowerment, and sustained local engagement is essential to integrate Ladakh meaningfully into India's democratic and developmental framework.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Centre-State Relations</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. To what extent is Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, bearing marginal note "Temporary provision with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir", temporary? Discuss the future prospects of this provision in the context of Indian polity. [2017]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Ladakh, a strategically vital and culturally unique region, has witnessed persistent public discontent since its bifurcation from Jammu & Kashmir in 2019 and subsequent transition into a Union Territory. Despite recent policy measures notified by the Centre in June 2025, concerns over identity protection, political representation, and employment remain

	<p>largely unresolved.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Recent Policy Measures by the Centre</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Up to 85% job reservation</b> for indigenous people in Ladakh.</li><li>• <b>Domicile definition:</b> 15 years of continuous residence post-2019.</li><li>• <b>Language inclusion:</b> English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, and Purgi as official languages.</li><li>• <b>One-third reservation for women</b> in Hill Councils.</li><li>• Aimed to mirror protections provided in northeastern states like Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.</li></ul> <p><b>Demands of the People of Ladakh</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sixth Schedule inclusion</b> for constitutional protection of tribal rights and land.</li><li>• <b>Full statehood</b> to enable self-governance.</li><li>• <b>Separate public service commission</b> for fair recruitment.</li><li>• <b>Second Lok Sabha seat</b> for adequate political representation.</li><li>• Civil society sees the new measures as <b>insufficient and superficial</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Administrative and Developmental Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>No recruitment</b> for 1,275 gazetted posts since 2019.</li><li>• <b>Youth unemployment</b> remains high, driving protests.</li><li>• Inadequate infrastructure and <b>poor local governance</b>.</li><li>• Absence of constitutional safeguards has <b>weakened trust in the administration</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Strategic and Geopolitical Significance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Located at a <b>critical tri-junction</b> with China and Pakistan.</li><li>• Recent military stand-offs highlight the <b>strategic urgency</b> of regional stability.</li><li>• Civil unrest may weaken India's posture in a <b>highly sensitive border region</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Way Forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule</b> to protect land, culture, and demography.</li><li>• <b>Fill vacant government posts</b> and establish a local PSC.</li><li>• <b>Empower local institutions</b>, especially hill councils, through devolution of powers.</li><li>• Strengthen <b>infrastructure, education, and connectivity</b> to boost local economy.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure regular <b>Centre–Ladakh civil society dialogue</b> for participatory governance.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Ladakh’s concerns must not be viewed merely through a security lens. A balanced approach combining constitutional safeguards, administrative empowerment, and sustained local engagement is essential to integrate Ladakh meaningfully into India’s democratic and developmental framework.

**Q4: The Supreme Court recently clarified that merely enacting a law by Parliament or a State Legislature cannot amount to contempt of court. In this context, explain the constitutional framework governing legislative autonomy, the role of judicial review, and how the separation of powers and checks and balances are upheld in Indian democracy. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Legislative autonomy in India

Source: The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-contempt-if-parliament-legislatures-simply-make-laws-supreme-court/article69653366.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	In a significant judgment delivered in June 2025, the Supreme Court held that any law made by Parliament or a State Legislature, even if perceived to contradict a judicial direction, cannot be treated as contempt of court. This ruling reaffirms the principle of separation of powers and legislative supremacy in law-making, subject to constitutional boundaries.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional Basis for Legislative Autonomy</li> <li>• Judicial Review vs Legislative Authority</li> <li>• Case Context: Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Act, 2011</li> <li>• Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances</li> <li>• Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The Supreme Court’s verdict highlights a fundamental principle of constitutional democracy — law-making is the domain of the legislature, and while courts can test its validity, they cannot treat it as contempt. This balance between autonomy and accountability is key to India’s democratic resilience.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Legislative autonomy in India</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Starting from inventing the ‘basic structure’ doctrine, the judiciary has played a highly proactive role in ensuring that India</b>

	<p>develops into a thriving democracy. In light of the statement, evaluate the role played by judicial activism in achieving the ideals of democracy. [2014]</p>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>In a significant judgment delivered in June 2025, the Supreme Court held that any law made by Parliament or a State Legislature, even if perceived to contradict a judicial direction, cannot be treated as contempt of court. This ruling reaffirms the principle of separation of powers and legislative supremacy in law-making, subject to constitutional boundaries.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Constitutional Basis for Legislative Autonomy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Articles 245 and 246</b> grant Parliament and State Legislatures plenary powers to make laws within their jurisdiction as defined by <b>Schedule VII</b>.</li><li>• Legislatures are free to <b>enact, amend, or repeal laws</b>, as long as they do not breach constitutional provisions.</li><li>• The Court observed: “Every State Legislature has plenary powers... unless declared ultra vires by a constitutional court, the said enactment has the force of law.”</li></ul> <p><b>Judicial Review vs Legislative Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Articles 13, 32, and 226</b> empower the Supreme Court and High Courts to review laws for <b>violations of fundamental rights and legislative competence</b>.</li><li>• However, <b>passing a new law is not contempt</b>, even if it seeks to alter the basis of a judicial ruling.</li><li>• Courts may strike down laws, but <b>cannot preclude legislatures from enacting fresh laws</b> on the same subject.</li></ul> <p><b>Case Context: Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Act, 2011</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Petitioners alleged contempt of court as the 2011 Act “legalized” SPOs (linked to Salwa Judum), despite SC’s 2011 judgment prohibiting their use.</li><li>• The Court ruled that <b>enactment of a law post-judgment is not contempt</b>, though its <b>validity may be constitutionally challenged</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• India’s Constitution mandates <b>functional separation</b> between Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary.</li><li>• Legislatures can <b>remove the basis of a judicial ruling</b> or <b>validate a struck-down law</b> via constitutional amendments or legislative refinements.</li><li>• The <b>doctrine of separation of powers</b> ensures that courts</li></ul>

	<p>interpret law but <b>do not encroach upon legislative intent or action.</b></p> <p><b>Way Forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional respect and <b>interdependence</b> among organs must be preserved.</li> <li>• Legislatures should exercise caution to <b>ensure laws align with constitutional values.</b></li> <li>• Judiciary must continue to perform <b>constitutional review</b> without overstepping into legislative prerogatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The Supreme Court’s verdict highlights a fundamental principle of constitutional democracy — law-making is the domain of the legislature, and while courts can test its validity, they cannot treat it as contempt. This balance between autonomy and accountability is key to India’s democratic resilience.</p>

**Q5. Despite being guaranteed under the Constitution, voting rights remain inaccessible for a large section of India’s migrant population. Examine the challenges faced by migrant workers in exercising their franchise. Discuss the possible policy solutions suggested by the Election Commission of India (ECI) and others, and evaluate their feasibility. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Fundamental Rights of migrants**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/enabling-voting-rights-for-migrants/article69736254.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The right to vote is the cornerstone of democracy, enshrined under Article 326 of the Indian Constitution. However, millions of India’s internal migrants, particularly those engaged in informal sector work, remain effectively disenfranchised due to structural, administrative, and logistical hurdles. With a growing rate of migration—from economically weaker to richer regions—enabling accessible voting mechanisms has become a pressing democratic imperative.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration Trends and Voter Disenfranchisement</li> <li>• Challenges Faced by Migrants in Voting</li> <li>• ECI and Policy Mechanisms to Enable Migrant Voting</li> <li>• Gender-Sensitive Electoral Measures</li> <li>• Towards an Inclusive Electoral Framework</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>Voting is not merely a constitutional right but a vehicle for empowerment, especially for the economically vulnerable. With internal migration set to rise in the coming decades, failure to address electoral</p>

exclusion risks eroding the democratic fabric. A comprehensive, flexible, and technology-backed voting mechanism is essential to ensure that every Indian, regardless of where they live or work, can fully participate in the democratic process.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Fundamental Rights of migrants</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India? (2018)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The right to vote is the cornerstone of democracy, enshrined under Article 326 of the Indian Constitution. However, millions of India's internal migrants, particularly those engaged in informal sector work, remain effectively disenfranchised due to structural, administrative, and logistical hurdles. With a growing rate of migration—from economically weaker to richer regions—enabling accessible voting mechanisms has become a pressing democratic imperative.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Migration Trends and Voter Disenfranchisement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Migration statistics:</b> As of 2021, India had a migration rate of <b>28.9%</b>, with <b>10% migrating for work</b>, predominantly in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.</li> <li>• <b>Impact on elections:</b> In Bihar's 2024 Lok Sabha polls, voter turnout was <b>56%</b>, much lower than the national average, largely due to out-migration.</li> <li>• <b>Informal sector challenge:</b> Most migrants are employed in precarious jobs, often without fixed addresses or leave provisions, making it difficult to return to vote.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges Faced by Migrants in Voting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Loss of livelihood:</b> Migrants are unable to afford wage losses for traveling home to vote.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of address proof:</b> Especially among inter-State migrants in construction and domestic work.</li> <li>• <b>Poor implementation of electoral registration updates</b> in new places of residence.</li> <li>• <b>Gender gap:</b> Many women migrating after marriage are not re-enrolled in their new constituency.</li> </ul> <p><b>ECI and Policy Mechanisms to Enable Migrant Voting:</b></p> <p><b>A. Remote Electronic Voting Machines (RVMs):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by ECI in 2023; can handle votes for up to <b>72</b></li> </ul>

**constituencies** on one machine.

- **Challenges:** Political opposition, logistical complexity, identity verification issues, and Code of Conduct complications.
- **Feasibility:** Needs extensive reforms, pre-registration mechanisms, and pilot testing.

**B. Postal Ballots:**

- Currently used for armed forces and select service voters.
- **Pros:** Easier to implement for registered migrants.
- **Cons:** Requires pre-registration, logistical efforts for ballot despatch and retrieval.

**C. Change of Constituency Enrollment:**

- Applicable for **longer-term migrants** residing over six months in a new location.
- **Empowers migrants** to participate in local governance issues affecting them.
- **Challenges:** Local opposition from native residents, documentation difficulties.

**D. Electoral Facilitation Measures:**

- For **intra-State migrants**, measures like:
  - Special buses during elections.
  - Enforcing **statutory holidays on polling day**.
  - Encouraging **bulk registration drives**.

**Gender-Sensitive Electoral Measures:**

- Focused drives to re-enrol **married women migrants** in new households.
- **Door-to-door campaigns**, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

**Towards an Inclusive Electoral Framework:**

- A **mixed model** is the most viable solution:
  - RVMs for mobile, seasonal workers.
  - Postal ballots for pre-registered, temporary workers.
  - Constituency transfer for permanent migrants.
- Need for **strong inter-departmental coordination** between ECI, Labour Ministry, and State Governments.
- Leverage **digital tools for registration**, authentication, and tracking.

**Conclusion**

Voting is not merely a constitutional right but a vehicle for empowerment, especially for the economically vulnerable. With internal migration set to rise in the coming decades, failure to address

electoral exclusion risks eroding the democratic fabric. A comprehensive, flexible, and technology-backed voting mechanism is essential to ensure that every Indian, regardless of where they live or work, can fully participate in the democratic process.

**Q6: Concerns surrounding arbitrary citizenship determination raise significant constitutional and human rights questions in India, particularly in border states. Discuss the underlying causes, policy framework, and challenges of such cases, with reference to recent judicial interventions. Suggest a way forward to ensure due process and dignity in citizenship determination. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Citizenship in India

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/cause-and-effect-on-human-rights-citizenship-cases/article69736669.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Citizenship is a fundamental legal status that determines an individual's rights, responsibilities, and sense of belonging in a country. In India, especially in border states like Assam and Jammu & Kashmir, challenges surrounding citizenship determination have exposed gaps in legal safeguards and raised serious human rights concerns. The recent interventions by the Supreme Court and High Courts—such as in the cases of Jaynab Bibi and Rakshanda Rashid—highlight the precarious conditions faced by individuals caught in bureaucratic and legal limbo.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional and Legal Framework on Citizenship:</li> <li>• Human Rights Principles and International Commitments:</li> <li>• Challenges in Implementation of Citizenship Policies:</li> <li>• Cause and Effect of Arbitrary Citizenship Decisions:</li> <li>• Recommendations and Way Forward:</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Citizenship is not merely a legal identity but a determinant of dignity, security, and access to rights. India's constitutional ethos, rooted in equality and justice, must reflect in how it treats its most vulnerable—whether documented or undocumented. Governments must proactively uphold human rights rather than relying on the judiciary to rectify injustices. A humane, transparent, and non-discriminatory approach is imperative for ensuring inclusive citizenship in a democratic society.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Citizenship in India</b>
<b>Why was this</b>	<b>Q. "Right of movement and residence throughout the territory of</b>

<b>question asked?</b>	<b>India are freely available to the Indian citizens, but these rights are not absolute." Comment. (2022)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Citizenship is a fundamental legal status that determines an individual's rights, responsibilities, and sense of belonging in a country. In India, especially in border states like Assam and Jammu & Kashmir, challenges surrounding citizenship determination have exposed gaps in legal safeguards and raised serious human rights concerns. The recent interventions by the Supreme Court and High Courts—such as in the cases of Jaynab Bibi and Rakshanda Rashid—highlight the precarious conditions faced by individuals caught in bureaucratic and legal limbo.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Constitutional and Legal Framework on Citizenship:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Articles 5–11 of the Indian Constitution</b> define citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution.</li><li>• The <b>Citizenship Act, 1955</b>, amended several times (notably in 2003 and 2019), governs acquisition, termination, and renunciation of citizenship.</li><li>• The <b>Foreigners Act, 1946</b>, and <b>Foreigners Tribunals Order, 1964</b>, empower tribunals to declare individuals as foreigners, especially in Assam.</li><li>• <b>Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)</b> introduces religion-based criteria for citizenship for six non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh—raising concerns of discriminatory treatment under <b>Article 14 (Right to Equality)</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Human Rights Principles and International Commitments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• India is a signatory to the <b>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)</b>, which guarantees the right to nationality and protection against arbitrary deprivation of citizenship (Article 15).</li><li>• <b>Due process and non-discrimination</b> are core principles of international law.</li><li>• The <b>Supreme Court in Md. Rahim Ali (2024)</b> reiterated that <i>"suspicion cannot substitute for legal evidence"</i>, reinforcing the importance of procedural fairness.</li></ul> <p><b>Challenges in Implementation of Citizenship Policies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Lack of documentation</b> among poor and marginalised communities, especially women and migrants, makes it difficult to prove citizenship.</li><li>• <b>Foreigners Tribunals</b> have often been criticised for opaque procedures, inconsistent decisions, and poor legal aid.</li><li>• <b>Delays in processing citizenship applications</b>, such as in</li></ul>

Rakshanda Rashid's case (application pending since 1996), highlight bureaucratic apathy.

- **Politicisation of citizenship**—particularly in Assam and Uttar Pradesh—has led to communal polarisation and fear among minorities.

#### **Cause and Effect of Arbitrary Citizenship Decisions:**

- **Psychological trauma and social ostracism** for those declared foreigners without adequate evidence.
- **Risk of statelessness**, which violates both domestic and international legal protections.
- **Undermining public trust** in institutions when courts have to frequently intervene to uphold basic rights.
- **Rise in judicial burden**, as courts are compelled to act as first responders to humanitarian crises due to executive failure.

#### **Recommendations and Way Forward:**

- **Establish a transparent and accountable mechanism** for citizenship verification, guided by principles of natural justice.
- **Legal aid and representation** must be institutionalised in Foreigners Tribunal proceedings.
- **Revise the CAA and NRC framework** to ensure non-discrimination and compliance with Article 14.
- **Digital documentation drives** in vulnerable communities to avoid exclusion due to lack of papers.
- Implement **judicially monitored time-bound review** of pending citizenship cases, especially those exceeding a decade.

#### **Conclusion**

Citizenship is not merely a legal identity but a determinant of dignity, security, and access to rights. India's constitutional ethos, rooted in equality and justice, must reflect in how it treats its most vulnerable—whether documented or undocumented. Governments must proactively uphold human rights rather than relying on the judiciary to rectify injustices. A humane, transparent, and non-discriminatory approach is imperative for ensuring inclusive citizenship in a democratic society.

# International Relations

**Q7. Despite its geographical proximity and cultural affinity, South Asia remains one of the least economically integrated regions in the world. Examine the causes behind this under-integration. How does it impact India's regional and global economic aspirations? Suggest measures to improve economic cooperation in South Asia, comparing it with other regional groupings. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Economic cooperation in South Asia**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-sorry-state-of-south-asian-economic-integration/article69728619.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	South Asia, comprising the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), accounts for nearly 25% of the global population but contributes only about 5% to global GDP. Despite decades of regional cooperation frameworks like SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area), intra-regional trade accounts for just 5–7% of South Asia's total trade—far behind regional blocs like the EU (45%), ASEAN (22%) and NAFTA (25%). This reflects a chronic underutilization of the region's economic potential, undermined by geopolitical tensions, security concerns, and inefficient trade mechanisms.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Structural and Conceptual Barriers to South Asian Integration</li><li>• Geopolitical and Security Challenges</li><li>• Impact on India's Economic and Strategic Interests</li><li>• International Comparisons: Lessons from ASEAN and EU</li><li>• Way Forward</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The economic under-integration of South Asia is not a failure of geography, but of political will and institutional capacity. For India, regional prosperity is not only a trade objective but also a strategic imperative—ensuring peace, reducing external dependence, and enhancing soft power. Drawing lessons from ASEAN and the EU, India must champion regionalism through inclusive trade diplomacy, infrastructure development, and pragmatic cooperation. Only through security-led prosperity can South Asia realize its collective potential.

**UPSC Syllabus**

**Economic cooperation in South Asia**

<p><b>Why was this question asked?</b></p>	<p><b>Q. What are the direct and indirect subsidies provided to farm sector in India? Discuss the issues raised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in relation to agricultural subsidies. [2023]</b></p>
<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>South Asia, comprising the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), accounts for nearly 25% of the global population but contributes only about 5% to global GDP. Despite decades of regional cooperation frameworks like SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area), intra-regional trade accounts for just 5–7% of South Asia’s total trade—far behind regional blocs like the EU (45%), ASEAN (22%) and NAFTA (25%). This reflects a chronic underutilization of the region’s economic potential, undermined by geopolitical tensions, security concerns, and inefficient trade mechanisms.</p>
<p><b>Body</b></p>	<p><b>Structural and Conceptual Barriers to South Asian Integration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SAFTA vs. Ground Realities:</b> Although SAFTA was adopted in 2006 to liberalize trade, <b>non-tariff barriers, restrictive visa regimes, and poor infrastructure</b> continue to hinder its efficacy.</li> <li>• <b>High Trade Costs:</b> Intra-SAARC trade costs are <b>114% of the goods’ value</b>, higher than with the U.S. (109%) or Brazil (despite being 22 times farther).</li> <li>• <b>Lack of Regional Value Chains:</b> Unlike ASEAN, which thrives on <b>cross-border manufacturing networks</b>, South Asia lacks a coherent strategy to integrate production lines across countries.</li> <li>• <b>Institutional Weakness:</b> The SAARC secretariat lacks the enforcement power or financial autonomy to drive economic integration effectively.</li> </ul> <p><b>Geopolitical and Security Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>India-Pakistan Conflict:</b> Bilateral trade fell from <b>\$2.41 billion in 2018</b> to <b>\$1.2 billion in 2024</b>, mostly due to terrorism, border skirmishes, and withdrawal of MFN status.</li> <li>• <b>Trust Deficit:</b> SAARC’s failure stems from mutual suspicion, nationalism, and interventionist politics. Minor conflicts often disrupt regional platforms.</li> <li>• <b>Internal Turmoil:</b> Afghanistan’s instability, Sri Lanka’s debt crisis, and Pakistan’s political volatility have disrupted consistent economic engagement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on India’s Economic and Strategic Interests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional Growth Drag:</b> India's trade-to-GDP ratio is disproportionately oriented toward extra-regional actors, making it vulnerable to global shocks.</li> </ul>

- **Strategic Isolation:** China's BRI gains traction in the region, while SAARC stagnates—eroding India's regional leadership.
- **Missed Market Potential:** South Asia has a potential intra-regional trade of **\$172 billion (UNESCAP)**; India is losing a natural export market.
- **Trade Deficit Worsening:** Regional imports are rising faster than exports, contributing to **\$339 billion trade deficit (2022)** for South Asia.

#### **International Comparisons: Lessons from ASEAN and EU**

- **ASEAN:** Emphasizes **non-interference, consensus-building, and institutional innovation**, allowing for pragmatic economic cooperation even amidst disputes.
- **EU:** Established **regulatory convergence, a common customs union, and freedom of movement**, which enabled deep economic linkages.
- **Contrast with SAARC:** South Asia lacks a **shared vision, binding dispute resolution, and long-term investment** in institutional trust-building.

#### **Way Forward: Enhancing Economic Integration in South Asia**

- **Reforming SAFTA:** Include services, harmonize standards, and create dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **India's Leadership Role:** Proactively revive regional forums (e.g., BIMSTEC, BBIN) where SAARC is deadlocked.
- **Confidence-Building Measures:** Gradual economic engagement with Pakistan, including border trade, tourism, and health diplomacy.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Fast-track cross-border connectivity projects like **Kaladan, India-Nepal railways, Chabahar Port**.
- **Promoting Sub-Regionalism:** Leverage **BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal)** and **India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership** as modular steps.

#### **Conclusion**

The economic under-integration of South Asia is not a failure of geography, but of political will and institutional capacity. For India, regional prosperity is not only a trade objective but also a strategic imperative—ensuring peace, reducing external dependence, and enhancing soft power. Drawing lessons from ASEAN and the EU, India must champion regionalism through inclusive trade diplomacy, infrastructure development, and pragmatic cooperation. Only through security-led prosperity can South Asia realize its collective potential.

**Q8: In the context of increasing geopolitical tensions, analyze India's response in ensuring the safety of its citizens abroad with reference to Operation Sindhu. What does it reflect about India's diplomatic capacity, crisis management infrastructure, and engagement with international actors? (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India's diplomacy during conflicts**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/flight-carrying-110-students-evacuated-from-iran-to-land-in-new-delhi-on-wednesday-night/article69709604.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Operation Sindhu, launched in April 2025 by the Government of India, was a coordinated evacuation effort amid escalating tensions between Iran and Israel. By facilitating the return of 110 Indian students—mainly from Jammu & Kashmir—India reaffirmed its global commitment to citizen safety during international emergencies. This operation also highlights India's adept diplomatic coordination with both regional partners and international agencies.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India's Expanding Citizen-Centric Diplomacy</li> <li>• Strategic Coordination with Host and Transit Countries</li> <li>• Role of International Agencies and Global Players</li> <li>• Challenges in Execution and Communication Gaps</li> <li>• India's Strengthened Global Image and Crisis Management Capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Operation Sindhu marks another milestone in India's growing proficiency in international humanitarian diplomacy. The role of international actors—from Iran, Armenia, and Qatar to global aviation authorities and UN-linked bodies—demonstrates the importance of multilateral cooperation in citizen protection. Going forward, India must institutionalize permanent diaspora safety cells, strengthen engagement with international agencies, and ensure inclusive communication strategies during emergencies to protect all citizens abroad, especially the most vulnerable.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India's diplomacy during conflicts</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. [2013]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Operation Sindhu, launched in April 2025 by the Government of India, was a coordinated evacuation effort amid escalating tensions between Iran and Israel. By facilitating the return of 110 Indian students—mainly from Jammu & Kashmir—India reaffirmed its global commitment to citizen safety during international emergencies. This operation also

	<p>highlights India's adept diplomatic coordination with both regional partners and international agencies.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>India's Expanding Citizen-Centric Diplomacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• India's foreign policy continues to prioritize the safety and welfare of overseas citizens during conflicts, disasters, or pandemics.</li><li>• Operation Sindhu follows a lineage of successful operations like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Operation Ganga</b> (Ukraine-Russia conflict, 2022),</li><li>○ <b>Operation Kaveri</b> (Sudan civil war, 2023), and</li><li>○ <b>Vande Bharat Mission</b> (COVID-19 evacuation).</li></ul></li><li>• These missions demonstrate India's ability to use soft power to protect its diaspora across different geographies.</li></ul> <p><b>Strategic Coordination with Host and Transit Countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Iran:</b> Iranian authorities, including the Deputy Ambassador in India, confirmed full cooperation with the Indian Embassy in Tehran.</li><li>• <b>Armenia:</b> Facilitated land transit from Qom to Yerevan, despite ongoing security risks. The Armenian government provided safe passage and temporary accommodation.</li><li>• <b>Qatar:</b> Acted as an intermediary air hub by enabling logistical support via <b>Doha</b>, underscoring the importance of India's Gulf partnerships.</li><li>• This multi-country coordination highlights India's <b>regional goodwill, diplomatic access, and logistics diplomacy</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Role of International Agencies and Global Players</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>International Organization for Migration (IOM):</b> Although not directly named in Operation Sindhu, the IOM often provides best practices, logistical templates, and regional evacuation protocols used by countries like India.</li><li>• <b>United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS):</b> Offers threat assessments in conflict regions, often accessed by Indian missions abroad.</li><li>• <b>Global aviation and security partners</b> such as <b>Qatar Airways</b> and <b>ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)</b> play a role in facilitating safe transit, airspace clearance, and civilian protection standards.</li><li>• <b>Israel's military actions</b> in Tehran prompted the evacuation, indirectly pushing India into urgent diplomatic coordination. Israel was reportedly briefed informally to avoid civilian areas, indicating back-channel diplomacy to <b>safeguard third-party</b></li></ul>

nationals.

### Challenges in Execution and Communication Gaps

- Despite the success, there were concerns:
  - Around 90 pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh were unaware of the evacuation plan.
  - Limited communication with the Indian Embassy and lack of real-time alerts created panic among vulnerable groups.
- The **lack of medical access** and essential services for stranded pilgrims, especially women and minors, indicates a need for inclusive evacuation protocols.

### India's Strengthened Global Image and Crisis Management Capacity

- The swift evacuation enhanced India's image as a **responsible regional power**, capable of responding in volatile geopolitical contexts.
- Operation Sindhu reaffirms India's:
  - Capacity to engage **multiple international actors simultaneously**,
  - Strength in **mobilizing logistics under high-risk environments**, and
  - Growing influence in **West Asia and the Caucasus region**.
- It also reinforces India's support for the "**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas**" approach at the global level, extending welfare to all Indians irrespective of location.

### Conclusion

Operation Sindhu marks another milestone in India's growing proficiency in international humanitarian diplomacy. The role of international actors—from Iran, Armenia, and Qatar to global aviation authorities and UN-linked bodies—demonstrates the importance of multilateral cooperation in citizen protection. Going forward, India must institutionalize permanent diaspora safety cells, strengthen engagement with international agencies, and ensure inclusive communication strategies during emergencies to protect all citizens abroad, especially the most vulnerable.

**Q9. India–Canada ties have faced repeated setbacks, often over diaspora-related issues and diplomatic trust deficits. In light of recent developments, critically examine the key irritants and propose a calibrated strategy to reset bilateral relations. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – India–Canada Relations

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/bad-blood-on-india-canada-ties/article69683197.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	India and Canada, two democracies with strong economic and diaspora linkages, have experienced fluctuating ties, particularly over the Khalistan issue. The situation worsened after Canada’s 2023 public allegations regarding the assassination of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which led to mutual diplomatic downgrades and a freeze in trade talks. However, recent efforts—such as India’s invitation to the G7 Outreach in Kananaskis (2025) by Canadian PM Mark Carney—signal a willingness to reset diplomatic engagement.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key Components of India–Canada Relations</li><li>• Major Irritants in the Relationship</li><li>• Recent Developments: Opportunity for Re-engagement</li><li>• Impact on India</li><li>• Way Forward: A Calibrated Re-engagement Strategy</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The India–Canada relationship cannot be hostage to a single issue. While summit-level engagements like the 2025 G7 outreach offer symbolic value, durable improvements demand quiet diplomacy, consistent engagement, and respect for each other’s red lines. A balanced, forward-looking strategy can transform challenges into opportunities in this strategic partnership.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India–Canada Relations</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Indian diaspora has scaled new heights in the West. Describe its economic and political benefits for India. [2023]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India and Canada, two democracies with strong economic and diaspora linkages, have experienced fluctuating ties, particularly over the Khalistan issue. The situation worsened after Canada’s 2023 public allegations regarding the assassination of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which led to mutual diplomatic downgrades and a freeze in trade talks. However, recent efforts—such as India’s invitation to the G7 Outreach in Kananaskis (2025) by Canadian PM Mark Carney—signal a willingness to reset diplomatic engagement.

## Body

### 1. Key Components of India–Canada Relations

- **Economic Ties:** Bilateral trade stood at USD 9.2 billion (2022–23); Canada is a key source of **energy, uranium, and FDI in India.**
- **Diaspora Diplomacy:** 1.86 million Indian-origin people live in Canada, forming a vital social and political bridge.
- **Strategic Cooperation:** Collaboration in **clean energy, education, Arctic research, and Indo-Pacific regional stability.**

### 2. Major Irritants in the Relationship

- **Khalistani Separatism:** Persistent support or tolerance of Khalistani elements in Canada has strained trust.
- **Nijjar Controversy:** Canada's public allegations against Indian officials, including a trial implicating government agents, have worsened tensions.
- **Diplomatic Retaliation:** Both nations expelled diplomats and downsized their missions; India suspended visa services.
- **Trade Freeze:** Canada suspended the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** talks.

### 3. Recent Developments: Opportunity for Re-engagement

- **G7 Outreach Meeting** (Kananaskis, June 2025): PM Modi's participation signals an intent to break the deadlock.
- **Law Enforcement Dialogue:** A possible forum to discuss sensitive security concerns, including Nijjar's killing and threats to Indian diplomats.
- **Restoration of Diplomacy:** Likely steps include reinstating High Commissioners and resuming CEPA negotiations.

### 4. Impact on India

- **Diaspora Vulnerability:** Threats to Indian community centres and students in Canada have security implications.
- **Strategic Diversion:** Distraction from Indo-Pacific collaboration and trade diversification goals.
- **Reputational Cost:** Allegations, even unproven, affect India's global image and diplomatic capital in the West.

### 5. Way Forward: A Calibrated Re-engagement Strategy

- **Mutual Respect for Sovereignty:** Both sides must refrain from public allegations and use back-channel diplomacy.
- **Counter-Radicalisation Dialogue:** A structured **security and intelligence dialogue** can address extremist threats.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>People-to-People Diplomacy:</b> Harnessing educational, student, and business ties to rebuild trust.</li> <li>• <b>Trade and Tech Reset:</b> Resume CEPA talks and focus on climate tech, clean energy, and digital collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>Institutional Mechanism:</b> A Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) at ministerial level to handle periodic tensions.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The India–Canada relationship cannot be hostage to a single issue. While summit-level engagements like the 2025 G7 outreach offer symbolic value, durable improvements demand quiet diplomacy, consistent engagement, and respect for each other’s red lines. A balanced, forward-looking strategy can transform challenges into opportunities in this strategic partnership.

**Q10: Operation Sindoor’s diplomatic outreach reflects a shift in India’s strategic communication approach in counter-terrorism diplomacy. Critically examine the objectives, execution, and implications of the Indian delegations’ international visits post-Pahalgam attack. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India’s counter-terrorism diplomacy**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/influencing-interlocutors-on-operation-sindoor-indias-delegations/article69671556.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, marked a significant evolution in India’s counter-terrorism diplomacy. The government dispatched seven delegations, comprising Members of Parliament and diplomats, to 32 countries to explain India’s position, highlight Pakistan’s role in cross-border terrorism, and emphasize a unified, pluralistic national stance. This outreach symbolizes India’s growing reliance on parliamentary diplomacy and public engagement to shape global narratives.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives of the Diplomatic Delegations</li> <li>• Key Diplomatic and Strategic Challenges</li> <li>• Strategic Communication and Parliamentary Diplomacy</li> <li>• Evaluation of Diplomatic Outcomes</li> <li>• The Way Ahead: Strengthening Counter-Terror Diplomacy</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Operation Sindoor's diplomatic delegations represent an assertive and inclusive model of strategic outreach. While immediate gains remain limited, the campaign succeeded in presenting India’s pluralism and unity on national security. Moving forward, India must build on this

momentum by institutionalizing strategic communication frameworks and reinforcing multilateral partnerships to isolate state sponsors of terror effectively.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India's counter-terrorism diplomacy</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of Indian government to improve relationship with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss. [2015]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, marked a significant evolution in India's counter-terrorism diplomacy. The government dispatched seven delegations, comprising Members of Parliament and diplomats, to 32 countries to explain India's position, highlight Pakistan's role in cross-border terrorism, and emphasize a unified, pluralistic national stance. This outreach symbolizes India's growing reliance on parliamentary diplomacy and public engagement to shape global narratives.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Objectives of the Diplomatic Delegations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Condemnation of Cross-Border Terrorism:</b> To share evidence of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahalgam terror attack and raise international pressure.</li> <li>• <b>Legitimizing India's Military Response:</b> Highlighted the "restrained and precise" nature of strikes, asserting India's adherence to responsible military conduct under international law.</li> <li>• <b>Reinforcing the "New Normal":</b> Communicated India's shift to a policy of proportionate retaliation to every major terror strike.</li> <li>• <b>Securing Global Solidarity:</b> Aimed to build consensus among UNSC members, OIC states, and Western democracies by engaging lawmakers, media, and civil society.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Diplomatic and Strategic Challenges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pakistan's Counter-Narrative:</b> Islamabad's simultaneous diplomatic campaign diluted India's messaging in several global capitals.</li> <li>• <b>UNSC Setbacks:</b> Pakistan's success in amending the UNSC statement and attaining key posts (Chair of Taliban Sanctions Committee) complicated India's multilateral leverage.</li> <li>• <b>OIC Criticism:</b> Persisting criticism from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation highlighted the difficulty India faces in</li> </ul>

shifting Islamic bloc perceptions.

- **U.S. Tensions:** Speculation around U.S. mediation claims and concerns about democratic backsliding created friction in India-U.S. diplomacy.

#### **Strategic Communication and Parliamentary Diplomacy:**

- **Pluralistic Representation:** Delegates from different political parties and communities projected **Indian unity and secularism**.
- **Soft Power Projection:** Emphasized India's democratic ethos and inclusive governance amid criticism of majoritarianism.
- **Diaspora Engagement:** Strengthened bonds with Indian diaspora — a critical factor in mobilizing global public opinion and lobbying efforts.
- **Media Utilization:** While aimed at transparency, reliance on Indian media during visits drew criticism for limiting engagement with foreign media and policymakers.

#### **Evaluation of Diplomatic Outcomes:**

- **Limited Tangible Gains:** Despite extensive outreach, **no major shift** in multilateral positions (e.g., FATF, UNSC) has been observed yet.
- **Symbolic Gains:** Asserted India's proactive global role and may have prevented harsher international criticism over the strike.
- **Strengthened Bilateral Channels:** Opened avenues for **bilateral clarifications** and direct dialogue with influential nations like the U.S., France, and the UK.

#### **The Way Ahead: Strengthening Counter-Terror Diplomacy:**

- **Enhanced Coordination with MEA:** Parliamentary diplomacy should be **strategically aligned** with professional diplomatic channels.
- **Engagement with Global Civil Society:** Focus on think tanks, foreign media, universities, and NGOs to broaden impact.
- **Leveraging Multilateral Forums:** Utilize platforms like G20, SCO, and BRICS to build collective action frameworks against state-sponsored terrorism.
- **Monitoring Global Perception:** Invest in **strategic communication units** to counter disinformation and shape public opinion abroad.

#### **Conclusion**

Operation Sindoor's diplomatic delegations represent an assertive and inclusive model of strategic outreach. While immediate gains remain limited, the campaign succeeded in presenting India's pluralism and unity on national security. Moving forward, India must build on this

momentum by institutionalizing strategic communication frameworks and reinforcing multilateral partnerships to isolate state sponsors of terror effectively.

**Q11. India and the European Union have undertaken joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean to address non-traditional security threats. In this context, examine the significance of such exercises for India's maritime security and its broader strategic partnership with the EU. Also, highlight the institutional mechanisms enabling such cooperation, including the China factor and QUAD's relevance. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – India and the European Union

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-european-union-naval-force-plan-joint-naval-exercise/article69645381.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	India and the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) recently conducted joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), involving ships from Spain and Italy under Operation Atalanta. The exercise underscores the growing maritime convergence between India and the EU in response to evolving non-traditional threats and great-power competition in the Indo-Pacific.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Significance of India–EU Naval Cooperation</li> <li>• EUNAVFOR and Operation Atalanta</li> <li>• Institutional Mechanisms Driving Cooperation</li> <li>• The China Factor and QUAD Relevance</li> <li>• Challenges and the Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The India–EU naval exercise represents a maturing partnership that now extends beyond trade into the strategic sphere. In an era of strategic flux driven by China's maritime assertiveness, such engagements enhance regional deterrence, reinforce global maritime norms, and allow India to leverage multilateral groupings like QUAD for deeper security cooperation. Moving forward, institutionalizing these maritime engagements will be vital to sustaining Indo-Pacific stability.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India and the European Union</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. 'The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India'. What is your opinion about this statement? Give reasons and examples to support your answer. [2023]</b>

## Introduction

India and the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) recently conducted joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), involving ships from Spain and Italy under Operation Atalanta. The exercise underscores the growing maritime convergence between India and the EU in response to evolving non-traditional threats and great-power competition in the Indo-Pacific.

## Body

### Strategic Significance of India–EU Naval Cooperation

- **Safeguarding Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs):** Ensures freedom of navigation in key chokepoints like the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Countering Maritime Crimes:** Joint surveillance and tactical drills strengthen anti-piracy, anti-smuggling, and anti-trafficking efforts.
- **Enhancing Strategic Autonomy:** Both sides aim to preserve a *rules-based international order* independent of coercive powers.

### EUNAVFOR and Operation Atalanta

- **Operation Atalanta:** EU's naval mission in the Western Indian Ocean to combat piracy and protect humanitarian shipments.
- **India's Role:** Indian Navy has escorted over 3,000 vessels in the Gulf of Aden. Operational linkages with EUNAVFOR enhance *shared maritime domain awareness (MDA)*.

### Institutional Mechanisms Driving Cooperation

- **4th India–EU Maritime Security Dialogue (March 2025):** Addressed threats from piracy, unregulated fishing, and emphasized maritime domain awareness.
- **India-EU Strategic Partnership (2020 onwards):** Maritime security is one of the key pillars in the India–EU Roadmap 2025.
- **Working Group on Maritime Security** under India-EU Security and Defence Consultations.
- **Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Cybersecurity:** Provides synergy across overlapping domains.

### The China Factor and QUAD Relevance

- **China's Expanding Naval Footprint:**
  - Presence at Djibouti base, strategic port acquisitions (e.g., Gwadar, Hambantota), and PLAN patrols in the IOR have raised alarms.
  - India–EU cooperation counters such assertiveness through *presence-based deterrence*.
- **QUAD (India, US, Japan, Australia):**
  - While EU is not a QUAD member, India–EU naval

exercises **complement QUAD's goals** of ensuring a *free and open Indo-Pacific*.

- EU's own *Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021)* aligns with QUAD in emphasizing **multilateralism, transparency, and sovereignty**.
- **Geostrategic Balancing:**
  - India's engagement with both QUAD and EU allows it to maintain **issue-based coalitions** without formal military alliances.
  - Joint exercises serve as **strategic signaling to China**, discouraging unilateralism.

### Challenges and the Way Forward

- **Challenges:**
  - EU's diverse maritime capabilities and political will vary across member states.
  - Logistics, technological disparities, and lack of a unified EU naval command may limit scale.
  - Strategic calculations may vary on how overtly to counterbalance Beijing.
- **Way Forward:**
  - **Expand joint exercises:** Include **trilateral or multilateral formats** with other Indo-Pacific stakeholders.
  - **Information Fusion:** Link EU assets with *Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC–IOR)*.
  - **Blue Economy cooperation:** Joint research on sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity.
  - **Capacity Building:** Offer **training, logistics support, and technical exchanges** with smaller IOR states to counter asymmetric maritime threats.

### Conclusion

The India–EU naval exercise represents a maturing partnership that now extends beyond trade into the strategic sphere. In an era of strategic flux driven by China's maritime assertiveness, such engagements enhance regional deterrence, reinforce global maritime norms, and allow India to leverage multilateral groupings like QUAD for deeper security cooperation. Moving forward, institutionalizing these maritime engagements will be vital to sustaining Indo-Pacific stability.

**Q12: India and Australia recently reiterated their commitment to combating terrorism and strengthening the defence partnership. In this context, explain the institutional mechanisms and strategic frameworks driving India-Australia counter-terrorism cooperation. Highlight the challenges and suggest the way forward to deepen the bilateral security relationship. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India and Australia’s Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-australia-agree-to-work-together-to-combat-terrorism-in-all-its-forms/article69656839.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	India and Australia, as Indo-Pacific democracies, have increasingly aligned their strategic interests, particularly in counter-terrorism and defence cooperation. The fifth anniversary of their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020–2025) witnessed renewed pledges to fight terrorism in all its forms and enhance defence-industrial collaboration, technology sharing, and maritime security.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual Framework: Counter-Terrorism and Strategic Convergence</li> <li>• Institutional Mechanisms and Forums</li> <li>• Organisational and Defence Partnerships</li> <li>• Challenges in Bilateral Counter-Terrorism Cooperation</li> <li>• Way Forward: Strengthening Strategic Depth</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	India and Australia’s defence and counter-terrorism cooperation is deepening amid growing strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific. While progress has been steady, addressing trust deficits and logistical bottlenecks can help elevate the partnership to a more operational and technology-driven phase. A shared commitment to democratic values and regional security makes their collaboration vital for ensuring a stable Indo-Pacific order.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India and Australia’s Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue(Quad)’ is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times–Discuss. [2020]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India and Australia, as Indo-Pacific democracies, have increasingly aligned their strategic interests, particularly in counter-terrorism and defence cooperation. The fifth anniversary of their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020–2025) witnessed renewed pledges to fight terrorism in all its forms and enhance defence-industrial collaboration, technology sharing, and maritime security.

## Body

### Conceptual Framework: Counter-Terrorism and Strategic Convergence

- **Shared Vision:** A free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific underpins bilateral cooperation.
- **No Distinction on Terrorism:** India emphasized its stand on “no distinction between terrorists and their sponsors,” indicating convergence on a zero-tolerance policy.
- **Support for Self-Defence:** Australia’s **unequivocal support** to India’s response to the Pahalgam terror attack reflects diplomatic alignment on terrorism as a global threat.

### Institutional Mechanisms and Forums

- **2+2 Dialogue Mechanism (Defence & Foreign Ministers):** Provides a high-level platform for reviewing defence and security cooperation.
- **Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (JWG-CT):** Focuses on information exchange, joint training, and capacity building.
- **Defence Policy Talks (DPT):** Regular consultations, with the latest held in March 2025, reviewing strategic projects and regional threats.

### Organisational and Defence Partnerships

- **ISRO–Australian Space Agency MoU (2021):** Enhances satellite surveillance and space-based maritime monitoring.
- **Joint Research Projects & Defence Science Collaboration:** Signed in 2025, these focus on cyber defence, AI, and surveillance tech.
- **Naval and Maritime Security Cooperation:** Joint naval drills like AUSINDEX, ship repair and maintenance in India, and hydrographic surveys.

### Challenges in Bilateral Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

- **Defence Exports to Pakistan:** Concerns persist about potential diversion of military tech to terrorist groups.
- **Asymmetric Threat Perceptions:** Australia prioritizes the Pacific while India remains more focused on continental terrorism and Pakistan-based threats.
- **Bureaucratic Delays:** Defence tech transfer and co-production face regulatory hurdles and export controls.

### Way Forward: Strengthening Strategic Depth

- **Formalize Intelligence Sharing Agreements** and enable real-time counter-terror data exchange.
- **Expand the scope of QUAD cooperation** to include a

	<p>permanent counter-terrorism agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Joint Counter-Terror Training &amp; Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Missions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaborate on cyber-terrorism and disinformation threats</b> via integrated cyber cells.</li> <li>• <b>Institutionalize Industry Collaboration</b> under the Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP).</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India and Australia’s defence and counter-terrorism cooperation is deepening amid growing strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific. While progress has been steady, addressing trust deficits and logistical bottlenecks can help elevate the partnership to a more operational and technology-driven phase. A shared commitment to democratic values and regional security makes their collaboration vital for ensuring a stable Indo-Pacific order.</p>

**Q13. The recent U.K.–EU diplomatic reset opens new strategic and economic opportunities for India. Critically examine how this development can reshape India’s trade, diplomacy, and diaspora policy in the West. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India’s policy in the West**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-eurocentric-reset-a-gateway-for-india/article69661860.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>In May 2025, the United Kingdom and the European Union initiated a landmark diplomatic reset to renew cooperation in key sectors such as food standards, fisheries, border controls, and defence. This move marks a shift from post-Brexit disengagement towards regulatory harmonisation and policy alignment. While this may appear Eurocentric, it presents a timely opportunity for India to redefine its engagement with both the U.K. and the EU—two of its most critical partners in trade, diplomacy, and diaspora relations.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade and Regulatory Alignment</li> <li>• Diplomatic and Defence Opportunities</li> <li>• Impact on India’s role in Global Governance</li> <li>• Reopening of Talent Corridors</li> <li>• India’s Strategic Response: What Must Be Done</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The U.K.–EU diplomatic reset is a gateway for India—not just to enhance economic ties, but to strategically reposition itself within the Western order. By aligning domestic reforms with external opportunities, India can convert this Eurocentric reset into a multipolar advantage, advancing</p>

both strategic autonomy and economic resilience in a changing global order.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India's policy in the West</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. 'The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India'. What is your opinion about this statement? Give reasons and examples to support your answer. [2023]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	In May 2025, the United Kingdom and the European Union initiated a landmark diplomatic reset to renew cooperation in key sectors such as food standards, fisheries, border controls, and defence. This move marks a shift from post-Brexit disengagement towards regulatory harmonisation and policy alignment. While this may appear Eurocentric, it presents a timely opportunity for India to redefine its engagement with both the U.K. and the EU—two of its most critical partners in trade, diplomacy, and diaspora relations.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Trade and Regulatory Alignment: Easing Compliance Burdens</b></p> <p>The reset has the potential to significantly reduce trade frictions for Indian exporters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In FY2024, India exported goods worth <b>\$86 billion to the EU</b> and <b>\$12 billion to the U.K.</b>, covering key sectors like <b>pharmaceuticals, textiles, seafood, and agro-based products</b>.</li><li>• Post-Brexit, dual regulatory standards in the U.K. and EU created barriers for Indian exporters.</li><li>• A harmonised regulatory regime can:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Simplify certifications and reduce delays.</li><li>○ Lower logistics and compliance costs.</li><li>○ Enable faster market access, especially in <b>pharmaceuticals</b>, where India meets <b>25% of U.K.'s generic drug needs</b>.</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Stricter unified standards may disadvantage Indian <b>MSMEs</b>, who lack capacity for high-end compliance. India must ramp up support through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>PLI schemes</b> targeting export-oriented sectors.</li><li>• <b>RoDTEP</b> benefits and digitised trade facilitation.</li><li>• Skilling programs to help small exporters meet global benchmarks.</li></ul> <p><b>Diplomatic and Defence Convergence: Strategic Opportunities</b></p> <p>A coordinated U.K.-EU foreign policy stance offers India opportunities in strategic and defence cooperation:</p>

- India already has established frameworks with both:
  - **EU-India Strategic Partnership Roadmap (2025).**
  - **India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022).**
- Key areas include **maritime security, cybersecurity, green technology, and climate action.**
- India's defence partnerships with **France, Germany, and the U.K.** focus on technology transfers, joint R&D, and naval collaboration.

As Europe reasserts a collective foreign policy posture:

- India can propose **trilateral cooperation formats** (e.g., India–France–U.K.) in the **Indo-Pacific**, where convergence on China's assertiveness exists.
- Participation in **EU defence initiatives** such as PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) could be explored through observer roles or technology collaboration.

### **Amplifying India's Voice in Global Governance**

India's presidency of the **G-20 in 2023** spotlighted its leadership in the **Global South**.

- A unified Western bloc, if constructively engaged, can support India's agenda on:
  - **WTO reform**, especially regarding fair trade and agricultural subsidies.
  - **Climate finance commitments** for developing countries.
  - **UN Security Council reform**, where India seeks permanent membership.

The reset allows India to build coalitions with a more predictable and aligned West on multilateral platforms like the **UN, G-20, IMF, and WTO**.

### **Diaspora and Mobility: A Reopening of Talent Corridors**

The U.K. and EU host large Indian diaspora communities:

- In **2024**, the U.K. issued over **1,10,000 student visas** to Indians—among the highest for any nationality.
- Brexit disrupted the mobility of Indian professionals into the EU from the U.K., limiting cross-border opportunities.
- Renewed U.K.-EU coordination could:
  - Enable **semi-integrated migration pathways**.
  - Revive stalled mobility pacts and educational exchanges.
  - Strengthen India's existing migration agreements with **France, Germany, and Portugal** under a broader

	<p>framework.</p> <p>This could also improve <b>mutual recognition of degrees</b>, work permits, and start-up collaborations.</p> <p><b>India's Strategic Response: What Must Be Done</b></p> <p>To effectively leverage the U.K.-EU reset, India must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accelerate export ecosystem reforms</b>—digitisation, port infrastructure, and quality certifications.</li> <li>• Deepen engagement with <b>EU Green Deal</b> and <b>U.K. Global Britain strategy</b>.</li> <li>• Invest in diplomatic capacity for trilateral dialogues.</li> <li>• Strengthen diaspora outreach and educational cooperation through scholarships and startup incubation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>The U.K.–EU diplomatic reset is a gateway for India—not just to enhance economic ties, but to strategically reposition itself within the Western order. By aligning domestic reforms with external opportunities, India can convert this Eurocentric reset into a multipolar advantage, advancing both strategic autonomy and economic resilience in a changing global order.</p>

**Q14: In light of China's growing clout in the SCO and Pakistan's continued use of cross-border terrorism, examine how India's refusal to sign the 2025 joint statement reflects a shift from symbolic presence to strategic assertion. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Regional Groupings**

**Source:** The Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/rajnath-refuses-to-sign-sco-statement-significance-explained-10090709/>

<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>On June 26, 2025, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh refused to sign the joint draft statement, objecting to the omission of the Pahalgam terror attack, while the draft selectively mentioned incidents in Pakistan. This bold diplomatic move comes in a complex geopolitical context, where India's relations with Pakistan remain strained over cross-border terrorism, and the SCO increasingly reflects China's growing influence. The move highlights India's principled stance on terrorism and its commitment to strategic autonomy.</p>
<p><b>Body</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaffirmation of India's Zero-Tolerance Policy on Terrorism</li> <li>• SCO's Background: India-Pakistan Tensions and the Terrorism Agenda</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia’s Balancing Role in the SCO</li> <li>• Resistance to China-Pakistan Narrative Domination in SCO</li> <li>• Strategic Autonomy and Diplomatic Leverage</li> <li>• Enhancing India’s Global Image and Normative Leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India’s refusal to sign the 2025 SCO draft statement marks a turning point in regional diplomacy, where national interest and moral clarity on terrorism took precedence over diplomatic convenience. In a China-led forum increasingly accommodating Pakistan’s narratives, India’s bold stance underscores its commitment to principled multilateralism and global counter-terrorism norms. Going forward, India’s engagement in the SCO must continue to challenge selective silence on terrorism and ensure that regional cooperation is not held hostage to geopolitical alignments.</p>

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Regional Groupings</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. ‘Virus of Conflict is affecting the functioning of the SCO’. In the light of the above statement point out the role of India in mitigating the problems. [2023]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>On June 26, 2025, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, India’s Defence Minister Rajnath Singh refused to sign the joint draft statement, objecting to the omission of the Pahalgam terror attack, while the draft selectively mentioned incidents in Pakistan. This bold diplomatic move comes in a complex geopolitical context, where India’s relations with Pakistan remain strained over cross-border terrorism, and the SCO increasingly reflects China's growing influence. The move highlights India’s principled stance on terrorism and its commitment to strategic autonomy.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Reaffirmation of India’s Zero-Tolerance Policy on Terrorism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India has long maintained that <b>terrorism is the single largest threat to peace and stability in the region</b>, and that <b>cross-border terrorism must be called out in international forums</b>.</li> <li>• The <b>Pahalgam terror attack</b>, in which victims were allegedly profiled based on religious identity and targeted by Lashkar-e-Taiba proxies, was not mentioned in the draft document.</li> <li>• Rajnath Singh’s refusal to endorse a document that downplays terrorism reflects India’s unwavering policy that <b>terror and diplomacy cannot go hand-in-hand</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>SCO’s Background: India-Pakistan Tensions and the Terrorism</b></p>

## Agenda

- The SCO, established in **2001 in Shanghai**, evolved from the earlier “Shanghai Five” to address **regional security threats**, particularly after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rise of extremist threats in Central Asia.
- While SCO has a **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** meant to facilitate cooperation against terrorism, its effectiveness has been limited due to **political divergences**, especially between India and Pakistan.
- **India joined SCO in 2017**, expecting coordinated action against terror. However, **Pakistan’s continued sheltering of anti-India terror groups** and its attempts to internationalise Kashmir have blocked consensus on terror-related resolutions.
- China, often shielding Pakistan in global forums like the UN Security Council, **complicates consensus on naming Pakistan-based groups**. India has consistently pushed for the **inclusion of specific terror threats in SCO statements**, which are often diluted or blocked.

## Russia’s Balancing Role in the SCO

- Russia, a founding member of the SCO, has traditionally tried to **balance India and China** within the group.
- While Russia supports India’s concerns on terrorism, its strategic dependence on **China due to the Ukraine war** has reduced its ability to counterbalance Chinese narratives effectively.
- Despite this, Russia has been supportive of **India’s anti-terror position** in bilateral meetings and has acknowledged India’s legitimate security concerns.
- However, in multilateral forums like SCO, **Russia often avoids direct confrontation**, focusing instead on consensus-building, which sometimes leads to the watering down of strong anti-terror language.

## Resistance to China-Pakistan Narrative Domination in SCO

- With Russia’s regional clout reduced due to its ongoing conflict with Ukraine, **China has emerged as the dominant force in the SCO**, using its influence to protect Pakistan’s strategic interests.
- Rajnath Singh’s refusal to sign the document, framed under China’s 2025 chairmanship, **pushes back against this imbalance** and signals that India will not allow the SCO to become a platform for **selective political messaging**.

### Strategic Autonomy and Diplomatic Leverage

- India's principled decision not to sign the draft, despite diplomatic pressure, is a demonstration of **strategic autonomy** in foreign policy.
- It creates diplomatic leverage ahead of the **SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in Tianjin**, by ensuring that terrorism remains central to future agenda-setting.
- This also reinforces India's position that **any regional security architecture must treat terrorism with seriousness and impartiality**.

### Enhancing India's Global Image and Normative Leadership

- India's stand projects it as a country that **prioritises rule-based global order** and **normative consistency in multilateral diplomacy**.
- It aligns with India's leadership in the **Global South**, where calls for just and inclusive security frameworks are growing.
- The action also strengthens India's credibility in **forums like the UN, G20, and Quad**, where counter-terrorism remains a shared concern.

### Conclusion

India's refusal to sign the 2025 SCO draft statement marks a turning point in regional diplomacy, where national interest and moral clarity on terrorism took precedence over diplomatic convenience. In a China-led forum increasingly accommodating Pakistan's narratives, India's bold stance underscores its commitment to principled multilateralism and global counter-terrorism norms. Going forward, India's engagement in the SCO must continue to challenge selective silence on terrorism and ensure that regional cooperation is not held hostage to geopolitical alignments.

## Economy

**Q 15: The recent Prada-Kolhapuri controversy highlights the vulnerability of indigenous artisans in the global luxury market. Explain the role of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Geographical Indications (GI) in protecting traditional crafts. What are the challenges in enforcing these rights internationally? Suggest measures to ensure fair recognition and economic justice for artisan communities. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Geographical Indications (GI)**

**Source:** The Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/prada-kolhapuri-controversy->

[10094130/](#)

<b>Introduction</b>	Traditional crafts like the iconic Kolhapuri chappals represent centuries-old heritage, indigenous knowledge, and regional identity. Yet the global fashion industry often reaps massive profits by rebranding these crafts without attribution or benefit-sharing. The Prada–Kolhapuri sandal controversy underscores how weak Intellectual Property (IP) enforcement and limited international protection of Geographical Indications (GI) continue to marginalise India’s artisan communities amid rising debates on decolonising fashion and ethical consumption.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Appropriation and the Prada–Kolhapuri Case</li> <li>• The Role of IP and GI in Protecting Traditional Crafts</li> <li>• Challenges in International Enforcement</li> <li>• Wider Impacts on Artisans and Indigenous Economies</li> <li>• Way Forward: Protecting Heritage and Promoting Equity</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The Prada–Kolhapuri controversy is a stark reminder that without robust IP frameworks and ethical global practices, traditional knowledge remains vulnerable to exploitation. Safeguarding India’s artisan heritage demands not just stronger legal protection but fair economic inclusion. Only then can indigenous communities receive rightful recognition and a dignified share of the global craft economy they sustain.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Geographical Indications (GI)</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. In a globalized world, Intellectual Property Rights assume significance and are a source of litigation. Broadly distinguish between the terms—Copyrights, Patents and Trade Secrets. (2014)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Traditional crafts like the iconic Kolhapuri chappals represent centuries-old heritage, indigenous knowledge, and regional identity. Yet the global fashion industry often reaps massive profits by rebranding these crafts without attribution or benefit-sharing. The Prada–Kolhapuri sandal controversy underscores how weak Intellectual Property (IP) enforcement and limited international protection of Geographical Indications (GI) continue to marginalise India’s artisan communities amid rising debates on decolonising fashion and ethical consumption.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Cultural Appropriation and the Prada–Kolhapuri Case</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently, Italian luxury brand Prada listed leather sandals bearing a striking resemblance to Kolhapuri chappals but with</li> </ul>

no mention of their Indian origin or artisan heritage.

- This incident exemplifies **cultural appropriation**, where dominant groups profit from elements of marginalised cultures without consent or fair compensation.
- The controversy also exposes stark price inequity: local artisans earn under ₹1,000 per pair, while luxury versions sell for over ₹1 lakh.

### **The Role of IP and GI in Protecting Traditional Crafts**

- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)** provide legal tools to protect creativity and traditional knowledge.
- **Geographical Indications (GI)**, under India's GI Act (1999), recognise goods with unique qualities linked to a region — such as Kolhapuri chappals, Banarasi sarees, or Darjeeling tea.
- GI status aims to ensure only authorised producers can market products under the GI name, preventing misuse within India and enhancing the craft's value.

### **Challenges in International Enforcement**

- **Limited Extraterritorial Protection:** India's GI protections do not automatically extend abroad. Brands can imitate the design aesthetic while avoiding the protected name, sidestepping infringement.
- **Lack of Binding Global Framework:** Though the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) holds discussions on protecting traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) and GIs, there is no enforceable international treaty.
- **Power Imbalances:** Artisans lack bargaining power, legal literacy, and market access to challenge luxury brands or negotiate fair partnerships.

### **Wider Impacts on Artisans and Indigenous Economies**

- Shrinking markets and competition from factory-made or luxury lookalikes undermine artisans' livelihoods.
- Younger generations often abandon crafts due to low income, threatening the survival of intangible cultural heritage.
- Ethical consumption trends risk becoming tokenistic if indigenous communities remain excluded from benefits.

### **Way Forward: Protecting Heritage and Promoting Equity**

- **Strengthen Global Advocacy:** India must push for binding international agreements under WIPO for GI recognition and TCE protection.
- **Mandatory Fair Attribution:** Global brands should disclose origins and credit artisan communities when using traditional

	<p>designs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fair Trade Models:</b> Encourage direct collaborations between luxury brands and artisan clusters, ensuring fair wages, royalties, and skill recognition.</li> <li>• <b>Consumer Awareness:</b> Promote responsible consumer behaviour to demand transparency and ethical sourcing.</li> <li>• <b>Support Indigenous IP Literacy:</b> Train artisan groups in IP rights, branding, and global marketing to negotiate better terms.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The Prada–Kolhapuri controversy is a stark reminder that without robust IP frameworks and ethical global practices, traditional knowledge remains vulnerable to exploitation. Safeguarding India’s artisan heritage demands not just stronger legal protection but fair economic inclusion. Only then can indigenous communities receive rightful recognition and a dignified share of the global craft economy they sustain.</p>

**Q16. Amidst global economic uncertainties, how can India steer its economy towards resilience and growth? Analyse the impact of external shocks on Indian industry and discuss a multi-pronged policy approach to address them. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Indian industry**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/steering-the-indian-economy-amidst-global-troubles/article69725165.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The global economy is witnessing heightened uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions, renewed trade wars, and disrupted supply chains. For India, which is deeply integrated into the global economy through trade and investment flows, these developments pose serious challenges—particularly to export-oriented industries and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). However, these challenges also present opportunities for strategic repositioning within global value chains (GVCs), provided India responds with a calibrated policy mix.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of Global Headwinds on the Indian Economy</li> <li>• India's Resilience Factors and External Cushion</li> <li>• Strategic Trade and Economic Policy Actions</li> <li>• Enhancing Industrial Competitiveness</li> <li>• Monetary and Fiscal Synchronisation</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>Global turbulence, while threatening, offers India a unique window to reposition itself as a key node in global trade and supply chains. Through trade diplomacy, structural reforms, and investment facilitation, India can</p>

turn crisis into opportunity. A resilient domestic economy, powered by innovation, strategic trade deals, and public-private synergy, is essential to secure India's economic future amidst global troubles.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Indian industry</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. To what factors can the recent dramatic fall in equipment costs and tariff of solar energy be attributed? What implications does the trend have for the thermal power producers and the related industry? (2015)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The global economy is witnessing heightened uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions, renewed trade wars, and disrupted supply chains. For India, which is deeply integrated into the global economy through trade and investment flows, these developments pose serious challenges—particularly to export-oriented industries and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). However, these challenges also present opportunities for strategic repositioning within global value chains (GVCs), provided India responds with a calibrated policy mix.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Impact of Global Headwinds on the Indian Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disrupted Supply Chains:</b> Pandemic aftershocks, the Russia-Ukraine war, and Red Sea tensions have hampered global logistics, raising input costs for Indian manufacturers.</li> <li>• <b>Tariff Uncertainties:</b> U.S. tariff reviews affect Indian exports, especially in sectors such as gems and jewellery, apparel, marine products, and pharmaceuticals.</li> <li>• <b>Dumping Risks:</b> With reduced demand elsewhere, China and ASEAN countries may redirect surplus production to India, threatening domestic industries.</li> <li>• <b>MSME Vulnerability:</b> Export margins of MSMEs are particularly sensitive to cost fluctuations and regulatory changes, making them less resilient to global shocks.</li> <li>• <b>Decision-making Paralysis:</b> Exporters face planning challenges due to tariff volatility, delaying investments and scaling operations.</li> </ul> <p><b>India's Resilience Factors and External Cushion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Robust Services Exports:</b> IT and consulting services to the U.S. and EU continue to grow, offering a cushion against merchandise trade shocks.</li> <li>• <b>High Forex Reserves:</b> India holds over \$600 billion in reserves, providing a buffer against currency volatility.</li> <li>• <b>Stable Current Account:</b> India's CAD is well below crisis</li> </ul>

thresholds, allowing greater flexibility in managing capital flows.

- **Strong Remittances:** Inward remittances exceeded \$125 billion in 2024, supporting domestic consumption.

### **Strategic Trade and Economic Policy Actions**

- **Bilateral Trade Agreements (BTAs):**
  - Early conclusion of BTAs with the **U.S., U.K., and EU** can help offset market losses from tariff hikes.
  - Prioritising **zero-duty access** for critical sectors like electronics and pharmaceuticals.
  - Mutual recognition agreements and addressing **non-tariff barriers (NTBs)** are essential.
- **Import Monitoring and Dumping Control:**
  - Strengthen customs surveillance and fast-track **anti-dumping investigations**.
  - Deploy trade remedial measures via **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)**.
- **Public Capex as a Growth Driver:**
  - Continued investment in infrastructure will crowd in private investments.
  - Schemes like **PM Gati Shakti, National Infrastructure Pipeline, and Bharatmala** should be fast-tracked.

### **Enhancing Industrial Competitiveness**

- **Expand PLI Schemes:**
  - Include high-growth sectors like **wearables, IoT devices, and green mobility components**.
  - Encourage scale, R&D, and deep manufacturing.
- **Anchor Global Investments:**
  - Offer tailored packages to multinationals diversifying away from China.
  - States should develop **plug-and-play industrial clusters** with quality logistics and single-window clearances.
- **Regulatory Reforms:**
  - Expedite implementation of **labour codes, land acquisition reforms, and Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** policies.
  - Complete **digitalisation of compliance frameworks** to reduce transaction costs.

### **Monetary and Fiscal Synchronisation**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monetary Policy Flexibility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ With inflation under control, a measured rate cut by the RBI can stimulate credit flow to MSMEs and households.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Fiscal Prudence with Growth Focus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain fiscal glide path while protecting capital expenditure outlays.</li> <li>○ Use targeted support mechanisms for stressed sectors like exports and manufacturing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>Global turbulence, while threatening, offers India a unique window to reposition itself as a key node in global trade and supply chains. Through trade diplomacy, structural reforms, and investment facilitation, India can turn crisis into opportunity. A resilient domestic economy, powered by innovation, strategic trade deals, and public-private synergy, is essential to secure India's economic future amidst global troubles.</p>

**Q17. With the notification of the “Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI),” the Indian government aims to attract global investment while nurturing domestic capacity. Discuss the key features of the scheme, supporting legal-political frameworks, implementation challenges, stakeholder roles, and the roadmap for India’s EV transition. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India’s electric vehicle (EV) mission**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/centre-cuts-import-duty-on-electric-cars-in-lieu-of-local-manufacturing/article69649426.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>India’s electric vehicle (EV) mission is central to its goals of decarbonization and self-reliance. The June 2025 launch of the SPMEPCI aims to attract foreign investment while boosting domestic manufacturing. It aligns with India’s ambition to become a global EV hub amid growing climate commitments. By linking market access with local production, the scheme seeks to strengthen the EV ecosystem and reduce import dependency.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salient Features of the SPMEPCI</li> <li>• Legal and Policy Backing</li> <li>• Key Challenges</li> <li>• Role of Key Stakeholders</li> <li>• Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>SPMEPCI offers a strategic opportunity to position India as a global EV</p>

manufacturing hub. Its success depends on ecosystem readiness, stable policy support, and a balanced approach to foreign and domestic interests. With effective implementation and coordination, it can accelerate green mobility and support India's 2070 net-zero goal. Timely execution and stakeholder alignment will be key to translating policy intent into tangible outcomes.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India's electric vehicle (EV) mission</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Describe the benefits of deriving electric energy from sunlight in contrast to the conventional energy generation. What are the initiatives offered by our government for this purpose? [2020]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India's electric vehicle (EV) mission is central to its goals of decarbonization and self-reliance. The June 2025 launch of the SPMEPCI aims to attract foreign investment while boosting domestic manufacturing. It aligns with India's ambition to become a global EV hub amid growing climate commitments. By linking market access with local production, the scheme seeks to strengthen the EV ecosystem and reduce import dependency.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Salient Features of the SPMEPCI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>15% Concessional Import Duty:</b> On Completely Built-up Units (CBUs) priced above \$35,000 for 5 years.</li> <li>• <b>Import Quota:</b> 8,000 units/year per applicant; unutilized quota can be carried over.</li> <li>• <b>Brownfield Projects:</b> Now eligible, accommodating legacy automakers.</li> <li>• <b>Local Manufacturing Mandate:</b> EV firms must establish manufacturing facilities within 3 years of approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal and Policy Backing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FAME II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles):</b> Offers subsidies for EVs and charging infrastructure.</li> <li>• <b>PLI Scheme for ACC Batteries:</b> ₹18,100 crore incentive for boosting local battery production.</li> <li>• <b>State EV Policies:</b> Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi offer land, tax breaks, and demand-side incentives.</li> <li>• <b>National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP):</b> Provides a long-term strategic vision for EV ecosystem growth.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consumer Reluctance:</b> Due to high upfront cost and lack of</li> </ul>

charging infrastructure.

- **Import Dependency:** Especially for battery cells and critical components.
- **Weak Domestic R&D and Supply Chain:** Hindering innovation and scalability.
- **Apprehension of Local OEMs:** Fear of unfair market disruption via CBUs.

#### Role of Key Stakeholders

- **Private Sector:** Tata, Mahindra, and Ola Electric are expanding indigenous EV portfolios.
- **Foreign OEMs:** BYD and Hyundai show interest; Tesla remains non-committal on manufacturing.
- **Government Bodies:**
  - *Ministry of Heavy Industries:* Nodal agency for SPMEPCI.
  - *NITI Aayog:* Strategic policy formulation.
  - *BEE & Ministry of Power:* Focus on energy efficiency and charging networks.

#### Way Forward

- **Localization Roadmap:** Mandated phased sourcing of EV components.
- **Infrastructure Push:** EV-ready building codes and national charging corridors.
- **Battery Recycling Framework:** EPR-based rules for sustainability.
- **EV Export Hubs:** Position India as an EV supplier for emerging markets.
- **R&D Clusters:** Foster public-private innovation in battery and motor tech.

#### Conclusion

SPMEPCI offers a strategic opportunity to position India as a global EV manufacturing hub. Its success depends on ecosystem readiness, stable policy support, and a balanced approach to foreign and domestic interests. With effective implementation and coordination, it can accelerate green mobility and support India's 2070 net-zero goal. Timely execution and stakeholder alignment will be key to translating policy intent into tangible outcomes.

**Q 18: “Empowering women in agriculture is not just about equity but is vital for food security, climate resilience, and sustainable development.” In this context, critically examine the challenges faced by women farmers in India and suggest a multi-pronged strategy to address them. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Agriculture reforms in India**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/empowering-women-in-agriculture-for-food-security/article69675539.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Women contribute nearly 50% of global food production and make up 60–80% of food producers in developing countries. Despite their critical role, women farmers in India face systemic disadvantages related to land rights, credit access, technology, and climate vulnerability. The declaration of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer by the UN underscores the urgency of addressing these inequalities to ensure inclusive and resilient agricultural development.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges Faced by Women Farmers in India</li> <li>• Government Interventions and Gaps</li> <li>• Best Practices and Innovative Models</li> <li>• Policy Recommendations for a Gender-Smart Agricultural Future</li> <li>• Role of International Cooperation &amp; 2026 Opportunity</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Empowering women in agriculture is a national imperative for India — vital for food security, inclusive growth, and climate adaptation. Moving beyond tokenism, it requires legal recognition, tailored financial tools, climate-aware planning, and community participation. The International Year of the Woman Farmer in 2026 offers India a timely opportunity to mainstream gender equity into its agrarian future and build resilient, self-reliant rural communities.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Agriculture reforms in India</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. How can the 'Digital India' programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income ? What steps has the Government taken in this regard ? [2015]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Women contribute nearly 50% of global food production and make up 60–80% of food producers in developing countries. Despite their critical role, women farmers in India face systemic disadvantages related to land rights, credit access, technology, and climate vulnerability. The declaration of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer by the UN underscores the urgency of addressing these inequalities to

	ensure inclusive and resilient agricultural development.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Challenges Faced by Women Farmers in India</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Land Ownership Disparity:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Only <b>14% of landowners in India are women</b>, with even lower real control (8.3% as per NFHS-5).</li><li>○ Lack of ownership limits access to institutional credit, insurance, and government schemes.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Limited Access to Finance &amp; Technology:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Women often rely on <b>microfinance and self-help groups</b>, which offer insufficient capital.</li><li>○ Gender gap in <b>mobile phone ownership and digital literacy</b> restricts access to market and weather advisories.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Climate Vulnerability:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Climate change intensifies the burden on women through increased household and farm duties.</li><li>○ Limited capacity to adapt due to lack of resources and information.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Lack of Representation in Agri-Governance:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Women are underrepresented in <b>agricultural cooperatives and decision-making bodies</b>.</li><li>○ Policies often ignore gendered needs such as suitable farming tools or flexible credit norms.</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Government Interventions and Gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Focuses on skill development and enhancing access to resources.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Offers <b>50–80% subsidy</b> on tools, but often poorly targeted.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>30% earmarking</b> under National Food Security Mission for women.</li></ul> <p><b>Gaps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of <b>gender-disaggregated data</b> for targeted policymaking.</li><li>• Inadequate convergence of schemes across Ministries and poor last-mile implementation.</li></ul> <p><b>Best Practices and Innovative Models</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ENACT Project (Assam):</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Provides weekly <b>climate-smart advisories</b> to women</li></ul></li></ul>

farmers.

- Uses **Climate Adaptation Information Centres** and community video conferencing.
- Promotes **flood-resilient rice varieties** and localised seed production.
- **Farm Law Protests & Livestock Roles:**
  - Highlight women's organisational strength and untapped leadership potential.
- **WFP-Norwegian Model:**
  - Combines nature-based solutions with **gender transformative approaches**.

### **Policy Recommendations for a Gender-Smart Agricultural Future**

- **Legal & Institutional Reforms:**
  - Ensure **joint land titles**, streamline inheritance rights.
  - Set up **Women Farmer Facilitation Cells** in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).
- **Inclusive Financial Ecosystem:**
  - Tailored credit products with relaxed collateral norms.
  - Scale-up access to **crop insurance and disaster relief funds**.
- **Digital & Climate Resilience Integration:**
  - Digital literacy campaigns and mobile-based agri-apps in regional languages.
  - Promote **climate-resilient crops** and local food systems.
- **Strengthening Women's Collectives:**
  - Support **Women-led Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)**.
  - Link them with markets, agri-value chains, and e-NAM.

### **Role of International Cooperation & 2026 Opportunity**

- **2026 as International Year of the Woman Farmer:**
  - Platform to galvanise global and national support.
  - Opportunity to build **climate-smart, gender-sensitive agricultural systems**.
- **Leverage global support** (e.g., WFP, Norway) for funding, tech transfer, and training.

### **Conclusion**

Empowering women in agriculture is a national imperative for India — vital for food security, inclusive growth, and climate adaptation. Moving beyond tokenism, it requires legal recognition, tailored financial tools, climate-aware planning, and community participation. The International Year of the Woman Farmer in 2026 offers India a timely opportunity to

mainstream gender equity into its agrarian future and build resilient, self-reliant rural communities.

**Q19. Why do governments revise the base year and methodology for GDP estimation? Examine the significance of India's proposed 2026 GDP revision in light of past controversies and the need for credible economic data. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

**Source:** The Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/why-govts-revise-gdp-base-year-and-methodology-10060239/>

<b>Introduction</b>	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the central metric for assessing the health and growth of an economy. To ensure that GDP estimates reflect the present-day structure of the economy, governments periodically revise the base year and estimation methodologies. India's next major GDP revision, scheduled for 2026 (with 2022–23 as the new base year), is particularly significant given the controversies around the 2015 series and the increasing scrutiny of India's economic data.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is GDP Base Year Revised?</li> <li>• History of GDP Revisions in India</li> <li>• Challenges Faced During Past Revisions</li> <li>• Why the 2026 Revision Matters Now</li> <li>• Way Forward to Strengthen GDP Estimation Credibility</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	India's GDP base year revision in 2026 is not a routine technical exercise but a critical opportunity to reaffirm the credibility, reliability, and transparency of its economic statistics. With rising global economic stature, India must adopt a robust, evidence-based statistical ecosystem that is both nationally responsive and globally respected.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product (GDP)</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the year 2015 and after the year 2015. (2021)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the central metric for assessing the health and growth of an economy. To ensure that GDP estimates reflect the present-day structure of the economy, governments periodically revise the base year and estimation methodologies. India's next major GDP revision, scheduled for 2026 (with 2022–23 as the new base year), is particularly significant given the controversies around the 2015 series

and the increasing scrutiny of India's economic data.

## Body

### Why is GDP Base Year Revised?

- **Reflect Structural Economic Changes:** As economies evolve (e.g., rise of services and digital sectors), the GDP basket and weights must be updated.
- **Incorporate Latest Data Sources:** New datasets like MCA-21, PLFS, and updated consumption surveys improve data accuracy.
- **Adjust for Inflation and Price Shifts:** To compute real GDP, base years need to reflect current price levels.
- **Align with Global Practices:** International standards (SNA 2008) recommend regular rebasing every 5–10 years.

### History of GDP Revisions in India

- India has revised its GDP base year **seven times**, the last being from **2004–05 to 2011–12** in 2015.
- Revisions typically accompany **methodological upgrades**, broader sectoral coverage, and newer deflators.
- Earlier revisions aligned with decadal census or NSS rounds (e.g., 1993-94, 1999-2000, etc.).

### Challenges Faced During Past Revisions

- **2015 Revision Controversy:** Critics like Arvind Subramanian and Prof. R Nagaraj alleged GDP overestimation due to reliance on MCA-21 data.
- **Data Quality Issues:** The PLFS 2017–18 and Consumer Expenditure Survey were delayed or rejected due to methodological concerns.
- **Policy Disruptions:** Demonetisation (2016) and GST (2017) created abnormal conditions, delaying base year update to 2022–23.

### Why the 2026 Revision Matters Now

- **Restores Credibility:** Timely and transparent revision will help rebuild trust in India's macroeconomic data.
- **Critical for Global Investors:** As India approaches the status of **3rd largest economy**, data accuracy affects **FDI, credit ratings**, and **sovereign risk** assessments.
- **Improves Domestic Policy Planning:** Accurate GDP helps in better fiscal planning, welfare targeting, and macroeconomic stability.
- **Global Comparability:** Aligns with **UN guidelines**, enabling global benchmarking and better inclusion in indices like WGI,

	<p>EODB, etc.</p> <p><b>Way Forward to Strengthen GDP Estimation Credibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutional Reforms:</b> Empower bodies like MoSPI, NSC, and NSSO with autonomy and funding.</li> <li>• <b>Transparent Methodology:</b> Publish detailed methods, data sources, and allow peer review.</li> <li>• <b>High-Frequency Data Integration:</b> Use satellite data, digital payments, and alternative proxies to track informal sector.</li> <li>• <b>Restore Core Surveys:</b> Expedite Census 2021, CES, and PLFS with strict data quality control.</li> <li>• <b>Strengthen Statistical Independence:</b> Insulate data agencies from political influence to build public and global confidence.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India's GDP base year revision in 2026 is not a routine technical exercise but a critical opportunity to reaffirm the credibility, reliability, and transparency of its economic statistics. With rising global economic stature, India must adopt a robust, evidence-based statistical ecosystem that is both nationally responsive and globally respected.</p>

**Q20. "The RBI's recent monetary policy decisions mark a strategic pivot towards prioritizing growth. Discuss the rationale behind this shift, the tools used, and the macroeconomic implications. Also, assess the significance of fiscal-monetary coordination in the current context." (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – RBI's monetary policy

Source: The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/same-page-on-monetary-policy-the-rbi-the-government/article69665242.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>India's monetary policy, historically guided by the dual mandate of controlling inflation and supporting growth, has recently tilted decisively in favor of growth. The <b>RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)</b>, in June 2025, cut the <b>repo rate by 50 basis points</b> and reduced the <b>cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 100 basis points</b>, citing subdued inflation and constrained fiscal space. This synchronized move with the government reflects a strategic alignment aimed at reviving domestic demand and boosting investment.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale for the Growth-Oriented Shift</li> <li>• Instruments of Monetary Policy Used</li> <li>• Implications for the Indian Economy</li> <li>• Fiscal-Monetary Policy Coordination</li> <li>• Challenges and the Way Forward</li> </ul>

<b>Conclusion</b>	The RBI's current focus on stimulating growth, backed by a favorable inflation trajectory and constrained fiscal leeway, is a timely and strategic response to economic realities. Its coordination with the government reflects mature macroeconomic stewardship. However, the real test lies in ensuring effective implementation and adaptability to future shocks. Sustained growth will depend not only on monetary easing but also on institutional reforms and global economic stability.
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<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>RBI's monetary policy</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is necessary for bringing unbanked to the institutional finance fold. Do you agree with this for financial inclusion of the poor section of the Indian society? Give arguments to justify your opinion. (2016)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India's monetary policy, historically guided by the dual mandate of controlling inflation and supporting growth, has recently tilted decisively in favor of growth. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in June 2025, cut the repo rate by 50 basis points and reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 100 basis points, citing subdued inflation and constrained fiscal space. This synchronized move with the government reflects a strategic alignment aimed at reviving domestic demand and boosting investment.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Rationale for the Growth-Oriented Shift:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Subdued Inflationary Pressure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Retail inflation is at a <b>69-month low</b>, providing the RBI the room to prioritize growth without risking price instability.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Slack in Economic Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Projected GDP growth of <b>6.5% in 2025-26</b>, similar to the previous year, is below India's potential growth rate of ~7-8%.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Limited Fiscal Headroom:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ After successive years of high capital outlay, <b>fiscal policy has reached its expansionary limits</b>, especially with rising defence and welfare commitments.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Global Economic Uncertainty:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The cautious approach stems from unpredictable geopolitical and economic shocks (e.g., oil prices, global slowdown).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Instruments of Monetary Policy Used:</b></p>

- **Repo Rate Cut (50 bps):**
  - Lowers cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses; aims to spur investment and consumption.
- **CRR Reduction (100 bps):**
  - Releases more liquidity into the banking system, facilitating better **monetary transmission** and credit growth.
- **Policy Stance Shift to 'Neutral':**
  - Indicates that future rate cuts will depend on evolving data — a prudent buffer against inflation resurgence or external shocks.

#### **Implications for the Indian Economy:**

- **Positive Impact on Credit Flow:**
  - Easier access to loans for MSMEs, infrastructure, and startups, encouraging private sector participation.
- **Boost to Consumption:**
  - Cheaper EMIs likely to spur demand in housing, automobiles, and durables, supporting broader economic revival.
- **Investment Revival:**
  - Lower borrowing costs could revive delayed or stalled projects, especially in the private sector.
- **Risks of Delayed Transmission:**
  - Public sector banks may take time to fully pass on the rate cuts to borrowers.

#### **Fiscal-Monetary Policy Coordination:**

- **Unified Growth Strategy:**
  - Both the RBI and government are focusing on **supporting recovery without compromising macroeconomic stability**.
- **Avoiding Policy Tug-of-War:**
  - Unlike earlier divergences, the RBI and Ministry of Finance are aligned on the limits of fiscal stimulus and the potential of monetary tools.
- **Credibility and Investor Confidence:**
  - Coherence in policy signals reassures markets, rating agencies, and foreign investors.
- **Institutional Autonomy Preserved:**
  - Despite alignment, the RBI retains its autonomy by adopting a **neutral stance** for future adjustments.

	<p><b>Challenges and the Way Forward:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Effective Monetary Transmission:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure banks pass rate cuts promptly; address NPAs and recapitalize banks if needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>External Volatility Management:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monitor global interest rate trends, especially U.S. Fed decisions, to avoid capital flight and rupee volatility.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Inflation Monitoring:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Track food prices and monsoon performance to avoid policy lag in reacting to inflation spikes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Complementary Reforms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structural reforms in credit markets, infrastructure, and ease of doing business are essential to sustain growth momentum.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>The RBI's current focus on stimulating growth, backed by a favorable inflation trajectory and constrained fiscal leeway, is a timely and strategic response to economic realities. Its coordination with the government reflects mature macroeconomic stewardship. However, the real test lies in ensuring effective implementation and adaptability to future shocks. Sustained growth will depend not only on monetary easing but also on institutional reforms and global economic stability.</p>

**Q21. In light of the Finance Ministry's 2025 circular mandating sunset dates and evaluation-based continuation of Central schemes, critically examine the rationale, implications, and challenges of this reform. How can it affect demand-driven schemes such as MGNREGA? (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Inclusive Growth and Issues arising from it**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/bad-blood-on-india-canada-ties/article69683197.ece>

<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>In June 2025, the Ministry of Finance issued a circular mandating that all Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes must be evaluated for effectiveness and assigned a "sunset date". The move aims to make public spending more result-oriented and efficient, especially as India approaches the 16th Finance Commission (FC) cycle (2026–2031). While this is aligned with global best practices of outcome budgeting, it raises critical questions about the future of demand-driven schemes like MGNREGA, which have historically served as social safety nets.</p>
<p><b>Body</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual Framework: From Entitlement to Outcome-Based Governance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional Framework and Circular Provisions</li> <li>• Rationale: Need for Fiscal Discipline and Scheme Rationalization</li> <li>• Challenges: Impact on Rights-Based and Demand-Driven Schemes</li> <li>• Way Forward: Reforming with Flexibility and Accountability</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The Finance Ministry’s circular represents a much-needed push toward data-driven governance and expenditure accountability, aligning with recommendations from the NITI Aayog, CAG, and 15th FC. However, social equity and flexibility must not be sacrificed for fiscal arithmetic. For demand-driven and rights-based schemes like MGNREGA, a context-sensitive implementation model with built-in buffers is essential. The path forward lies in balancing outcome-efficiency with inclusive governance.</p>

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Inclusive Growth and Issues arising from it</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Comment on the important changes introduced in respect of the Long term Capital Gains Tax (LCGT) and Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) in the Union Budget for 2018-2019. [2018]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>In June 2025, the Ministry of Finance issued a circular mandating that all Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes must be evaluated for effectiveness and assigned a "sunset date". The move aims to make public spending more result-oriented and efficient, especially as India approaches the 16th Finance Commission (FC) cycle (2026–2031). While this is aligned with global best practices of outcome budgeting, it raises critical questions about the future of demand-driven schemes like MGNREGA, which have historically served as social safety nets.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Conceptual Framework: From Entitlement to Outcome-Based Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome budgeting</b> was introduced in India in <b>2005-06</b> to link budget outlays to intended results, but its implementation has remained weak.</li> <li>• The <b>Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)</b> and <b>Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES)</b> under the Cabinet Secretariat have repeatedly called for <b>evidence-based policy continuation</b>.</li> <li>• The move from <b>input-output tracking</b> to <b>impact assessment</b> reflects a shift from “how much is spent” to “what is achieved”.</li> </ul> <p><b>Institutional Framework and Circular Provisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finance Ministry Circular (June 2025):</b></li> </ul>

- Sunset dates mandatory for all schemes post-March 2026.
- 5.5x cap on five-year outlay based on the average annual expenditure (FY22–FY25).
- **MGNREGA** and other demand-driven schemes must seek approval for exceeding pre-estimated beneficiary counts.
- **NITI Aayog** has been tasked with appraising **260 CSS schemes**, while independent third-party evaluations are underway for **54 Central Sector schemes**.
- As per the **Union Budget 2024-25**, total allocations to CSS stood at ₹4.67 lakh crore, forming ~13% of total budgeted expenditure.

#### **Rationale: Need for Fiscal Discipline and Scheme Rationalization**

- According to the **15th Finance Commission Report (2021)**, over 300 CSS existed with overlapping mandates and poor outcome traceability.
- The **Public Expenditure Review Committee (2020)** reported that **less than 50%** of centrally funded schemes undergo impact assessment.
- The **Economic Survey 2020-21** emphasized "spending better rather than spending more", noting that only **15 out of 100 flagship schemes** had demonstrated strong outcome metrics.
- The scheme restructuring intends to:
  - Improve fiscal space.
  - Encourage ministries to prioritize and rationalize.
  - Prevent duplication of efforts (e.g., multiple schemes on housing or skill development).

#### **Challenges: Impact on Rights-Based and Demand-Driven Schemes**

- **MGNREGA**, covering over **14 crore job card holders**, is demand-driven under the **MGNREGA Act, 2005**, and legally guarantees **100 days of work** per rural household annually.
- Imposing outlay caps can lead to:
  - **Exclusion errors** in times of rural distress or climate shocks.
  - Contradiction between legal entitlements and budget ceilings.
- According to the **Rural Development Ministry**, in FY 2023–24, demand for MGNREGA work exceeded projections by **18%** in drought-affected states.
- The **CAG Performance Audit (2013)** had warned about inadequate budget provisioning leading to delayed wage

	<p>payments—a concern likely to be repeated under rigid funding caps.</p> <p><b>Way Forward: Reforming with Flexibility and Accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Revise Evaluation Metrics:</b> Include <b>qualitative impacts</b> (like empowerment, social equity) alongside quantitative targets.</li><li>• <b>Tiered Appraisal System:</b> More frequent reviews for high-budget schemes, while low-cost schemes can follow a lighter touch model.</li><li>• <b>Legal Harmonization:</b> Align financial regulations with rights-based mandates like MGNREGA and NFSA.</li><li>• <b>Buffer Provisions:</b> Introduce a <b>flexibility clause</b> within approved outlays for exceptional demand spikes (e.g., disaster, pandemic).</li><li>• <b>Data Systems and Dashboards:</b> Strengthen <b>Poshan Tracker, MGNREGA Soft, and Jal Jeevan Mission Dashboards</b> for real-time monitoring and feedback.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The Finance Ministry’s circular represents a much-needed push toward data-driven governance and expenditure accountability, aligning with recommendations from the NITI Aayog, CAG, and 15th FC. However, social equity and flexibility must not be sacrificed for fiscal arithmetic. For demand-driven and rights-based schemes like MGNREGA, a context-sensitive implementation model with built-in buffers is essential. The path forward lies in balancing outcome-efficiency with inclusive governance.</p>

# Disaster Management

**Q 22: Recurring monsoon-triggered disasters in Northeast India highlight the ecological fragility and governance gaps of the region. In this context, examine the environmental and infrastructural challenges. Discuss the role of key stakeholders and suggest a comprehensive strategy to enhance disaster preparedness and sustainable development. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Monsoon-triggered disasters in India**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/monsoon-woes-on-the-southwest-monsoon-and-the-northeast/article69649625.ece>

## Introduction

The southwest monsoon, while vital for India’s agriculture and water

	<p>security, often brings devastation to Northeast India through intense rainfall, floods, and landslides. In 2025 alone, over 3 lakh people were affected in Assam, with dozens of casualties reported across Tripura, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Bay of Bengal branch of the monsoon strikes the region early and intensely, highlighting its chronic vulnerability to hydro-meteorological disasters. This recurring pattern underscores the urgent need for climate-resilient planning and disaster preparedness in the region.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental and Geographic Vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Infrastructural Challenges</li> <li>• Institutional and Policy Gaps</li> <li>• Role of Key Stakeholders</li> <li>• Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The repeated havoc caused by monsoons in the Northeast demands more than post-disaster relief — it calls for a strategic, region-specific, long-term disaster management and infrastructure overhaul. Coordinated action between state governments, central agencies, and local communities is essential to transform vulnerability into resilience. Sustainable development in the region must be climate-informed, inclusive, and infrastructure-secure.</p>

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Monsoon-triggered disasters in India</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. 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 fall outs in India. [2014]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The southwest monsoon, while vital for India’s agriculture and water security, often brings devastation to Northeast India through intense rainfall, floods, and landslides. In 2025 alone, over 3 lakh people were affected in Assam, with dozens of casualties reported across Tripura, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Bay of Bengal branch of the monsoon strikes the region early and intensely, highlighting its chronic vulnerability to hydro-meteorological disasters. This recurring pattern underscores the urgent need for climate-resilient planning and disaster preparedness in the region.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Environmental and Geographic Vulnerabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Rainfall Base:</b> Even when the IMD forecasts ‘below</li> </ul>

normal' rains, the region receives high absolute rainfall.

- **Hilly Terrain:** The Eastern Himalayas are geologically fragile and prone to landslides.
- **Riverine Systems:** Major rivers like the Brahmaputra and Teesta often overflow during intense monsoon spells.
- **Dual Monsoons:** A secondary monsoon (Oct–Dec) further increases annual flood exposure.

### Infrastructural Challenges

- **Weak Connectivity:** Roads and bridges are frequently washed away or blocked.
- **Poor Flood Control Infrastructure:** Embankments, sluice gates, and urban drainage are underdeveloped or obsolete.
- **Ecologically Unsustainable Urbanization:** Construction along riverbanks worsens flood impacts.
- **Strained Tourism Infrastructure:** North Sikkim's isolation of tourists in 2025 highlights this issue.

### Institutional and Policy Gaps

- **Lack of a Regional Flood Plan:** No integrated river basin management system exists across northeastern states.
- **Underutilization of Disaster Funds:** SDRF and NDRF disbursements are often delayed or inefficient.
- **Absence of Local Risk Zoning:** Inadequate hazard mapping for floods, landslides, and cloudbursts.

### Role of Key Stakeholders

- **NDMA:** Must issue region-specific SOPs and strengthen state disaster management agencies.
- **IMD & CWC:** Should implement hyper-local weather alerts, automated river gauge systems, and multilingual dissemination.
- **NESAC:** Can provide satellite-based flood and landslide mapping, and help in early warning systems.
- **Ministry of DoNER:** Needs to prioritize DRR in development funding and promote inter-state coordination.
- **State Governments & PRIs:** Must update DDMPs, regulate ecologically sensitive zones, and train local first responders.
- **Civil Society & Academia:** Essential for risk communication, training, and evidence-based resilience planning.

### Way Forward

- **Integrated River Basin Management:** Conserve wetlands, afforest catchment areas, and prevent sand mining.
- **Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure:** Build flood-proof housing

	<p>and landslide-resistant roads.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Preparedness:</b> Promote disaster literacy and community-led mitigation through panchayats.</li> <li>• <b>Dedicated Mission:</b> Launch a <b>Northeast Monsoon Resilience Mission</b> linked with SAPCCs and centrally monitored by NDMA.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The repeated havoc caused by monsoons in the Northeast demands more than post-disaster relief — it calls for a strategic, region-specific, long-term disaster management and infrastructure overhaul. Coordinated action between state governments, central agencies, and local communities is essential to transform vulnerability into resilience. Sustainable development in the region must be climate-informed, inclusive, and infrastructure-secure.</p>

**Q23. Maritime accidents like shipboard fires and oil spills pose severe environmental, logistical, and security challenges for India. In this context, critically examine India's maritime firefighting capabilities, highlight existing institutional mechanisms, and suggest a roadmap for strengthening maritime disaster response. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Maritime Fire and Disaster Management**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/fire-on-waters-on-india-and-maritime-accidents/article69698008.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>India, with a 7,500 km coastline and high reliance on maritime trade, is increasingly vulnerable to peacetime maritime disasters such as ship fires, oil spills, and vessel sinkings. These incidents not only threaten marine ecosystems but also disrupt logistics, energy security, and coastal livelihoods. The recent fire onboard MV Wan Hai 503 off Kerala's coast exemplifies both the challenges and the emerging response capabilities of Indian maritime agencies. While significant progress has been made, persistent gaps remain that require urgent policy and institutional attention.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding Maritime Fire and Accident Risks</li> <li>• Institutional Framework and Firefighting Capabilities</li> <li>• Policy Measures and International Compliance</li> <li>• Key Challenges in Maritime Fire and Disaster Management</li> <li>• Way Forward: Strengthening Maritime Disaster Preparedness</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India has demonstrated commendable maritime firefighting capacity in incidents like MV Wan Hai 503 and VLCC New Diamond. However, to</p>

effectively counter the increasing frequency and complexity of maritime disasters, systemic reforms, inter-agency coordination, and capacity-building investments are essential. Securing India's maritime domain will require a forward-looking strategy that blends technology, training, infrastructure, and global best practices.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Maritime Fire and Disaster Management</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Discuss the recent measures initiated in disaster management by the Government of India departing from the earlier reactive approach. [2020]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India, with a 7,500 km coastline and high reliance on maritime trade, is increasingly vulnerable to peacetime maritime disasters such as ship fires, oil spills, and vessel sinkings. These incidents not only threaten marine ecosystems but also disrupt logistics, energy security, and coastal livelihoods. The recent fire onboard MV Wan Hai 503 off Kerala's coast exemplifies both the challenges and the emerging response capabilities of Indian maritime agencies. While significant progress has been made, persistent gaps remain that require urgent policy and institutional attention.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Understanding Maritime Fire and Accident Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Types of Peacetime Maritime Disasters:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Ship fires</b> due to hazardous cargo or engine faults.</li> <li>○ <b>Oil spills</b> from tankers and gas carriers.</li> <li>○ <b>Sinking of vessels</b>, affecting cargo, marine life, and port operations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>High-risk cargoes</b> include flammable chemicals, liquefied natural gas, and crude oil.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic chokepoints</b> (e.g., Malacca Strait) amplify global risks from such incidents.</li> </ul> <p><b>Institutional Framework and Firefighting Capabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Indian Coast Guard (ICG)</b> is the lead maritime disaster response agency, operating patrol vessels equipped with <b>foam monitors, tow lines, and pollution-control systems</b>.</li> <li>• The <b>Indian Navy</b> supplements disaster operations by providing <b>aerial support, salvage operations, and manpower</b>, as seen during the MV Wan Hai 503 incident.</li> <li>• The <b>Directorate General of Shipping</b> oversees <b>compliance with maritime safety norms</b> and enforces <b>hazardous cargo regulations</b>.</li> </ul>

- **Ports and oil companies** implement **Oil Spill Contingency Plans (OSCPs)** to enable localized rapid response.

#### **Policy Measures and International Compliance**

- India is a signatory to the **MARPOL Convention (1973/78)** for pollution control from ships.
- Compliance with **IMO guidelines**, including the **Fire Safety Systems (FSS) Code** and **SOLAS Convention**, is maintained for vessel safety.
- The **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP)**, updated in **2022**, outlines coordinated oil spill response mechanisms under ICG leadership.
- The **Sagarmala Project**, though infrastructure-focused, indirectly enhances **port-level disaster resilience and connectivity**.

#### **Key Challenges in Maritime Fire and Disaster Management**

- There is **limited real-time coordination** among agencies such as the ICG, Navy, ports, and private stakeholders.
- India has an **inadequate number of dedicated firefighting vessels and pollution-response assets**.
- **Delayed responses** are common during **adverse weather and deep-sea incidents**.
- **Heavy reliance on foreign salvage firms** restricts India's operational sovereignty in major incidents.
- **Crew training in hazardous material handling** and onboard fire response remains insufficient and inconsistent.

#### **Way Forward: Strengthening Maritime Disaster Preparedness**

- **Enhance early warning and surveillance systems** through **satellite monitoring and UAVs**, as per the **NMDA Project** and **INCOIS**.
- **Establish joint maritime disaster task forces** across coastal zones, in line with **Sheel Kant Sharma Committee (2015)** recommendations.
- **Invest in indigenous fireboats, oil spill containment systems, and salvage tugs**, as proposed under **Maritime India Vision 2030**.
- **Strengthen enforcement of safety standards** for hazardous cargo and ship design using **IMO's FSS Code** and **SOLAS norms**.
- **Conduct regular inter-agency and international drills**, consistent with the **UN Sendai Framework (2015–30)**, to test and improve preparedness.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Set up regional oil spill equipment hubs</b>, as advised by NOSDCP (2022), to decentralize and speed up response.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	India has demonstrated commendable maritime firefighting capacity in incidents like MV Wan Hai 503 and VLCC New Diamond. However, to effectively counter the increasing frequency and complexity of maritime disasters, systemic reforms, inter-agency coordination, and capacity-building investments are essential. Securing India's maritime domain will require a forward-looking strategy that blends technology, training, infrastructure, and global best practices.

## Science and technology

**Q 24: The advent of generative AI models poses new challenges to content ownership and fair compensation in the digital ecosystem. In this context, critically examine the impact of AI on news publishers. Discuss the legal, ethical, and policy frameworks required to ensure fair compensation. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Artificial Intelligence (AI)

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/theft-and-compensation-on-news-publishers-and-ai-models/article69724451.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) models, particularly large language models (LLMs), rely on extensive datasets, often sourced from freely accessible online content, including copyrighted news articles. This practice has raised fundamental questions about intellectual property (IP), journalistic sustainability, and ethical AI development. With billions invested in AI innovation, concerns are mounting over the lack of compensation for news publishers, whose content is being used to train models and generate monetised outputs.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How Generative AI Uses News Content</li><li>• Legal and Policy Frameworks: India and Global Trends</li><li>• Challenges Faced by News Publishers</li><li>• India-Specific Impacts and Structural Vulnerabilities</li><li>• The Way Forward: Equitable Compensation and Ethical AI Integration</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The rise of AI must not replicate earlier patterns of digital exploitation that hollowed out creative industries. A balanced regulatory regime is essential—one that fosters AI innovation while safeguarding

journalistic ecosystems. India, with its vibrant media landscape and growing AI ambitions, must pioneer a rights-based framework to ensure that the AI revolution is inclusive, ethical, and sustainable. News publishers deserve their fair share of the digital future they helped build.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Artificial Intelligence (AI)</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? [2023]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) models, particularly large language models (LLMs), rely on extensive datasets, often sourced from freely accessible online content, including copyrighted news articles. This practice has raised fundamental questions about intellectual property (IP), journalistic sustainability, and ethical AI development. With billions invested in AI innovation, concerns are mounting over the lack of compensation for news publishers, whose content is being used to train models and generate monetised outputs.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>How Generative AI Uses News Content</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generative AI models such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude are trained using large text corpora scraped from the Internet, including journalistic outputs from media organisations.</li> <li>• This process lacks <b>prior consent</b> or compensation, bypassing traditional <b>copyright licensing mechanisms</b>.</li> <li>• While AI firms argue for “<b>fair use</b>” in model training, this often undermines the original creators whose efforts form the foundation of AI-generated summaries or narratives.</li> <li>• As the models improve, they can <b>summarise, rephrase, or mimic</b> original journalistic styles—eroding attribution and revenue channels.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal and Policy Frameworks: India and Global Trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In India, the <b>Copyright Act, 1957</b> does not explicitly account for AI training datasets, creating a <b>regulatory vacuum</b>.</li> <li>• The <b>Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)</b> has recently set up a <b>committee on copyright and AI</b>, aiming to examine fair compensation models and content scraping guidelines.</li> <li>• <b>Canada’s Online News Act (2023)</b> mandates platforms like Google and Meta to pay publishers for linking or reusing news.</li> <li>• The <b>EU’s Digital Services Act</b> and <b>Digital Markets Act</b></li> </ul>

enforce **transparency of AI training data** and mandate fair competition.

- In contrast, **US copyright law** remains vague, with ongoing litigation (e.g., *New York Times vs. OpenAI*) challenging unlicensed model training.

### Challenges Faced by News Publishers

- **Revenue loss:** AI models summarise content, reducing traffic to original websites and lowering advertising income.
- **Erosion of brand identity:** When AI platforms aggregate news, the publisher's distinct voice is lost.
- **No attribution or backlinks:** Summaries often appear without credit or direct links, further isolating creators from audiences.
- **Asymmetric power dynamics:** Tech giants have far greater bargaining power, controlling both AI platforms and user traffic pipelines.

### India-Specific Impacts and Structural Vulnerabilities

- Indian media faces **declining subscription revenue** and rising costs. AI content use further **hollows out their digital margins**.
- Vernacular publishers are particularly vulnerable, as their content may be mined without consent or even recognition in model outputs.
- Given India's **fragmented digital IP enforcement**, most small and medium news enterprises cannot track or challenge misuse.
- Additionally, AI's **multilingual generation capacity** allows it to bypass original content in regional languages.

### The Way Forward: Equitable Compensation and Ethical AI Integration

- **Legal reform:** Amend the Copyright Act to include AI-specific data usage and licensing provisions.
- **Licensing frameworks:** Mandate AI companies to negotiate licenses with content creators, akin to **blanket licenses** in the music industry.
- **Collective rights management:** Create a digital media rights collective to negotiate and monitor content use.
- **Transparency norms:** Require AI firms to disclose dataset sources, especially for monetised outputs.
- **Fair Revenue Sharing Models:** Encourage platform-publisher partnerships, where media houses are compensated for content used in AI training or outputs.
- **Technological safeguards:** Deploy watermarking or blockchain-based tracing to track unauthorized use of news

	content.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The rise of AI must not replicate earlier patterns of digital exploitation that hollowed out creative industries. A balanced regulatory regime is essential—one that fosters AI innovation while safeguarding journalistic ecosystems. India, with its vibrant media landscape and growing AI ambitions, must pioneer a rights-based framework to ensure that the AI revolution is inclusive, ethical, and sustainable. News publishers deserve their fair share of the digital future they helped build.

**Q25. Discuss the role of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in India's energy transition. Explain the significance, institutional frameworks, challenges, and the way forward for scaling BESS to ensure energy security and sustainability. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Energy security and sustainability**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/role-of-bess-in-shaping-indias-energy-transition/article69656518.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	As India targets 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030, integrating intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind into the grid presents technical and infrastructural challenges. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have emerged as a transformative solution to bridge this gap, ensuring grid stability, energy accessibility, and sustainability in India's energy transition.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept and Significance of BESS</li> <li>• Institutional and Policy Frameworks</li> <li>• Key Challenges</li> <li>• Emerging Opportunities and Global Alliances</li> <li>• Way Forward</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	BESS is not just an enabling technology but a cornerstone of India's energy transition strategy. With the right mix of innovation, partnerships, and policy support, India can lead the global South in storage-driven green transformation, fulfill its SDG 7 commitments, and strengthen national energy security in the post-fossil fuel era.

**UPSC Syllabus**

**Energy security and sustainability**

<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Should the pursuit of carbon credits and clean development mechanisms set up under UNFCCC be maintained even though there has been a massive slide in the value of a carbon credit? Discuss with respect to India's energy needs for economic growth. [2014]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	As India targets 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030, integrating intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind into the grid presents technical and infrastructural challenges. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have emerged as a transformative solution to bridge this gap, ensuring grid stability, energy accessibility, and sustainability in India's energy transition.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Concept and Significance of BESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Definition:</b> BESS are systems that store energy using batteries for later use, allowing flexible load management.</li><li>• <b>Grid Reliability:</b> Helps balance demand-supply fluctuations and manage peak loads.</li><li>• <b>Climate Goals:</b> Facilitates higher renewable energy penetration by mitigating intermittency.</li><li>• <b>Equitable Energy Access:</b> Supports decentralised energy systems and microgrids, enabling last-mile electrification.</li></ul> <p><b>Institutional and Policy Frameworks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>47 GW BESS Target by 2032</b> announced by the Indian government.</li><li>• <b>Viability Gap Funding (VGF) and Interstate Transmission System (ISTS) waiver</b> for BESS projects commissioned by June 2025.</li><li>• <b>BESS pilot projects</b> like the 20 MW/40 MWh Kilokari (Delhi) project by BSES Rajdhani, IndiGrid, and GEAPP.</li><li>• <b>EnerGrid Platform:</b> A \$300 million partnership for greenfield BESS by IndiGrid, BII, and Norfund.</li></ul> <p><b>Key Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>High Upfront Cost</b> despite falling battery prices (90% drop in 15 years).</li><li>• <b>Regulatory and market delays</b> in long-term procurement agreements.</li><li>• <b>Lack of grid infrastructure investment</b> and integration planning.</li><li>• <b>Critical mineral dependence</b> affecting domestic manufacturing of battery components.</li></ul> <p><b>Emerging Opportunities and Global Alliances</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Public-Private-Philanthropic Alliances</b> enabling concessional financing and technical support.</li><li>• <b>BESS Consortium by GEAPP</b> aims at global cooperation for scalable, replicable storage models.</li><li>• <b>International Climate Finance</b> can support early-stage large-scale BESS rollouts.</li></ul> <p><b>Way Forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Policy clarity and time-bound procurement models</b> for storage integration.</li><li>• <b>Local manufacturing ecosystem</b> and circular economy models for battery recycling.</li><li>• <b>Investment in R&amp;D</b> and innovation for new storage chemistries (e.g., sodium-ion, flow batteries).</li><li>• <b>Pilot-to-scale strategy</b> with replicable use-cases for utilities and DISCOMs.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	BESS is not just an enabling technology but a cornerstone of India's energy transition strategy. With the right mix of innovation, partnerships, and policy support, India can lead the global South in storage-driven green transformation, fulfill its SDG 7 commitments, and strengthen national energy security in the post-fossil fuel era.

**Q 26: Evaluate the recent policy reforms exempting scientific research institutions from mandatory Government e-Marketplace (GeM) procurement. Critically analyze their implications—including government reports, data, and recommendations—and propose a framework to ensure procurement transparency without undermining scientific autonomy. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Scientific Research in India**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-free-hand-on-scientific-institutes-and-gem-norms/article69704952.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	In June 2025, the Government of India amended procurement rules to allow scientific and academic institutions greater autonomy by exempting them from mandatory procurement through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. This reform was driven by the realization that rigid price-focused procurement norms were adversely impacting research quality, reproducibility, and efficiency. The move aligns with India's broader goal of promoting indigenous research and technological innovation without being constrained by procedural bottlenecks.
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<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralized Procurement and Its Impact on Scientific Research</li> <li>• Key Features of the June 2025 Procurement Reforms</li> <li>• Insights from Government Reports and Policy Observations</li> <li>• Balancing Procurement Autonomy with Fiscal Transparency</li> <li>• Recommendations for a Robust Research-Oriented Procurement Framework</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The 2025 procurement reforms represent a strategic shift in favor of empowering India's scientific institutions to innovate without bureaucratic impediments. While GeM remains essential for standard public procurement, its blanket application to research institutions was a structural mismatch. By enabling a hybrid model of procurement that blends accountability with autonomy, India can create an enabling environment for world-class scientific research, aligning with the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat@2047.</p>

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Scientific Research in India</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Scientific research in Indian universities is declining, because a career in science is not as attractive as our business operations, engineering or administration, and the universities are becoming consumer oriented. Critically comment. (2014)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	In June 2025, the Government of India amended procurement rules to allow scientific and academic institutions greater autonomy by exempting them from mandatory procurement through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. This reform was driven by the realization that rigid price-focused procurement norms were adversely impacting research quality, reproducibility, and efficiency. The move aligns with India's broader goal of promoting indigenous research and technological innovation without being constrained by procedural bottlenecks.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Centralized Procurement and Its Impact on Scientific Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The GeM platform, while promoting cost-efficiency, often failed to accommodate the technical precision required in scientific research.</li> <li>• Many scientific institutions reported delays in procurement of sensitive equipment due to limited vendor availability on GeM.</li> <li>• The emphasis on lowest-cost procurement often resulted in the supply of substandard or unsuitable research materials.</li> <li>• The inability to procure high-quality and reliable components affected the reproducibility of experiments, a critical pillar of</li> </ul>

scientific validity.

- The centralized nature of GeM procurement reduced institutional flexibility, leading to underutilization of research funds and stalled projects.

### **Key Features of the June 2025 Procurement Reforms**

- The revised General Financial Rules (GFR) allowed direct purchases up to ₹2 lakh without requiring GeM routing.
- The limit for procurement through purchase committees was raised to ₹25 lakh, enhancing institutional decision-making powers.
- Limited tendering thresholds were increased from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore for scientific and educational institutions.
- Institutions were authorized to conduct Global Tender Enquiries (GTE) up to ₹200 crore, subject to internal approval.
- Heads of institutions such as Directors of research councils and Vice-Chancellors of universities were empowered to make procurement decisions independently.

### **Insights from Government Reports and Policy Observations**

- A review by the Department of Expenditure found that the lowest-price mandate under GeM was incompatible with the specialized needs of research institutions.
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) highlighted that several experimental failures were linked to inadequate quality of GeM-procured materials.
- Ministries involved in R&D, such as the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Department of Biotechnology, noted that excessive procedural delays hindered time-bound innovation.
- Government feedback channels reported that researchers faced significant challenges sourcing high-purity reagents, precision instruments, and lab-specific components through GeM.
- The reforms were driven by recognition that scientific institutions require a differentiated procurement ecosystem to remain globally competitive.

### **Balancing Procurement Autonomy with Fiscal Transparency**

- Institutional autonomy must be matched with robust internal controls to prevent misuse of public funds.
- Post-facto audits by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and internal audit committees can ensure accountability without delaying research workflows.
- Scientific institutions should maintain digital procurement logs

	<p>with technical justifications for each non-GeM purchase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procurement decisions should involve committees comprising technical experts, finance officers, and external observers for large-value items.</li><li>• Transparency can be enhanced by publishing annual procurement reports and vendor performance reviews on institutional websites.</li></ul> <p><b>Recommendations for a Robust Research-Oriented Procurement Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A dual-track procurement mechanism should be institutionalized, with GeM used for standard goods and direct procurement allowed for specialized scientific items.</li><li>• National research councils should create and update a registry of certified vendors for lab-grade chemicals, instruments, and services.</li><li>• A dedicated e-platform for scientific procurement can be developed with filters based on quality, certifications, and user ratings rather than price alone.</li><li>• Institutions should receive training to strengthen procurement planning, vendor negotiation, and technical evaluation of bids.</li><li>• A quarterly compliance review system can be established to detect anomalies without obstructing scientific timelines.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The 2025 procurement reforms represent a strategic shift in favor of empowering India's scientific institutions to innovate without bureaucratic impediments. While GeM remains essential for standard public procurement, its blanket application to research institutions was a structural mismatch. By enabling a hybrid model of procurement that blends accountability with autonomy, India can create an enabling environment for world-class scientific research, aligning with the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat@2047.</p>

**Q 27: Should India amend its nuclear energy laws to enable private and foreign participation in nuclear power generation? Critically examine the legal, strategic, and economic implications. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – India's nuclear energy laws**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/should-india-amend-its-nuclear-energy-laws/article69662033.ece>

**Introduction**

India's ambition to expand its nuclear energy capacity from 8 GW to 100 GW by 2047 necessitates large-scale investment, technological

	infusion, and faster project implementation. However, existing laws — the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010 — restrict private and foreign participation. This raises the question: should India amend its nuclear energy laws?
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Barriers to Expansion</li> <li>• Strategic and Security Concerns</li> <li>• Economic and Infrastructural Challenges</li> <li>• Public Safety and Liability Issues</li> <li>• Energy Security and Clean Transition</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	India must carefully balance attracting investment with safeguarding public interest and strategic autonomy. Amending nuclear energy laws should not mean weakening liability or oversight. Instead, India can adopt a phased reform approach — allowing private participation under strict regulation, ensuring transparent liability mechanisms, and protecting sovereign interests. Sustainable nuclear expansion requires not just legal change, but also political will, indigenous capacity building, and societal trust.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>India's nuclear energy laws</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Give an account of the growth and development of nuclear science and technology in India. What is the advantage of fast breeder reactor programme in India? (2017)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	India's ambition to expand its nuclear energy capacity from 8 GW to 100 GW by 2047 necessitates large-scale investment, technological infusion, and faster project implementation. However, existing laws — the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010 — restrict private and foreign participation. This raises the question: should India amend its nuclear energy laws?
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Legal Barriers to Expansion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Atomic Energy Act, 1962</b> gives the government exclusive rights over nuclear energy generation.</li> <li>• <b>CLNDA, 2010</b> imposes supplier liability (Section 17(b)), which deters foreign companies like Westinghouse, Areva, and GE-Hitachi from entering the Indian market.</li> </ul>

- After 2010, indemnification through contracts (as was done pre-CLNDA with Rosatom) became legally questionable.
- The **Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC)**, which India joined in 2016, promotes a liability structure that channels all responsibility to operators, in contrast to India's current law.

### Strategic and Security Concerns

- Nuclear energy is a **sensitive domain**, involving proliferation risks and strategic materials.
- Technology transfers are unlikely to occur freely; past collaborations (e.g., with Russia's Rosatom) had limited access to core technologies.
- The **U.S. and other suppliers** operate under export control regimes, making transfer of Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technology uncertain.

### Economic and Infrastructural Challenges

- Nuclear plants have **high capital costs** and long gestation periods; SMRs may reduce scale but are still cost-intensive.
- Private players may find nuclear ventures financially unviable without strong government guarantees.
- Despite 100% FDI in defence, India has not received major technology transfers — suggesting similar risks in nuclear.

### Public Safety and Liability Issues

- Post-Bhopal, India rightly strengthened liability norms to hold suppliers accountable.
- Diluting CLNDA may **expose public to risks**, especially when dealing with untested technologies like SMRs.
- CSC model, while globally accepted, prioritizes **quick compensation over legal accountability**, potentially weakening victims' rights.

### Energy Security and Clean Transition

- Nuclear power offers **base-load, low-emission energy**, crucial for SDG 7 and net-zero targets.
- India's **three-stage nuclear programme** (including thorium reactors) remains key to long-term sustainability.
- Public-private partnerships in areas like component manufacturing and SMRs can be encouraged under strict regulation.

### Conclusion

India must carefully balance attracting investment with safeguarding public interest and strategic autonomy. Amending nuclear energy laws

should not mean weakening liability or oversight. Instead, India can adopt a phased reform approach — allowing private participation under strict regulation, ensuring transparent liability mechanisms, and protecting sovereign interests. Sustainable nuclear expansion requires not just legal change, but also political will, indigenous capacity building, and societal trust.

## Defence

**Q28. “Drones are the new face of warfare, revolutionising modern military strategy while blurring lines between civilian and military use.” Critically examine the role of drones in contemporary conflict with reference to recent global and Indian examples. Also suggest steps India should take to build resilience in drone warfare. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Emerging defence technologies

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-drones-are-the-new-face-of-warfare/article69674623.ece#:~:text=By%20operating%20at%20low%20altitudes,enemy%20radar%20and%20communication%20systems.>

<b>Introduction</b>	The evolution of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, has fundamentally transformed the nature of modern warfare. Drones now serve as force multipliers in both offensive and defensive operations. The increasing accessibility, affordability, and adaptability of drone technology — as demonstrated in conflicts from Ukraine to Myanmar and most recently India’s Operation Sindoor — show that drone warfare is becoming mainstream in military strategy. However, the convergence of military and commercial applications also introduces new security and ethical challenges.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Strategic Role of Drones in Modern Warfare</li><li>• Evolution of Drone Technologies and Innovations</li><li>• Counter-Drone Capabilities and Limitations</li><li>• Military-Commercial Crossovers and Non-State Threats</li><li>• India's Path to Drone Resilience and Strategic Autonomy</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Drones have become an indispensable part of contemporary warfare, shifting military doctrines and introducing new dimensions of asymmetry. For India, the lessons from Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Operation Sindoor are clear: a resilient, scalable, and modular drone

ecosystem — backed by a strong industrial base and integrated command structures — is critical to modern defence preparedness. In the age of drone warfare, the sky is not the limit, but the new battleground.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Emerging defence technologies</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. How is S-400 air defence system technically superior to any other system presently available in the world? (2021)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The evolution of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, has fundamentally transformed the nature of modern warfare. Drones now serve as force multipliers in both offensive and defensive operations. The increasing accessibility, affordability, and adaptability of drone technology — as demonstrated in conflicts from Ukraine to Myanmar and most recently India’s Operation Sindoor — show that drone warfare is becoming mainstream in military strategy. However, the convergence of military and commercial applications also introduces new security and ethical challenges.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>The Strategic Role of Drones in Modern Warfare</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Force Multipliers:</b> Drones enhance precision strikes, real-time surveillance, and standoff capabilities.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic Depth:</b> India’s use of drones in Operation Sindoor demonstrated their ability to strike deep while maintaining plausible deniability.</li> <li>• <b>Case Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020):</i> Azerbaijan’s success using Israeli kamikaze drones.</li> <li>○ <i>Ukraine-Russia Conflict:</i> Use of improvised and low-cost drones for strategic strikes (e.g., Operation Spider Web).</li> <li>○ <i>Myanmar:</i> Rebel groups use 3D-printed drones to challenge better-equipped state forces.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Evolution of Drone Technologies and Innovations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dual-Use Nature:</b> Commercial drones can be weaponised cheaply, blurring military-civilian lines.</li> <li>• <b>Technological Innovations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>AI &amp; Terrain Mapping:</b> Ukraine’s AI-guided, terrain-savvy drones to avoid detection.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- **Electronic Warfare:** Drones with radar jamming/spoofing capabilities.
- **3D Printing:** Rapid drone prototyping by Ukraine and Myanmar insurgents.
- **Swarm Tactics:** China's CH-901 kamikaze drones and Russia's use of Shahed drones to overwhelm defences.

### Counter-Drone Capabilities and Limitations

- **India's Response:**
  - Use of *Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS)*, S-400, Akash, MR-SAM systems.
  - Indigenous soft-kill and hard-kill UAV neutralization systems.
- **Challenges:**
  - High cost of interception.
  - Jamming/spoofing vulnerabilities.
  - Limited magazine depth during prolonged engagements.

### Military-Commercial Crossovers and Non-State Threats

- **Weaponisation of Commercial Drones:**
  - Civilian drones can be retrofitted with explosives or surveillance tools.
  - Terrorist threats to civilian infrastructure loom large.
- **Global Trend:**
  - Open-source software and modular drone design lower barriers to entry.
  - U.S. and U.K. pushing commercial 3D-printed drones to bypass sluggish supply chains.
- **India's Internal Security Risk:** Urgent need to empower paramilitary and police forces with counter-drone capabilities.

### India's Path to Drone Resilience and Strategic Autonomy

- **Asymmetric Strategy vs. China:**
  - China's Wing Loong II, TB-001 drones provide it with edge at LAC.
  - India must scale up affordable loitering munitions and tactical drones.
- **Policy and Industrial Support:**
  - Establish surge capacity in defence production.
  - Resolve procurement delays and ensure sustained demand signals to industry.
  - Encourage MSMEs and startups via initiatives like iDEX and DPEPP 2020.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Strategic Autonomy:</b> Develop indigenous alternatives to imported systems (like Shahed or Bayraktar drones).</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Drones have become an indispensable part of contemporary warfare, shifting military doctrines and introducing new dimensions of asymmetry. For India, the lessons from Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Operation Sindoor are clear: a resilient, scalable, and modular drone ecosystem — backed by a strong industrial base and integrated command structures — is critical to modern defence preparedness. In the age of drone warfare, the sky is not the limit, but the new battleground.

# Human Geography

**Q 29: India's fertility rate has fallen below the replacement level, with financial insecurity emerging as a major deterrent to family expansion. In this context, examine the reasons for India's demographic transition. Also discuss its implications and suggest policy measures to sustainably harness the demographic dividend. (250 words, 15 marks)**

## Topic – Demographic dividend in India

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://theprint.in/india/indias-fertility-rate-below-replacement-level-financial-strain-a-key-factor-finds-un-report/2653734/>

<b>Introduction</b>	India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1, according to the UNFPA 'State of World Population 2025' report. This milestone, once a distant goal, has been achieved organically—driven by education, women's empowerment, contraceptive access, and economic concerns. While this transition has curbed unsustainable population growth, it also presents new demographic and economic challenges.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Factors Driving Fertility Decline in India</li><li>• Implications of Below-Replacement Fertility</li><li>• Regional Disparities and Policy Blind Spots</li><li>• Role of Social and Institutional Factors</li><li>• Way Forward: Sustaining Equitable Demographic Transition</li></ul>

## Conclusion

India's demographic trajectory is no longer about controlling numbers, but about managing transitions. As the fertility rate drops below replacement level, the challenge is to balance population stabilization with economic vitality, gender justice, and social well-being. The demographic dividend must be harnessed not just quantitatively, but through inclusive and rights-based policies that reflect the aspirations of India's youth and women.

## UPSC Syllabus

### Demographic dividend in India

## Why was this question asked?

**Q. "Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative." What measures have been taken by the government to enhance the capacity of our population to be more productive and employable? [2016]**

## Introduction

India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1, according to the UNFPA 'State of World Population 2025' report. This milestone, once a distant goal, has been achieved organically—driven by education, women's empowerment, contraceptive access, and economic concerns. While this transition has curbed unsustainable population growth, it also presents new demographic and economic challenges.

## Body

### Factors Driving Fertility Decline in India

- **Education and Awareness:** Increased female literacy and school enrolment have delayed marriages and reduced desired family size.
- **Access to Reproductive Healthcare:** Government schemes like **Mission Parivar Vikas** and **Family Welfare Programmes** have improved contraceptive use (68% among married women).
- **Urbanization and Lifestyle Changes:** Urban couples often prefer smaller families due to housing constraints and career priorities.
- **Financial Constraints:** According to the report, **38% cited financial limitations** and **21% pointed to job insecurity** as deterrents.
- **Changing Aspirations:** Women increasingly prefer workforce participation and independence over large families.

### Implications of Below-Replacement Fertility

- **Demographic Dividend Window:** With **68% in working-age group**, India has a potential for economic acceleration.

- **Ageing Population Ahead:** The population over **65 years may grow sharply post-2050**, straining pensions and healthcare.
- **Labour Market Challenges:** Declining fertility may lead to future **labour shortages**, especially in key sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.
- **Intergenerational Imbalance:** A shrinking younger population must support a growing elderly base.

#### **Regional Disparities and Policy Blind Spots**

- States like **Bihar (2.98)**, **Meghalaya**, and **U.P.** still have high fertility rates.
- Policy focus remains on population control despite the natural decline, risking overreach (e.g., pressure by health workers reported by 14% of respondents).
- Skewed sex ratios and unmet needs of rural women persist.

#### **Role of Social and Institutional Factors**

- **Family Influence:** 19% of women stated their partner wanted fewer children.
- **Gender Inequality:** Lack of male participation in domestic duties discourages childbearing.
- **Healthcare System Biases:** Medical professionals sometimes pressure women to adopt permanent solutions without fully informed consent.

#### **Way Forward: Sustaining Equitable Demographic Transition**

- **Policy Shift from Control to Choice:** Prioritize **reproductive rights**, informed choices, and gender-sensitive counseling.
- **Invest in Education and Skilling:** To reap demographic dividends before the window closes.
- **Strengthen Social Security Nets:** Especially pensions and geriatric care for a future ageing society.
- **Promote Gender Equitable Parenting:** Incentivize **paternity leave** and shared childcare responsibilities.
- **Address Regional Imbalances:** Target high-fertility states with localized health, education, and employment policies.

#### **Conclusion**

India's demographic trajectory is no longer about controlling numbers, but about managing transitions. As the fertility rate drops below replacement level, the challenge is to balance population stabilization with economic vitality, gender justice, and social well-being. The demographic dividend must be harnessed not just quantitatively, but through inclusive and rights-based policies that reflect the aspirations of India's youth and women.

# Social Justice

**Q 30: Despite notable progress in educational and health indicators, India continues to rank low on the Global Gender Gap Index. Critically examine the components of the index and India's performance in each. Suggest comprehensive reforms to improve gender parity in India. (250 words, 15 marks)**

## Topic – Global Gender Gap Index

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-gender-gap-rank-global-gender-gap-index-2025-world-economic-forum/article69685804.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), published annually by the World Economic Forum, assesses gender parity across 148 countries based on four core dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In the 2025 edition, India ranked 131st, slipping two places with an overall parity score of 64.1%, reflecting deep-rooted structural barriers despite modest gains in some areas.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)</li><li>• India's Performance in 2025: A Sector-Wise Breakdown</li><li>• Implications for India</li><li>• Steps Taken and Gaps</li><li>• Way Forward: Comprehensive Reform Strategy</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	India's low rank in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 is a stark reminder that economic growth without gender justice is unsustainable. While education and health show improvement, gaps in economic participation and political representation persist. Bridging these divides demands institutional reform, societal change, and political will, making gender equality not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity for India's long-term prosperity

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Global Gender Gap Index</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples. [2021]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), published annually by the World Economic Forum, assesses gender parity across 148 countries based on

four core dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In the 2025 edition, India ranked 131st, slipping two places with an overall parity score of 64.1%, reflecting deep-rooted structural barriers despite modest gains in some areas.

## Body

### Understanding the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)

- **Published by:** World Economic Forum (WEF) since 2006.
- **Dimensions covered:**
  - *Economic Participation and Opportunity* (e.g., wage equality, labour force participation)
  - *Educational Attainment* (e.g., literacy and enrolment rates)
  - *Health and Survival* (e.g., sex ratio at birth, life expectancy)
  - *Political Empowerment* (e.g., parliamentary representation, women in ministerial roles)
- **Purpose:** To benchmark national gender gaps and guide policies towards equitable development.

### India's Performance in 2025: A Sector-Wise Breakdown

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity:**
  - Improved from 39.8% to **40.7%**, mainly due to a rise in **earned income parity** (from 28.6% to 29.9%).
  - Labour force participation (45.9%) remained stagnant.
  - Female employment in leadership roles remains minimal.
- **Educational Attainment:**
  - Strong score of **97.1%**, driven by better **female literacy** and **tertiary education enrolment**.
  - Yet, education is not translating effectively into labour market inclusion.
- **Health and Survival:**
  - Marginal improvements in **sex ratio at birth** and **healthy life expectancy**.
  - Overall parity achieved here, yet India still ranks low globally due to historical skew.
- **Political Empowerment:**
  - Parity declined: women in Parliament dropped from **14.7% to 13.8%**, and in ministerial roles from **6.5% to 5.6%**.
  - Political representation remains the weakest area for

India in global comparison.

### Implications for India

- **Economic:** Underutilisation of half the workforce leads to GDP loss; as per McKinsey, India could add **\$770 billion** to its GDP by 2025 through gender parity.
- **Social:** Reinforces stereotypes, limits women's agency, increases gender-based violence.
- **Global Standing:** Weak performance undermines India's ambitions in global governance and SDG commitments, especially **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**.

### Steps Taken and Gaps

- **Positives:**
  - *Digital public infrastructure* (e.g., Jan Dhan, UPI, DBT) improving financial inclusion.
  - *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, Maternity Benefit Scheme, and *Women in STEM* initiatives.
- **Gaps:**
  - Weak political will and enforcement.
  - Gender budgeting is not outcome-focused.
  - Skewed societal norms remain unaddressed in rural areas.

### Way Forward: Comprehensive Reform Strategy

- **Legislative & Political:**
  - Pass the **Women's Reservation Bill** for 33% seats in Parliament and State Assemblies.
  - Enforce quotas in political parties and local bodies.
- **Economic Empowerment:**
  - Expand formal employment avenues with **skill training and childcare support**.
  - Provide **tax incentives** for women-led businesses and MSMEs.
- **Education to Employment:**
  - Encourage **STEM education** for girls and bridge school-to-work transitions.
  - Implement gender audits in corporate hiring and promotion.
- **Data & Governance:**
  - Improve **gender-disaggregated data** collection and use it for targeted policymaking.
  - Strengthen **gender-responsive budgeting** at all levels.

### Conclusion

India's low rank in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 is a stark reminder that economic growth without gender justice is unsustainable. While education and health show improvement, gaps in economic participation and political representation persist. Bridging these divides demands institutional reform, societal change, and political will, making gender equality not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity for India's long-term prosperity.

**Q31. Several Indian States have passed anti-rape laws in recent years, promising stricter punishments and faster trials. Critically examine the evolution of these State-level laws post-2012 and assess the challenges in their implementation. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Women security

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/anti-rape-laws-how-many-states-passed-them-and-have-they-been-implemented/article69708056.ece>

### Introduction

The 2012 Delhi gangrape case (Nirbhaya case) marked a watershed moment in India's legal and societal response to sexual violence against women. While the Parliament passed multiple Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts since then, several States also introduced their own anti-rape legislations, aiming to provide stricter punishments, expedited trials, and victim rehabilitation. However, many of these Bills remain unimplemented or legally contested, reflecting the complex interplay between State autonomy, federal scrutiny, and constitutional validity.

### Body

- Evolution of Central Anti-Rape Laws
- State-Level Anti-Rape Bills Passed Post-2017
- Legal and Constitutional Challenges in Implementation
- Implementation on the Ground: Gaps and Outcomes
- Recommendations for Effective Reform

### Conclusion

While the intent behind State anti-rape bills is commendable, their limited implementation and legal ambiguity dilute their impact. In a federal setup, effective legal reform requires harmonisation between State ambition and constitutional procedure, backed by administrative readiness and public accountability. Gender justice must go beyond legislative symbolism and translate into institutional change and survivor empowerment across the country.

### UPSC Syllabus

**Women security**

<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. "Though women in post-Independent India have excelled in various fields, the social attitude towards women and feminist movement has been patriarchal." Apart from women education and women empowerment schemes, what interventions can help change this milieu? (2021)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The 2012 Delhi gangrape case (Nirbhaya case) marked a watershed moment in India's legal and societal response to sexual violence against women. While the Parliament passed multiple Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts since then, several States also introduced their own anti-rape legislations, aiming to provide stricter punishments, expedited trials, and victim rehabilitation. However, many of these Bills remain unimplemented or legally contested, reflecting the complex interplay between State autonomy, federal scrutiny, and constitutional validity.
<b>Body</b>	<b>Evolution of Central Anti-Rape Laws</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013</b> was passed in response to the Nirbhaya case, making punishment for rape more stringent, introducing minimum 20 years to life imprisonment for rape, and death penalty for repeat offenders.</li><li>• <b>The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018</b> introduced <b>death penalty</b> for rape of minors under 12 years, and enhanced punishment for rape of girls below 16 years.</li><li>• <b>The Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), 2023</b>, now in force since July 2024, replaced IPC and made sexual offences <b>more gender-neutral</b>, although <b>marital rape remains non-criminalised</b>, and protection for <b>male and transgender victims</b> is still absent.</li></ul> <b>State-Level Anti-Rape Bills Passed Post-2017</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Madhya Pradesh (2017)</b>: Introduced <b>death penalty for rape of girls under 12</b>. Rajasthan, Haryana, and Arunachal Pradesh followed suit in 2018.</li><li>• <b>Andhra Pradesh (2019)</b>: Passed the <b>Disha Act</b> and a companion Bill for setting up <b>special courts</b>, fast-track trials, and awarding death penalty for rape and murder of women. Both Bills await President's assent.</li><li>• <b>Maharashtra (2021)</b>: Passed the <b>Shakti Bill</b>, providing death penalty for rape and acid attacks, time-bound investigation and trial, but the President returned the Bill citing conflict with Supreme Court precedents.</li><li>• <b>West Bengal (2024)</b>: Passed the <b>Aparajita Bill</b>, enabling life imprisonment without parole or death penalty in severe rape cases and imposing time-bound investigations (21 days). Bill is</li></ul>

pending Presidential assent.

- **Tamil Nadu (2025):** Passed a Bill proposing **14 to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for rape**, stricter for public officials, and **death penalty for rape of girls under 12**. Yet to become law.

### **Legal and Constitutional Challenges in Implementation**

- **State anti-rape bills often seek to amend the IPC**, which falls under the Concurrent List (Entry 1 of List III, Seventh Schedule)—requiring Presidential assent to become enforceable.
- **Many bills remain dormant**, pending scrutiny from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the President's office, causing significant delays in implementation.
- **Some provisions conflict with Supreme Court rulings**, particularly on **mandatory death penalties, speedy trial timelines**, and definitions of sexual offences, leading to **return or modification requests**.
- **Post BNS (2023)**, the Centre has questioned the **relevance of state-specific laws** when a uniform criminal code has been passed, further complicating the legal landscape.

### **Implementation on the Ground: Gaps and Outcomes**

- **Only a few states** like Andhra Pradesh operationalised supportive infrastructure, such as Disha police stations and women safety apps (e.g., Shakti app), while others await legal clearance.
- No state-specific law has yet achieved full implementation across all districts, due to lack of institutional preparedness, trained personnel, and judicial capacity.
- Conviction rates in rape cases remain low (~27.2% in 2023, NCRB data), suggesting that legal amendments alone are insufficient without systemic reform.
- Stigma, poor forensic evidence collection, and delays in justice delivery continue to hamper outcomes for survivors.

### **Recommendations for Effective Reform**

- **States must align their amendments with the constitutional framework and Supreme Court jurisprudence** to secure Presidential assent.
- **Focus should shift from symbolic laws to effective enforcement**, with investment in forensic labs, fast-track courts, and trained judicial officers.
- **Public awareness campaigns**, victim protection schemes, and **counselling services** must be institutionalised to ensure

	<p>survivor-centric justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Centre and States should coordinate</b> through Inter-State Councils or NITI Aayog mechanisms for harmonised legal responses and sharing of best practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>While the intent behind State anti-rape bills is commendable, their limited implementation and legal ambiguity dilute their impact. In a federal setup, effective legal reform requires harmonisation between State ambition and constitutional procedure, backed by administrative readiness and public accountability. Gender justice must go beyond legislative symbolism and translate into institutional change and survivor empowerment across the country.</p>

**Q 32: Despite improvements in economic and educational indicators, India's poor political empowerment ranking continues to drag its position in the Global Gender Gap Index. Critically evaluate the causes and suggest steps to improve gender parity in policymaking. (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Gender parity in India

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/mind-the-gap-on-india-and-the-global-gender-gap-index-report/article69697984.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The Global Gender Gap Index, released annually by the World Economic Forum (WEF), assesses the state of gender parity across four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In its 2025 edition, India ranks 131 out of 148 countries, with a gender parity score of 64.1%, placing it among the lowest-ranked countries in South Asia. Although India has recorded marginal improvements in economic participation, education, and health, a persistent and deepening shortfall in political empowerment continues to drag down its overall standing.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India's Performance Across the Four Index Dimensions</li> <li>• Causes for Declining Political Empowerment</li> <li>• Constitutional and Legal Framework</li> <li>• Measures to Improve Political Empowerment of Women</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India's falling performance in political empowerment reflects not only a gap in representation but also in execution, commitment, and social acceptance. While legislative efforts like the Women's Reservation Act signal progress, genuine transformation will require institutional reforms, political accountability, and cultural change. Enhancing women's role in policymaking is vital for achieving inclusive</p>

governance, balanced development, and democratic maturity.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Gender parity in India</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Discuss the contribution of civil society groups for women's effective and meaningful participation and representation in state legislatures in India. (2023)</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The Global Gender Gap Index, released annually by the World Economic Forum (WEF), assesses the state of gender parity across four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In its 2025 edition, India ranks 131 out of 148 countries, with a gender parity score of 64.1%, placing it among the lowest-ranked countries in South Asia. Although India has recorded marginal improvements in economic participation, education, and health, a persistent and deepening shortfall in political empowerment continues to drag down its overall standing.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>India's Performance Across the Four Index Dimensions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• India's score in the <b>economic participation and opportunity</b> sub-index improved by <b>+0.9 percentage points</b>, owing to a rise in <b>estimated earned income parity</b> from <b>28.6% to 29.9%</b>.</li><li>• The <b>labour force participation rate</b> remained steady at <b>45.9%</b>, which is the <b>highest recorded to date</b> for India, showing growing economic involvement by women.</li><li>• India showed progress in the <b>educational attainment</b> and <b>health and survival</b> categories due to improved <b>female literacy, school enrolment ratios, and a more balanced sex ratio at birth</b>.</li><li>• The <b>political empowerment</b> dimension experienced a significant decline. The percentage of <b>women in Parliament</b> fell from <b>14.7% in 2024 to 13.8% in 2025</b>, and the share of <b>women in ministerial roles</b> dropped from <b>6.5% to 5.6%</b>, marking the <b>second consecutive year of decline</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Causes for Declining Political Empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>delayed implementation</b> of the <b>Women's Reservation Act (2023)</b> is a major reason. Although the Act reserves <b>one-third of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures for women</b>, its enforcement has been postponed to <b>2029</b>, contingent on the completion of the <b>Census and delimitation process</b>.</li><li>• <b>Political parties have not voluntarily increased women's representation</b> in electoral nominations, despite no legal restrictions on doing so before 2029.</li></ul>

- A deeply **patriarchal political culture** discourages women's political engagement, with women often denied safe constituencies, campaign funds, and equal visibility.
- **Structural and societal barriers** such as domestic burdens, safety concerns, and limited access to networks further restrict women's entry into politics.

### **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- **Article 14** ensures equality before law; **Article 15** prohibits discrimination; and **Article 16** guarantees equal opportunity in public employment.
- The **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments** have mandated **one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies**, resulting in over **1.4 million elected women representatives at the grassroots level**.
- The **Women's Reservation Act (2023)** provides 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies, but its delayed implementation undermines its transformative potential.

### **Measures to Improve Political Empowerment of Women**

- The government should **expedite the Census and delimitation** to implement the reservation law by **2026 or earlier**, if feasible.
- **Political parties must voluntarily commit to fielding more women candidates**, particularly in winnable seats, even before the 2029 deadline.
- Create **structured mentorship and leadership training programs** for aspiring women politicians to build capacity and confidence.
- Establish **public funding mechanisms or subsidies for women candidates**, especially those contesting for the first time.
- Enforce **gender audits and internal quotas within political parties**, monitored by the **Election Commission of India**.
- Promote **awareness campaigns and media representation** to normalize female political leadership and challenge stereotypes.

### **Conclusion**

India's falling performance in political empowerment reflects not only a gap in representation but also in execution, commitment, and social acceptance. While legislative efforts like the Women's Reservation Act signal progress, genuine transformation will require institutional reforms, political accountability, and cultural change. Enhancing women's role in policymaking is vital for achieving inclusive governance, balanced development, and democratic maturity.

# Public Health

**Q 33: Urban traffic congestion poses a significant challenge to emergency medical response in India. In this context, examine how technology and public policy can be leveraged to reduce ambulance response times and reclaim the 'Golden Hour'. Suggest reforms for better integration of health and urban mobility systems. (250 words, 15 marks)**

## Topic – Public Health in Urban Areas

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/reclaiming-the-golden-hour-how-technology-can-help-beat-urban-traffic-and-save-lives/article69678684.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	The Golden Hour—the first 60 minutes following a traumatic injury or acute medical episode—is crucial for survival. In India’s urban areas, however, this critical window is often lost due to severe traffic congestion, poor emergency infrastructure, and weak enforcement of ambulance right-of-way. While cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi continue to expand in size and complexity, their healthcare logistics systems struggle to keep pace. Technology-driven interventions now offer promising solutions to overcome these delays and save lives.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the Crisis: Urban Delays and the Golden Hour</li><li>• Technology as a Lifesaving Intervention</li><li>• Policy and Scheme Interventions</li><li>• Challenges: Infrastructure, Attitude, and System Gaps</li><li>• Way Forward: Integration and Accountability</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The loss of the Golden Hour to traffic isn’t just a logistical failure—it is a preventable tragedy. India’s goal of Universal Health Coverage must include urban emergency responsiveness as a priority. Technology alone cannot solve the problem; it must be complemented by legal enforcement, public cooperation, and urban planning reforms. When time is the most crucial medicine, beating the clock becomes a national health imperative.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Public Health in Urban Areas</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India. Explain. [2018]</b>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The Golden Hour—the first 60 minutes following a traumatic injury or acute medical episode—is crucial for survival. In India’s urban areas, however, this critical window is often lost due to severe traffic congestion, poor emergency infrastructure, and weak enforcement of ambulance right-of-way. While cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi continue to expand in size and complexity, their healthcare logistics systems struggle to keep pace. Technology-driven interventions now offer promising solutions to overcome these delays and save lives.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Understanding the Crisis: Urban Delays and the Golden Hour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report (2021)</b> noted that over <b>90,000 crash victims</b> in Karnataka alone missed timely medical care due to ambulance delays.</li><li>• <b>National average ambulance response time:</b> 25–30 minutes; worse in rural areas.</li><li>• According to the <b>National Crime Records Bureau</b>, many trauma-related deaths occur <b>en route</b> to hospitals.</li><li>• In Delhi, average response times increased from <b>13 minutes (2014)</b> to <b>17 minutes (2024)</b>, despite an expanded ambulance fleet.</li></ul> <p><b>Golden Hour:</b> Refers to the critical one-hour window post-trauma when medical intervention is most effective.</p> <p><b>Technology as a Lifesaving Intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>GPS-enabled ambulance tracking:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Enables real-time dispatch, route optimisation, and advance hospital notification.</li><li>○ Example: In <b>Chennai and Kolkata</b>, GPS integration led to a <b>12–15% reduction</b> in response time.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Traffic Signal Pre-emption Systems:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Ambulances automatically trigger green lights at intersections.</li><li>○ Pilot studies show up to <b>30–40% reduction</b> in travel time.</li><li>○ Currently implemented in very few intersections (&lt;20% in Tier-1 cities).</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Bike Ambulances:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Under <b>Karnataka’s Platinum Ten Minutes Initiative</b>, they handled <b>1/3rd of trauma cases</b> in Bengaluru with <b>median arrival time &lt;6 minutes</b>.</li></ul></li></ul>

- Useful in high-density, narrow-lane localities.

### Policy and Scheme Interventions

- **Supreme Court Directive (2024):** Advocated cashless ‘Golden Hour’ treatment for road victims.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** Can integrate traffic management with health emergency protocols.
- **Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM):** Can be used to digitally mandate GPS tracking and emergency readiness.
- **National Ambulance Code (under MoRTH):** Needs urgent update to incorporate modern tech standards.
- **Digital India Mission:** Offers a platform for real-time emergency response integration.

### Challenges: Infrastructure, Attitude, and System Gaps

- **Inadequate infrastructure:** Only 20% of urban signals can support pre-emption; many still timer-based.
- **Technological gaps:** GPS failures, uncharged equipment, software lags hamper efficiency.
- **Public apathy:**
  - 62% of ambulance drivers report that vehicles don’t yield.
  - Weak enforcement of **Section 194E of Motor Vehicles Act** (penalty for obstructing emergency vehicles).
- **Fragmented governance:** Health and transport departments function in silos.

### Way Forward: Integration and Accountability

- **Legislative and Policy Actions:**
  - Mandate GPS tracking for **all ambulances under National Health Mission**.
  - Penalise non-yielding vehicles under stricter enforcement rules.
- **Urban Design Reforms:**
  - Emergency lanes on congested highways.
  - Traffic light override systems in top 100 smart cities.
- **Public Engagement:**
  - National campaigns like “**Give Way, Save Lives**”.
  - Integration into school and driver education programs.
- **Decentralised Trauma Units:**
  - Mini ERs at major traffic junctions, modelled on ‘**Stop-the-Bleed**’ stations in the U.S.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Data-Driven Monitoring:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ National Emergency Medical Response Dashboard with live tracking and metrics.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The loss of the Golden Hour to traffic isn't just a logistical failure—it is a preventable tragedy. India's goal of Universal Health Coverage must include urban emergency responsiveness as a priority. Technology alone cannot solve the problem; it must be complemented by legal enforcement, public cooperation, and urban planning reforms. When time is the most crucial medicine, beating the clock becomes a national health imperative.

## Ecology and Environment

**Q34. In the wake of rising ecological degradation and transboundary wildlife trafficking, evaluate the strategic significance of India's launch of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in 2024. How does the alliance aim to reshape global conservation efforts for apex predators, and what institutional, geopolitical, and ecological challenges must it overcome to become an effective multilateral mechanism? (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Topic – Wildlife conservation

**Source:** The Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/international-big-cat-alliance-faq-10072246/>

<b>Introduction</b>	The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a multilateral initiative launched by India in March 2024 through the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). It aims to foster international cooperation to protect and conserve seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma. This alliance reflects India's leadership in global wildlife conservation, especially after five decades of Project Tiger.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Objectives and Institutional Framework of IBCA</li><li>• Rationale Behind the Initiative</li><li>• Significance of IBCA for India and the World</li><li>• Challenges to Implementation</li><li>• Way Forward and Recommendations</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a visionary initiative that

extends India's successful domestic conservation experience onto the global stage. By championing the protection of iconic yet endangered species across continents, IBCA aims to catalyse cooperative environmental governance in an era of mounting ecological crises. Its success will depend on sustained international commitment, community participation, and adaptive governance mechanisms that protect not only big cats but the ecosystems they symbolize.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Wildlife conservation</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. How does biodiversity vary in India? How is the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 helpful in conservation of flora and fauna? [2018]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a multilateral initiative launched by India in March 2024 through the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). It aims to foster international cooperation to protect and conserve seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma. This alliance reflects India's leadership in global wildlife conservation, especially after five decades of Project Tiger.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Objectives and Institutional Framework of IBCA</b></p> <p>The IBCA is envisioned as a multilateral institution with a structured operational framework aimed at fostering international cooperation in big cat conservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The core objective is to facilitate the conservation of seven big cat species across their global range countries, through knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and transboundary collaboration.</li> <li>• IBCA has been established under India's <b>National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)</b>, under the <b>Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)</b>. The alliance is headquartered in India, affirming India's central leadership role.</li> <li>• The Indian government has earmarked <b>₹150 crore (approx. USD 18 million)</b> for the 2023–28 period, with the expectation of attracting international co-financing and donor support.</li> <li>• The alliance is open to <b>all UN member countries</b>. As of September 2024, <b>25 nations</b> had formally joined, including Bangladesh, Suriname, Ecuador, Nigeria, and Kazakhstan. The <b>first General Assembly</b> was held in <b>New Delhi in June 2025</b>,</li> </ul>

where India was endorsed as the president.

- Membership is formalized through a **framework agreement** and **Note Verbale**, providing the IBCA with a recognized international legal status and operational legitimacy.

### Rationale Behind the Initiative

- **Declining Big Cat Populations:** India's tiger population fell from ~40,000 (1947) to ~1,800 (1970), prompting Project Tiger in 1973.
- **Ecological Importance:** Big cats are apex predators vital for maintaining ecological balance and preventing prey overpopulation and landscape degradation.
- **Global Challenge:** Poaching, habitat loss, human-animal conflict, and climate change threaten all seven species globally.
- **India's Conservation Leadership:** Home to 70% of global tiger population and experience with models like Project Tiger, Project Lion, and Cheetah reintroduction.

### Significance of IBCA for India and the World

- **Diplomatic Soft Power:** Positions India as a leader in global wildlife diplomacy.
- **Biodiversity Protection:** Ensures protection of habitats that house numerous species beyond big cats.
- **Climate Resilience:** Conservation of big cat habitats aids carbon sequestration, disease control, and natural disaster prevention.
- **Sustainable Development:** Aligns with SDGs – particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

### Challenges to Implementation

- **Poaching and Trafficking:** Modern trafficking networks are leaner and exploit technological loopholes.
- **Deforestation and Land-Use Change:** Shrinking forest cover and expanding urbanisation affect habitat continuity.
- **Man-Animal Conflict:** Encroachment into big cat territories increases conflict incidents.
- **International Coordination:** Requires harmonisation of legal frameworks, intelligence sharing, and joint protocols across diverse political systems.

### Way Forward and Recommendations

- **Strengthen Intelligence Networks:** Collaborate on anti-poaching technology and joint patrolling mechanisms.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Integrate local communities through eco-tourism and compensation mechanisms.
- **Capacity Building:** Support range countries through training,

	<p>equipment, and technical aid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scientific Research and Data Sharing:</b> Promote genetic studies, migratory tracking, and ecosystem monitoring using AI and satellite tools.</li> <li>• <b>Diplomatic Engagement:</b> Encourage more countries to ratify the agreement and contribute to the fund.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a visionary initiative that extends India's successful domestic conservation experience onto the global stage. By championing the protection of iconic yet endangered species across continents, IBCA aims to catalyse cooperative environmental governance in an era of mounting ecological crises. Its success will depend on sustained international commitment, community participation, and adaptive governance mechanisms that protect not only big cats but the ecosystems they symbolize.</p>

**Q35. Trade liberalisation has expanded global connectivity, but it has also heightened the risk of invasive alien species (IAS). Critically examine how changing trade dynamics contribute to biological invasions, with special reference to India. Suggest a policy framework to manage this growing threat. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Biodiversity conservation**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/trade-tariffs-close-borders-but-may-open-doors-to-invasive-alien-species/article69708421.ece>

<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Global trade has expanded dramatically in the last two centuries, connecting continents and transforming economies. However, an unintended consequence of this connectivity is the increasing introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS)—organisms introduced deliberately or accidentally into new ecosystems where they often thrive and disrupt native biodiversity. India, with its vast trade networks and biodiversity-rich landscapes, has become particularly vulnerable to these biological invasions.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade and the Spread of Invasive Alien Species</li> <li>• India's IAS Burden and Challenges</li> <li>• Gaps in Biosecurity and Monitoring</li> <li>• Policy Framework and Recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>India's dual role as both a major importer and exporter makes it highly susceptible to the introduction and establishment of invasive alien species. As freight traffic is expected to triple by 2050, the risk of biological invasions will rise correspondingly. A comprehensive 'One</p>

Biosecurity’ framework—on the lines of the ‘One Health’ model—must become a national priority. Strengthening institutional infrastructure, surveillance mechanisms, and trade-linked biological assessments is crucial to protecting India’s ecosystems, economy, and public health from the slow-moving crisis of invasive alien species.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Biodiversity conservation</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. How does biodiversity vary in India? How is the Biological Diversity Act,2002 helpful in conservation of flora and fauna? [2018]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Global trade has expanded dramatically in the last two centuries, connecting continents and transforming economies. However, an unintended consequence of this connectivity is the increasing introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS)—organisms introduced deliberately or accidentally into new ecosystems where they often thrive and disrupt native biodiversity. India, with its vast trade networks and biodiversity-rich landscapes, has become particularly vulnerable to these biological invasions.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Trade and the Spread of Invasive Alien Species</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bilateral trade growth</b> has increased from 5,700 trade pairs in 1948 to over 34,000 in the 2000s, intensifying the movement of biological goods.</li> <li>• <b>Shipping and ballast water</b> carry aquatic species like the Asian paddle crab, while <b>biofouling</b> allows organisms to hitchhike on ship hulls.</li> <li>• <b>Ornamental, pet, and food trades</b> introduce species such as mosquitofish, guppies, and tilapia for biocontrol or aquaculture, which later become invasive.</li> <li>• <b>Unregulated imports</b>, such as contaminated U.S. wheat under the PL-480 scheme in 1955, led to the spread of Parthenium grass.</li> </ul> <p><b>India’s IAS Burden and Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India is the <b>second-most affected country</b> globally, losing <b>\$127.3 billion</b> over 60 years due to IAS.</li> <li>• Over <b>2,000 IAS</b> exist in India, but only <b>3%</b> have documented economic impacts, pointing to data gaps.</li> <li>• IAS such as the <b>giant African snail</b> and <b>yellow fever mosquito</b> damage crops, ecosystems, and human health.</li> <li>• <b>Climate change and shifting trade routes</b> increase the probability of IAS establishment in new regions.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Gaps in Biosecurity and Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many <b>developing nations lack infrastructure</b> to inspect goods from new trade partners.</li><li>• Poor <b>quarantine enforcement</b>, absence of <b>real-time tracking</b>, and fragmented departmental coordination weaken India's response.</li><li>• IAS introduced today may only reveal their impact decades later, making <b>early detection and prevention essential</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Policy Framework and Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>One Biosecurity Approach:</b> Integrate environmental, health, and agricultural agencies for a unified response.</li><li>• <b>Stricter port surveillance</b> and <b>quarantine facilities</b> for biological goods.</li><li>• Implement <b>mandatory biological impact assessments</b> post-trade.</li><li>• Create a <b>centralized IAS database</b>, coordinated by the Ministry of Environment.</li><li>• Raise <b>public and trader awareness</b> regarding IAS risks, especially in ornamental and aquarium trades.</li></ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>India's dual role as both a major importer and exporter makes it highly susceptible to the introduction and establishment of invasive alien species. As freight traffic is expected to triple by 2050, the risk of biological invasions will rise correspondingly. A comprehensive 'One Biosecurity' framework—on the lines of the 'One Health' model—must become a national priority. Strengthening institutional infrastructure, surveillance mechanisms, and trade-linked biological assessments is crucial to protecting India's ecosystems, economy, and public health from the slow-moving crisis of invasive alien species.</p>

**Q36. The 2024 WMO "State of the Climate in Asia" report warns that Asia is warming at nearly twice the global average. Critically examine the causes, regional implications, and India-specific challenges of this trend. How can regional and global cooperation mitigate these effects? (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Climate change**

**Source:** The Hindu

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/asia-is-warming-at-twice-the-global-average-wmo-report/article69727259.ece>

**Introduction**

According to the World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) 2024 report, Asia recorded its warmest year in history, with heatwaves, glacial retreat, marine warming, and extreme weather events affecting millions.

	The continent is now warming at nearly twice the global average, threatening food, water, and energy security, and imposing immense economic and social costs. As Asia’s most populous and climate-vulnerable region, South Asia — and India in particular — are facing disproportionate consequences.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Climate Trends Highlighted in the WMO Report</li> <li>• Causes of Accelerated Warming in Asia</li> <li>• Impacts on India and South Asia</li> <li>• Regional and International Comparisons</li> <li>• Solutions and Policy Recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The 2024 WMO report is a stark reminder that Asia’s climate crisis is deepening and disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations. For India, the stakes are particularly high as it navigates economic development amidst escalating environmental stress. A science-backed, equity-driven, and cooperative regional approach is crucial to safeguard ecosystems, livelihoods, and future growth. Ignoring these warning signs will only intensify the human and economic toll, while urgent climate action offers a path toward resilience and shared prosperity.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Climate change</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. Explain the purpose of the Green Grid Initiative launched at World Leaders Summit of the COP26UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November,2021. When was this idea first floated inthe International Solar Alliance (ISA)? [2021]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	According to the World Meteorological Organisation’s (WMO) 2024 report, Asia recorded its warmest year in history, with heatwaves, glacial retreat, marine warming, and extreme weather events affecting millions. The continent is now warming at nearly twice the global average, threatening food, water, and energy security, and imposing immense economic and social costs. As Asia’s most populous and climate-vulnerable region, South Asia — and India in particular — are facing disproportionate consequences.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Key Climate Trends Highlighted in the WMO Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Record Temperatures:</b> 2024 was the warmest year since 1850, with persistent heatwaves across Asia. India recorded over <b>450 heat-related deaths</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Accelerated Glacier Loss:</b> 23 of 24 monitored glaciers in the Central Himalayas and Tian Shan lost mass, triggering glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) and landslides.</li> </ul>

- **Marine Heatwaves:** The largest extent of marine heatwaves since 1993 affected the **Indian Ocean, Yellow Sea, and East China Sea**, damaging marine ecosystems.
- **Rising Sea Levels:** The Pacific and Indian Ocean coasts of Asia experienced sea level rise **above the global average**, endangering low-lying coastal regions.
- **Extreme Weather Events:** Record-breaking **rainfall in Nepal, landslides in Kerala, and Cyclones Remal and Asna** caused large-scale devastation and displacement.

#### **Causes of Accelerated Warming in Asia**

- **Geographical Composition:** Asia's **diverse topography**, including dense urban regions and high mountain ranges, exacerbates climate feedback loops.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** Rapid and unplanned urbanisation intensifies local warming through impervious surfaces, high energy consumption, and deforestation.
- **Industrial and Agricultural Emissions:** Heavy reliance on **coal-based energy, fertiliser-intensive agriculture, and biomass burning** in countries like India and China.
- **Weak Climate Governance:** Lack of stringent enforcement of environmental regulations, delayed carbon market mechanisms, and underfunded climate adaptation programmes.

#### **Impacts on India and South Asia**

- **Health and Mortality:** Over **1,300 deaths due to lightning** in India; **heatwaves and floods** increasing vulnerability among the poor, elderly, and outdoor workers.
- **Water Insecurity:** Retreating glaciers threaten perennial rivers like the Ganga and Brahmaputra, increasing water stress for **over 500 million** people.
- **Agricultural Risks:** Changing monsoon patterns, droughts (like in China), and heat stress impact **rice and wheat yields**, exacerbating food insecurity.
- **Displacement and Livelihood Loss:** GLOFs, cyclones, and floods (as in **Nepal and Kerala**) destroy homes and critical infrastructure, creating **climate refugees**.
- **Energy Demand:** Increased demand for cooling during extreme heat spikes stresses power grids and raises carbon emissions further, creating a vicious cycle.

#### **Regional and International Comparisons**

- **Europe:** Although warmer, Europe has adapted better through early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, and stronger institutional frameworks.

- **ASEAN:** Some Southeast Asian nations have invested in **regional disaster preparedness and transboundary river management**, though vulnerabilities remain.
- **Global South vs. Global North:** While high-income countries account for historical emissions, **Asia bears the brunt**, with limited fiscal capacity to adapt.

### **Solutions and Policy Recommendations**

- **Regional Climate Cooperation:** Strengthen **South Asia Hydromet Forum** and **Bay of Bengal Initiative** for climate early warning systems, data-sharing, and disaster response.
- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Promote **mangrove restoration, afforestation, and glacier monitoring** in the Himalayas for long-term resilience.
- **Heat Action Plans:** Expand successful models (e.g., Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan) across vulnerable Indian cities with **cool roofs, green corridors, and public awareness drives**.
- **Climate Finance and Loss & Damage Fund:** India must push for **equitable climate finance** through multilateral forums, including a focus on **compensation for climate disasters**.
- **Transition to Renewable Energy:** Accelerate deployment of **solar, wind, and hydro** to meet India's net-zero commitments and reduce regional emissions.

### **Conclusion**

The 2024 WMO report is a stark reminder that Asia's climate crisis is deepening and disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations. For India, the stakes are particularly high as it navigates economic development amidst escalating environmental stress. A science-backed, equity-driven, and cooperative regional approach is crucial to safeguard ecosystems, livelihoods, and future growth. Ignoring these warning signs will only intensify the human and economic toll, while urgent climate action offers a path toward resilience and shared prosperity.

**Q37. The IBAT Alliance's recent increase in investment highlights the growing importance of biodiversity data in global environmental governance. Explain the role of the IBAT Alliance in biodiversity conservation. Discuss the significance of science-based biodiversity databases for public and private sector decision-making. (250 words, 15 marks)**

**Topic – Global wildlife conservation**

**Source:** Down to Earth

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/ibat-alliance-formed-by-four-largest-global-conservation-organisations-doubled-its-investment-in-biodiversity-data-from-2023-to-2024>

<b>Introduction</b>	In June 2025, the IBAT Alliance—a collaboration of four global conservation giants: BirdLife International, Conservation International, the IUCN, and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre—announced a record investment of \$2.5 million in biodiversity data, up from \$1.2 million in 2023. This move reinforces the role of science-backed biodiversity databases in guiding environmental, governmental, and corporate actions globally, especially in achieving targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of the IBAT Alliance in Biodiversity Conservation</li> <li>• Importance of Science-Based Biodiversity Databases</li> <li>• Implications for Businesses and Financial Institutions</li> <li>• Enhancing Global Biodiversity Governance</li> <li>• Broader Significance and Future Outlook</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	The IBAT Alliance’s increased investment in biodiversity data reflects a vital shift toward evidence-based environmental governance. By empowering both public and private actors with reliable data, IBAT facilitates informed decision-making and targeted conservation. In a time of accelerating biodiversity loss, such initiatives are not just timely—they are essential for securing a nature-positive future for all.

<b>UPSC Syllabus</b>	<b>Global wildlife conservation</b>
<b>Why was this question asked?</b>	<b>Q. How does biodiversity vary in India? How is the Biological Diversity Act,2002 helpful in conservation of flora and fauna? [2018]</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	In June 2025, the IBAT Alliance—a collaboration of four global conservation giants: BirdLife International, Conservation International, the IUCN, and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre—announced a record investment of \$2.5 million in biodiversity data, up from \$1.2 million in 2023. This move reinforces the role of science-backed biodiversity databases in guiding environmental, governmental, and corporate actions globally, especially in achieving targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
<b>Body</b>	<p><b>Role of the IBAT Alliance in Biodiversity Conservation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IBAT Alliance is a collaboration between four leading global conservation organisations: BirdLife International, Conservation International, IUCN, and UNEP-WCMC.</li> <li>• It aims to improve global access to credible and science-based biodiversity data for effective conservation planning.</li> <li>• The Alliance maintains and supports three critical biodiversity</li> </ul>

datasets: the **World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)**, the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**, and the **World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA)**.

- These datasets provide a scientific foundation to guide conservation efforts, promote sustainable development, and support climate-resilient planning.

### **Importance of Science-Based Biodiversity Databases**

- Science-based biodiversity databases are essential for enabling **data-driven conservation**, helping to identify species and ecosystems most at risk.
- These databases are used to **monitor global biodiversity trends**, assisting in measuring progress toward international commitments such as the SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Governments and businesses use these datasets in **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)** to screen biodiversity-related risks early in the project planning phase.

### **Implications for Businesses and Financial Institutions**

- In 2024, over **200 private-sector organisations** accessed IBAT's biodiversity data, reflecting growing interest in sustainability-aligned decision-making.
- Businesses use the data to **understand their ecological impacts and dependencies**, particularly in sectors like infrastructure, mining, and finance.
- These datasets help companies meet **regulatory and disclosure obligations**, especially under Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks.
- IBAT also enables companies to **align their goals with global biodiversity targets** and implement nature-positive strategies.

### **Enhancing Global Biodiversity Governance**

- The **IUCN Red List** is globally recognised as the “barometer of life” due to its role in assessing extinction risks of species.
- Investment from IBAT supports the **regular updating of species assessments**, including the addition of new species groups.
- It also improves tools and data systems used by **governments, scientists, and conservation planners**, thus strengthening evidence-based policymaking.

### **Broader Significance and Future Outlook**

- The IBAT initiative strengthens the **science-policy-business interface**, which is crucial for mainstreaming biodiversity into

	<p>development strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It enables countries to build <b>national biodiversity dashboards</b> and track their conservation performance more effectively.</li><li>• The platform also supports <b>transparent reporting and accountability</b>, in line with global standards such as the <b>Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)</b>.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>The IBAT Alliance's increased investment in biodiversity data reflects a vital shift toward evidence-based environmental governance. By empowering both public and private actors with reliable data, IBAT facilitates informed decision-making and targeted conservation. In a time of accelerating biodiversity loss, such initiatives are not just timely—they are essential for securing a nature-positive future for all.</p>

