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# **GS - I**

**1. INDIA & WORLD HISTORY**

**2. SOCIAL ISSUES**



**3. PRELIMS WORKBOOK**

# GS 1

## 1. INDIA & WORLD HISTORY

### 1.1. INDIGENOUS LEGACY OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

#### Descriptive Question:

“Indian democracy did not begin with the Constitution of 1950 but is deeply rooted in indigenous traditions of collective decision-making.” Examine this statement in light of ancient Indian democratic practices, particularly during the Chola period, and discuss its contemporary relevance.

#### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- The narrative of Indian democracy is often tied to the post-independence constitutional journey beginning in 1950. However, recent scholarly research and archaeological evidence demonstrate that the ideals of transparency, eligibility, electoral participation, and public accountability were embedded in India’s civilisational ethos long before modern liberal democracies evolved in the West. The Chola-period inscription from the village of Uttaramerur (c. 920 AD) and earlier traditions from Vaishali, the world’s first known republic, highlight an indigenous legacy of democratic governance rooted in ethics, equity, and participatory norms.

#### I. Indigenous Traditions of Democracy in Ancient India

##### 1. Republican Traditions in Ancient India:

- The **ganas** and **sanghas** in ancient India, as referenced in Buddhist texts and Kautilya’s Arthashastra, were assemblies of ruling clans or communities, where decisions were taken collectively.
- The **Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali** (~6th century BCE) had an elected head and governing councils—possibly the world’s first example of democratic governance.

##### 2. Kautilyan Principles of Collective Governance:

- Kautilya’s Arthashastra advocates decision-making through structured councils and assemblies, with a clear articulation of **eligibility criteria**, including property, education, and moral conduct.

##### 3. The Uttaramerur Inscriptions (Chola Period, 10th Century CE):

- The inscriptions from the **Vaikuntaperumal temple in Uttaramerur**, Tamil Nadu (dated around 920 AD during the reign of Parantaka Chola I), describe in astonishing detail a **complex electoral system** for local self-governance, including:

- Constitution of wards.
  - Formation of committees for executive functions.
  - Rotation and selection of candidates by **kudavolai** (lot-drawing).
  - Strict eligibility norms: minimum age, property ownership, taxation compliance, and no criminal or moral disqualification.
  - Disqualification of individuals with outstanding debts, recent convictions, or failure to uphold social responsibilities.
- Those found guilty of wrongdoing were not just barred from office but had to **publicly resign and vacate property** linked to their authority.

## II. Significance of the Chola Electoral Legacy

### 1. Ethical and Moral Standards in Politics:

- Candidates had to demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct. This contrasts with contemporary concerns about rising criminalisation in politics.

### 2. Public Accountability and Transparency:

- Elected members were held accountable through **codified rules** and **social oversight**—prefiguring the modern RTI and anti-defection norms.

### 3. Community Participation:


- The electoral process was deeply **inclusive**, involving widespread public engagement and a mechanism for local self-rule—precursor to modern Panchayati Raj Institutions.

### 4. Institutionalisation of Checks and Balances:

- The administrative structure included checks on corruption, disqualification clauses, and committee-based governance, akin to modern parliamentary systems.

## INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

India has a long legacy of collective decision-making embedded in local self-governing institutions.




### REPUBLICAN TRADITIONS IN ANCIENT INDIA

- Ancient texts and inscriptions refer to various *ganas* and *sanghas* (assemblies), where clan-based decisions were made collectively

### DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES OF THE CHOLA PERIOD

- The Uttaramerur inscriptions from 10th century CE describe the structure of local administration
- Villagers elected representatives through a system called “kudovoloi” (pot-ticket) in each ward
- Eligibility included land ownership, tax-paying, knowledge of Vedas
- Disqualification for malpractices, non-performers were subject to removal



### CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

- Ethical standards in politics, offers lessons in public accountability and transparency
- Ties to Panchayati Raj Institutions and participatory governance

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### III. Contemporary Relevance and Implications

#### 1. Reclaiming Democratic Confidence in an Era of Global Authoritarianism:

- At a time when democracies around the world are witnessing democratic backsliding, India's ability to draw upon its indigenous democratic legacy bolsters confidence in **home-grown democratic resilience**.

#### 2. Civilisational Ownership of Democracy:

- The idea that democracy is not an imported construct but **native to Indian culture** enhances national pride and affirms political legitimacy.

#### 3. Panchayati Raj and Constitutional Devolution:

- The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution institutionalised local self-governance. However, the sophisticated models from Chola times can be studied for improving **decentralised governance models**, especially in terms of:

- Participatory budgeting.
- Citizen charters.
- Gram sabha empowerment.

#### 4. Democratic Ethics as a Foundation for Electoral Reforms:

- The Chola emphasis on **morality in public life** inspires present-day debates on electoral reforms—disqualification of tainted candidates, inner-party democracy, and voters’ right to recall.

### IV. Counterpoints and Balanced View

#### 1. Democratic Structures Were Not Universal:

- These traditions were largely confined to certain regions and castes, with **limited participation from women** and lower social groups.
- Monarchs retained overarching authority in most ancient Indian states—**constitutional democracy as we know today is modern** and shaped by Enlightenment ideals.

#### 2. Modern Liberal Institutions Remain Foundational:

- Institutions like **universal adult franchise**, independent judiciary, and fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution are products of **modern democratic evolution** and are indispensable.

#### 3. Lessons Must Be Contextualised:

- While historical legacies are valuable, present-day democracy must operate in a **vast, diverse, and digital polity**, requiring newer institutional innovations.

#### Conclusion:

- India’s democratic ethos is deeply anchored in its civilisational history. From Vaishali to Uttaramerur, the spirit of collective decision-making, transparency, and ethical governance has been a part of the Indian polity long before Western democracies evolved. As the world witnesses democratic retreat, India’s ability to draw from its own democratic traditions offers both strength and inspiration. However, such heritage must be supplemented with the values enshrined in the Constitution—liberty, equality, and justice—to ensure a truly inclusive and participatory democracy.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 2. SOCIAL ISSUES

### 2.1. DEALING WITH CASTEIST NOMENCLATURE IN VILLAGE NAMES

#### Descriptive Question:

“The Tamil Nadu government’s recent decision to remove casteist nomenclature such as “colony” and other derogatory caste references from village names marks an important intervention in addressing historical discrimination.”

Discuss the historical roots, socio-cultural implications, and potential impacts of this reform. How can such symbolic measures be integrated with substantive policy action to dismantle caste-based stigma and exclusion in India?

#### Answer:

#### 1. Introduction: Symbolic Reform with Deep Social Resonance

- The removal of derogatory caste references from place names in Tamil Nadu—such as “colony” and terms like “Pallapatti”, “Paraiyapatti”, “Akkukulam Kulam”, and “Sakkilipatti”—is more than a linguistic exercise. It represents a state-led acknowledgment of the entrenched caste stigma encoded in everyday geography. By erasing these markers from official records, the state aims to dismantle symbolic reminders of untouchability and reinforce constitutional commitments to equality and dignity.

#### 2. Historical Background: The Spatialisation of Caste

- **Segregated settlement patterns** date back to the *varna-jati* order, with documentary and literary evidence pointing to the separation of lower castes from upper-caste quarters as early as the **12th century CE**.
- Terms like “colony” in rural Tamil Nadu differ from their urban usage; here, they exclusively denote settlements of historically marginalised castes.
- Portuguese, Dutch, British and French colonial town planning often institutionalised such separations, reinforcing caste hierarchies in physical space.
- Ancient Tamil literature shows that even terms like “cheri” or “cherry” were historically used to indicate settlements of lower castes. Texts like *Tolkappiyam* and the works of later poets reveal their linguistic evolution into derogatory identifiers.

#### 3. Cultural and Psychological Impacts

- **Identity erasure and stigma:** Caste-referencing place names serve as constant reminders of social exclusion, triggering condescension, discriminatory behaviour, and systemic neglect.
- **Self-perception and mental health:** For residents, being geographically labelled according to caste perpetuates a feeling of second-class citizenship and psychological trauma.
- **Public perception:** Such names unconsciously normalise caste prejudice, embedding it into administrative, postal, and legal systems.


#### 4. Literary and Historical Continuity of Discrimination

- Medieval texts like *Periya Puranam* and the *Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam* document the social and spatial exclusion of “untouchable” communities.
- 18 ancient literary treatises in Tamil contain frequent references to “cheri” as a synonym for marginalised settlements.
- The term persisted into modernity, with colonial census operations and post-independence administrative records maintaining caste-linked identifiers in village names.

#### 5. Counter-Arguments and Challenges

- **Argument of neutrality:** Some contend that “colony” is an innocuous term in urban contexts (e.g., “Railway Colony”, “Jayendran Colony”), suggesting its rural usage is a linguistic coincidence rather than an act of discrimination.
- **Cultural preservationists:** A minority argue that changing traditional names erases local heritage and disrupts archival continuity.
- **Administrative complexities:** Renaming involves updating land records, postal codes, and public signages, which demands resources and coordination.

**Rebuttal:** In contexts where “colony” has a caste-specific derogatory connotation, retaining it undermines the constitutional mandate to abolish untouchability (Article 17). The symbolic benefit outweighs logistical challenges, especially when combined with grassroots sensitisation.



### DEALING WITH CASTEIST NOMENCLATURE IN VILLAGE NAMES





#### SYMBOLIC REFORM

Tamil Nadu recently moved to drop caste references like ‘colony’, ‘karuppur’ and ‘pallam’ from village names – acknowledging historical stigma

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Lower caste settlements were spatially segregated since at least the 12th century CE
- Even ancient Tamil literature contains references to these enclaves and their pejorative names
- ‘Colony’ denotes marginalised neighbourhoods in rural areas, unlike its urban usage






#### SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS

- Caste-based place names are daily reminders of exclusion
- For communities labelled by these names, psychological trauma and self-perception are affected

#### TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

- Implement infrastructure parity in water, sanitation, roads etc.
- Expand quality education, targeted skills and economic opportunities – undertake anti-caste youth sensitisation



## 6. Legal and Policy Context

- **Constitutional backing:**
  - *Article 17:* Abolition of untouchability.
  - *Article 46:* Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Judicial precedent:** Courts have upheld state action to remove caste-based identifiers in public spaces, recognising them as discriminatory.
- **Comparative perspective:** Similar renaming efforts have occurred globally—South Africa removed apartheid-era place names; New Zealand restored indigenous Māori names to reclaim cultural dignity.

## 7. Integrating Symbolism with Substantive Action

Symbolic reforms alone cannot dismantle caste inequalities entrenched in land ownership, education, and political representation. A comprehensive reform package should include:

- 1) **Economic empowerment** through targeted skill programmes, cooperative ownership of common resources, and land redistribution where feasible.
- 2) **Educational reform** ensuring access to quality schools in formerly segregated areas.
- 3) **Infrastructure parity**—equal quality roads, sanitation, water supply, and internet access for all settlements.
- 4) **Social sensitisation** campaigns in schools and media to change mindsets.
- 5) **Political representation** for marginalised communities in local governance bodies.

## 8. Expected Impact

- **Short-term:** Reduction in overt caste markers in public life; a boost to community self-esteem; improved civic engagement from marginalised areas.
- **Long-term:** Gradual dismantling of the mental geography of caste, paving the way for more inclusive urban and rural planning.
- **Global image:** Projects India as committed to equality and social justice, strengthening its human rights credentials.

## 9. Conclusion

- The Tamil Nadu government's initiative reflects a conscious effort to dismantle *both* the physical and symbolic architecture of caste discrimination. While changing a name does not automatically change social reality, it is a crucial step in re-imagining public space as caste-neutral. For the reform to achieve lasting impact, it must be accompanied by legal, economic, and educational measures that address the structural roots of exclusion.
- In a society where caste still shapes opportunity, residence, and dignity, even a change in signboards can be a statement of constitutional morality—a public declaration that the geography of stigma will no longer be state-sanctioned.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 2.2. BUILDING CIVIC BRIDGES AMID POLARISATION

### Descriptive Question:

“India’s civic strength has historically come from accommodating complexity—allowing multiple identities to coexist without fear.”

In the backdrop of rising polarisation, perceived state partisanship, and everyday frictions (from loudspeakers and Friday prayers on roads to cow-slaughter sensitivities and disputes over waqf), critically examine what ‘building bridges’ should mean for a constitutional democracy.

### Answer

#### 1) Why “bridges” are a governance imperative, not a feel-good slogan

- India’s social peace has rarely been the product of perfect agreement; it has come from a **capacity to hold complexity**—ethnic, linguistic, caste and religious—inside a **shared constitutional frame**. Polarisation weakens this capacity and imposes real costs: it **shrinks the public sphere**, corrodes state legitimacy, distorts administrative priorities, and diverts development bandwidth into law-and-order firefighting. When **minorities feel unprotected** and **majorities feel unheard**, both withdraw from civic cooperation; everyday life turns zero-sum.

#### 2) Constitutional anchor: what “bridges” must protect

- **Preamble & Basic Structure:** democratic, secular, republican character.
- **Articles 14–15:** equality and non-discrimination.
- **Articles 19 & 21:** freedoms and dignity.
- **Articles 25–28:** freedom of religion subject to public order, morality, health and other fundamental rights.
- **Directive Principles & 51A(e),(f),(g):** promote harmony, renounce practices derogatory to women’s dignity, show compassion to living beings.

**Bridge-building is not value-neutral;** it must **deepen equal citizenship**, not bargain it away.

#### 3) The present fault lines—how mistrust accumulates

##### A. Everyday frictions that become identity markers

- **Noise & space:** loudspeakers for *azan*; processions with amplified music; **Friday-prayer overflow onto roads**; temple or shrine encroachments; festivals that intensify territorial performances.
- **Food & livelihood:** **cow-slaughter bans / beef politics**, vigilantism affecting cattle traders and transporters; bans or boycotts that fall disproportionately on the poor.
- **Property & institutions:** anxieties around **waqf governance** and attempted legal changes without consultation feed suspicion; conversely, allegations of illegal conversions or encroachments provoke counter-mobilisations.

- **Policing optics: perceived indulgence** during some majority festivals (e.g., state officials showering petals on pilgrims) vs **hard policing** when minorities gather; **“bulldozer justice”** or sealing drives without transparent, equal SOPs.

#### B. Information disorder

- Social-media virality, anonymous forwards, and selective clips **amplify grievance** faster than institutions can correct.

#### C. Political incentives

- Polarising frames can mobilise voters; **short-term gains** for actors translate into **long-term institutional loss**—police neutrality questioned, administration second-guessed.

#### D. Socio-economic segregation

- **Ghettoisation**, unequal access to housing/credit, and poor urban services in minority-dense areas create **material proof of exclusion**, even without explicit legal barriers.

### 4) What worked in the field: practical insights from dialogue

The meetings among stake holders show **small but concrete accommodations** that reduce daily friction without trading away rights:

- **Noise discipline by consent:** limiting **loudspeaker volume/time** for *azan* while protecting the prayer itself.
- **Decongesting Friday prayers:** coordinating **timings, venues, and traffic plans** so roads aren't blocked.
- **Addressing majority anxieties:** clear, even-handed enforcement against **cow slaughter** where prohibited, but with rule-of-law safeguards to prevent vigilantism.
- **Consult first, legislate later:** **waqf-related changes** or management reforms must be preceded by structured consultation; unilateral steps harden resistance.

The larger lesson: **visible neutrality of the State** plus **reciprocal restraint by communities** lowers temperature and **re-opens the space for trust**.

### 5) The State's role—what it must, and must not, do Must do

#### 1. Police neutrality as policy, not posture

- Issue **festival-agnostic SOPs:** decibel caps, procession routes, prayer-overflow protocols, crowd control, and quick complaint redress **applicable to all groups**.
- Implement **Prakash Singh** police reforms (independent complaints authority, fixed tenures, shield from partisan transfers) to **institutionalise neutrality**.
- Enforce **due process**; end “instant justice” demolitions without notice, hearing and documented illegality.

## 2. **Transparent, equal enforcement**

- Publish **public-order dashboards**: permits granted/denied, route maps, noise violations booked, actions taken—**disaggregated but anonymised**—so bias claims can be assessed, not assumed.

## 3. **Consultation before change**

- Any sensitive legal reform (e.g., waqf management, conversion laws, shrine or temple governance) should go through **white papers, stakeholder hearings, and impact assessments**.

## 4. **Protect speech; prosecute incitement**

- Distinguish **robust debate** from **targeted, imminent incitement**; apply hate-speech law equally; **time-bound trials** for communal violence cases to end the culture of impunity.

### **Must not do**

- **Symbolic partisanship** (state officials publicly privileging one group).
- Outsourcing order to vigilantes.
- **Collective punishment** of neighbourhoods.

## 6) **A bridge-building blueprint (institutional + civic)**

### **Pillar 1: Rule-of-law architecture**

- **Uniform Public Celebrations Code** (by-laws under police/municipal acts): common rules on procession timings, sound, public-space use; fast digital permitting; grievance hotlines; penalties that escalate by behaviour, not identity.
- **Event Safety Cells** in districts (police, fire, health, PWD, transport, community reps) with a **72-hour pre-event clearance** checklist and a **24-hour debrief**.

### **Pillar 2: Dialogue & mediation platforms**

- **District Inter-Faith Councils** chaired by the Collector/CP, meeting monthly, with **minutes and follow-through**.
- **Mohalla Peace Committees** for hotspots—shopkeepers, youth leaders, clerics, RWAs—tasked with **micro-adjustments** (e.g., re-routing processions, additional prayer venues, volunteer marshals).

### **Pillar 3: Equal access and symbolic fairness**

- **State neutrality protocol** for public ceremonies and festivals: if facilitation (e.g., flowers, water points, traffic marshals) is provided for one, **offer the same basket for all** upon request and compliance.
- **Civic inclusion**: fast-track sanitation, lighting and transport in **minority-dense localities**, reduce causes for daily friction.

**Pillar 4: Education & public culture**

- **Bridge Curriculum** in schools: constitutional values, comparative religion basics, conflict-resolution skills, and **service projects** where students work across identities.
- **Civic media literacy** (ward workshops, college credits) to **inoculate against disinformation**.
- City-level **“Shared Heritage” walks**, archives of local coexistence, and **joint community service days** (clean-ups, blood donation) that make cooperation habitual.

**Pillar 5: Technology & early warning**

- **Heat-map dashboards** of rumor spikes, flagged by community volunteers, with **rapid, verified counter-messaging** by the district PRO and faith leaders.
- **Anonymous reporting** for hate-speech and intimidation; **victim-support protocols** (legal aid, counselling).

**Pillar 6: Economic bridges**

- Support **mixed-neighbourhood markets**, incubate **inter-community business associations**, and extend **credit/insurance** to small traders vulnerable to boycott calls.

**BUILDING CIVIC BRIDGES  
AMID POLARISATION**



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governance hierarchy</b> unequal enforcement, partisan symbolism</li> <li>• <b>Everyday tensions</b> Noise laws, space for Friday prayers, cow protection contestation</li> <li>• <b>Divisive incentives</b> Grievance propagation, media virality, political opportunism</li> <li>• <b>Constitutional guardrails</b> Equality, religion subject to public order, morality, health</li> </ul>	<p>Inadequate police neutrality,</p> <p><b>Accumulation of Mistrust</b> Information disorder due to Social media. Vote bank Politics, Socio-Economic Segregation</p> <p><b>Practical dialogue</b> Lower azan volume, Friday-prayer overflow MoUs, cattle-transport SOP.</p> <p><b>State action</b> Uniform event norms, consultation before reform</p>
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### 7) Managing the contentious issues—casewise guidance

- **Loudspeakers / sound:** apply **CPCB noise rules** uniformly; night-time limits; calibrated permissions for religious and non-religious events; **local compacts** on festival peaks; penalties on equipment owners, not congregations.
- **Friday prayers on roads:** provide **overflow venues** (community halls/schools) by MoUs; temporary traffic plans; volunteers as marshals; **firm bar on habitual road occupation** once alternatives exist.
- **Cow-related offences:** professionalise enforcement via **state cattle-transport SOPs**, safe-corridor mapping, and **24×7 helplines**; prosecute **both illegal slaughter and vigilantism**; insulate cattle-related policing from mob pressure.
- **Waqf/temple management:** **inventory, digitise, audit**; reform via **consultation + accountability**, not surprise amendments; expedite dispute resolution through **special benches/tribunals**.

### 8) Measuring success: 12–24 month indicators

- **Police neutrality:** independent audits of event permissions and FIR profiles show **no identity skew**; public satisfaction surveys improve.
- **Order & health:** festival-season incidents (injuries, vandalism) **down to less than 50%**; response times under **10 minutes** in hotspots.
- **Dialogue throughput:** **100% of flagged disputes** receive a council hearing within **14 days**; **resolution rate ≥70%**.
- **Education & cohesion:** number of schools/colleges completing **bridge projects**, and citizen participation in **joint service days**.

### 9) Balancing candour with solidarity

- Bridge-building is not the erasure of difference; it is the **craft of coexistence**. It demands **state neutrality in action, civic restraint by all**, and **structured platforms** that make accommodation routine rather than episodic. Small, reciprocal concessions (volume caps, alternative venues, traffic discipline) **do not dilute rights**; they **make rights liveable**.

### Conclusion:

- India's genius is not uniformity but **managed plurality**. Re-centering the **Constitution as the common language**, professionalising law-and-order, and institutionalising everyday dialogue can move society **from performative polarisation to practical peace**. The goal is simple and demanding: **every Indian must feel equally seen by the State and equally safe among neighbours**. That is the only bridge that lasts.

**Source: The Indian Express**

**4. PRELIMS WORK BOOK**

1. **Where is the Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), which played a key role in facilitating the GI registration of Kolhapuri Chappal, located?**
  - a) Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh
  - b) Agra, Uttar Pradesh
  - c) Chennai, Tamil Nadu
  - d) Hyderabad, Telangana
2. **The Karkota dynasty, known for its patronage of Hindu art and temple architecture, primarily ruled over which of the following regions?**
  - a) Bengal
  - b) Kashmir
  - c) Gujarat
  - d) Odisha
3. **Who among the following authored the book *The Marathas 1600–1818*?**
  - a) Jadunath Sarkar
  - b) Stewart Gordon
  - c) B.L. Bhadani
  - d) Satish Chandra
4. **The Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3), held in 2025, took place in:**
  - a) Baku, Azerbaijan
  - b) Astana, Kazakhstan
  - c) Awaza, Turkmenistan
  - d) Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
5. **In the context of India's cultural traditions, the term "Dhirio" refers to:**
  - a) A tribal war dance of the North-East
  - b) A traditional bullfight of Goa
  - c) A wrestling form of coastal Karnataka
  - d) A ritual harvest festival in Maharashtra
6. **Consider the following railway zones in India:**
  - 1) Southern Railway
  - 2) Northeast Frontier Railway
  - 3) Eastern Railway
  - 4) South Central Railway

**Which of the above became the first railway zone to introduce compostable bio-plastic on trains?**

**Options:**

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

**7. Recently, the Cambridge Dictionary added the slang word “Delulu”. What does it signify?**

- a) A slang term for exaggerated confidence in stock market investments.
- b) A shortened form of “delusional,” describing unrealistic hopes or fantasies, especially in fan culture.
- c) A traditionalist movement supporting conservative gender roles in marriage
- d) A popular internet meme combining dance moves with nonsensical lyrics.

**8. “Ulchi Freedom Shield”, recently in the news, is best described as:**

- a) A U.S. ballistic-missile defense system deployed in the Indo-Pacific
- b) A UN-mandated maritime embargo operation against North Korea
- c) An annual large-scale joint military exercise conducted by South Korea and the United States
- d) A cyber-security information-sharing pact among Quad members

**9. Which king of Kamarupa (Assam) is believed to have defeated Bakhtiyar Khilji in the early 13th century CE?**

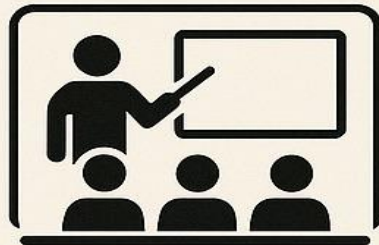
- a) Rudra Singha
- b) Lachit Borphukan
- c) Prithu
- d) Naranarayan

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## GENERAL STUDIES

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# **GS - II**

**1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**2. HEALTH & EDUCATION**

**3. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**



**4. PRELIMS WORKBOOK**

## GS 2

### 1. POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1.1. RIGHT TO REPAIR FOR DIGITALIZATION SUSTAINABILITY

##### Descriptive Question:

“In the age of digital obsolescence and environmental crisis, the ‘Right to Repair’ must not only be about sustainability but also about preserving knowledge and livelihoods.” Examine the evolution and implications of the Right to Repair in India, and suggest policy measures to promote equitable digital innovation.

##### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- As India advances into an era of digitalisation, sustainability, and circular economy, the idea of a 'Right to Repair' is gaining global and national traction. While this right is often framed around environmental benefits and consumer choice, it also has deeper roots in preserving knowledge systems, empowering informal economies, and ensuring technological sovereignty. In May 2025, the Indian government accepted a report proposing a 'Repairability Index' for electronics—a milestone in mainstreaming the repair economy. However, a more holistic understanding is needed to connect repair with memory, labour, equity, and sustainability.

##### I. Understanding the Right to Repair: Evolution and Scope

##### 1. Definition and Objectives:

- The Right to Repair refers to the **legal and policy framework** that ensures consumers or independent technicians have the right to access necessary information, tools, parts, and software to repair and reuse their products.
- It aims to counter planned obsolescence, reduce e-waste, **support sustainability**, and **empower local economies**.

##### 2. Global Momentum:

- **European Union** has mandated companies to provide repair manuals and parts access since 2021.
- **United States** saw significant legislative support through the Fair Repair Act and executive orders.
- The **United Nations SDG 12** emphasizes sustainable consumption and production, under which Right to Repair becomes a critical mechanism.

##### 3. Indian Milestones:

- Department of Consumer Affairs launched the **Right to Repair framework** in 2022.
- In May 2025, India introduced a **Repairability Index** for smartphones and electronics, covering factors like spare part access and repair software support.
- New **E-Waste Management Rules 2022** and **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** schemes promote post-use recycling but underemphasize repair.

**RIGHT TO REPAIR FOR DIGITALIZATION SUSTAINABILITY**

**Indian government accepted a report proposing a 'Repairability Index' for electronics—a milestone in mainstreaming the repair economy**

**WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO REPAIR?**

- Accessing materials for product repair
- Preserving knowledge & informal repair economies
- Countering planned obsolescence and reduce e-waste

**CHALLENGES AND GAPS**

- Blind Spot in Digital Innovation**  
Right to repair not integrated into digital skills nor recognized as a form of innovation
- India's E-Waste Policies**  
Focused more on recycling and insufficiently on repair and reuse
- Non-Repairable Design**  
Consumer electronics increasingly difficult to fix

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Codification and Certification**  
Develop repair skills curriculum and certify informal repairers
- Repair Documentation by OEMs**  
Require brands to release manuals, diagnostics, and spares
- Innovation and Circular Economy**  
Incentivize repair-friendly product design and urban repair labs
- Inclusivity in Tech Policy Design**  
Engage repair communities in Digital India Act discussions

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## II. Why Repair is More than Just a Consumer Right: Memory, Knowledge & Livelihoods

### 1. Tacit and Experiential Knowledge:

- Repair knowledge exists largely in **informal economies**—appliance technicians in Delhi's Karol Bagh or mobile repairers in Chennai's Ritchie Street—who work without manuals, relying on observation, trial-and-error, and community memory.
- These practitioners represent India's **technological resilience** but remain excluded from formal skilling, certification, or recognition frameworks.

## 2. Cultural and Economic Value:

- Informal repairers are the backbone of a **circular economy**, enabling affordable access, reducing electronic waste, and preserving material culture.
- Their knowledge includes creative reuse, diagnosing faults by touch or sound, and adapting devices under constraints.

## 3. Invisible Digital Labour:

- With India's push for **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** and **AI-enabled services**, many underlying systems rely on uncredited data or informal fixes.
- AI systems often **fail to learn context-specific repair knowledge** due to the lack of memory-rich training sets that informal repairers could provide.

## III. Challenges and Gaps in Current Frameworks

### 1. Blind Spot in AI and Digital Economy:

- Most frameworks around digital infrastructure and innovation overlook **repair as a form of innovation**.
- Informal repair is not integrated into formal skill programs (e.g., PMKVY), which favour industrial settings.

### 2. Policy Narrowness:

- Most rules focus on recycling rather than reuse and repair. The **EPR policies and circularity goals** remain supply-side oriented.
- **Platforms like Skill India or MSME** fail to codify or valorise tacit repair knowledge, missing a significant opportunity for skilling and entrepreneurship.

### 3. Design-Repair Disconnect:

- Consumer electronics and digital goods are increasingly designed to be non-repairable—locked software, proprietary screws, unavailability of spare parts.
- Repair is treated as **secondary or disruptive**, rather than as an intentional design principle.

## IV. The Need to Integrate the 'Right to Remember'

### 1. From Repair to Resilience:

- Repair should be viewed as a repository of **collective learning and social knowledge**, not just mechanical fixing.
- Platforms like **Samaaj, Sarkar, Bazaar**, as envisioned by civil society leaders, can empower community repair models through mutual cooperation and open access.

### 2. Preserving Repair Communities:

- Just as we preserve art forms or oral traditions, repair traditions must also be documented, recognised, and passed on.
- Documentation models like **Large Language Models (LLMs)** or **digital archives** could help curate repair narratives for future AI learning.

### 3. Intersectionality of Sustainability and Equity:

- Right to Repair helps meet not just environmental goals (e.g., reduced e-waste, lower carbon emissions) but also **inclusion, livelihoods, and digital justice**.
- Recognising informal repairers as stewards of sustainability is key to **inclusive digital transitions**.

## V. Policy Recommendations and Way Forward

### 1. Codification and Certification:

- Develop **repair curricula** as part of Skill India and ITI modules.
- Launch certification programs for informal repairers through **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** under National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).

### 2. Mandatory Repair Documentation by OEMs:

- Mandate brands to release repair guides and diagnostics under the **Digital Product Passports** system.
- Extend the **Right to Repair portal** to include white goods, farming equipment, and ICT devices.

### 3. Innovation for Repair and Circular Economy:

- Incentivise start-ups focusing on **design-for-repair** and modular product architecture.
- Promote **Urban Repair Labs**, repair cafés, and mobile service units at the district level.

### 4. Inclusivity in Tech Policy Design:

- Embed informal knowledge in AI training models.
- Establish consultative forums with repair communities in the Digital India Act and DPDP frameworks.

## Conclusion:

- The Right to Repair must be reimagined as a **right to remember, reclaim, and redesign**—not just products, but also relationships between humans, technologies, and the environment. India stands at a critical juncture where it can lead the world not just in digital public goods and AI platforms, but also in **human-centred, inclusive innovation ecosystems**. By integrating repair into national policy, sustainability goals, and cultural memory, India can protect both its future and its past.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.2. Six YEARS OF CHALLENGES AMID PROGRESS – ABROGATION OF 370

### Descriptive Question:

**Six years since the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu & Kashmir stands transformed in terms of governance, security, and investment—but not without challenges. Discuss the progress made, persisting issues, and the legal pathway for restoring statehood to the Union Territory.**

### Answer:

#### Introduction:


- The abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, marked a watershed moment in India's constitutional and federal history. It ended the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), bifurcated it into two Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh), and brought the region under the direct control of the Centre. Billed as a step toward full integration and peace, six years hence, the debate on its impact remains contentious—spanning achievements in development and governance on one hand, and questions over democratic deficits and political representation on the other.

#### Political Transformation: Representation with Restrictions:

- After the 2019 reorganisation, political activity resumed in J&K, culminating in the formation of a new elected government. However, under the J&K Reorganisation Act, the new Assembly is significantly limited in its powers. Policing and public order remain under the control of the Lieutenant Governor (L-G), and the Assembly is barred from introducing bills on taxation, finance, or land acquisition without the L-G's recommendation.
- Although this has enabled the return of democratic representation, the authority of the elected representatives remains subordinate, causing persistent political dissatisfaction. The National Conference and other regional parties have demanded restoration of full statehood, including control over public order and land policy.

#### Security Situation: Stabilisation but Intermittent Disruptions

- One of the primary rationales behind the 2019 move was to curb terrorism. Available data suggest improvement in security indicators:
  - Civilian killings dropped from 129 in 2022 to 51 in 2023 and further to 28 by mid-2024.
  - Terrorist recruitment, incidents of grenade attacks, and cross-border infiltrations have seen a downward trend.
  - However, the recent Pahalgam terror attack has shattered the post-2019 narrative of complete normalcy, drawing attention to persistent vulnerabilities in the region.
- Thus, while overall violence is down, a full return to peace remains fragile and contingent on sustainable counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation strategies.




## SIX YEARS OF CHALLENGES AMID PROGRESS: ABROGATION OF 370


Six years since the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu & Keshmir has seen a transformation in governance, security, and investment—but not without challenges.

### POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

- Political activity resumed with a new elected government
- J&K Reorganisation Act: Assembly cannot legislate on policing, land, finance without L-G's consent
- Demands persist for restoring full statehood



### SECURITY SITUATION




- Civillian killings: 28 as of mid-2024 vs. 187 in 2018
- Terrorist incidences and recruitment declining
- Pahalgam attack exposed fragile security conditions

These actions remain and question sustainability

### ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT REVIVAL

- 14,914 crore industrial investment
- Tax revenue up 12% in 2023–24
- Record 2.21 crore tourist arrivals in 2023



Key questions remain but higgestone is statehood

### LEGAL PATHWAY TO RESTORING STATEHOOD

- Repeal of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019

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#### Economic and Investment Revival:

- The government has focused on stimulating economic activity through increased capital investment, infrastructure projects, and simplification of business procedures.
  - **Industrial Promotion:** 359 industrial units are operational and 1,424 units are in the pipeline.
  - **Revenue Mobilisation:** Tax revenue from J&K increased by 12% in 2023–24, aided by the formalisation of trade and administration.
  - **Tourism:** In 2023, 2.21 crore tourists visited J&K, contributing 7% to its GDP—a record-breaking figure and an indicator of stability. However, security incidents like the Pahalgam attack have shown how quickly gains in this sector can be reversed.
  - **Power Infrastructure:** Hydropower production rose by 30%, and additional capacity has been installed, especially in remote districts like Kargil and Kupwara.
- These improvements indicate better governance outcomes and economic optimism, but questions remain over their inclusivity and sustainability without greater regional autonomy.

**Social and Governance Dimensions:**

- **Women's Rights:** The removal of Article 35A has enabled gender-equal property rights in J&K.
- **Panchayati Raj Institutions:** Village-level empowerment and direct funding mechanisms have improved local accountability, though participation from certain areas remains low due to lingering distrust.
- **Legal and Administrative Reforms:** Central laws, including the Right to Education and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, now apply in the region.

However, the absence of an empowered state government limits participatory governance. Critics argue that prolonged central control risks creating a bureaucratic disconnect from ground realities.

**Legal Path to Statehood: Constitutional and Statutory Requirements:**

- The restoration of full statehood is not automatic and requires a series of legislative and constitutional steps:
  1. **Repeal of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019:** Passed under Article 3 of the Constitution, the Act divided the state into two UTs. To reverse this, a new Bill would need to be introduced and passed by both Houses of Parliament.
  2. **Role of the President and Union Cabinet:** Article 3 mandates that any such proposal originate from the Union Cabinet and requires Presidential recommendation.
  3. **Section 53 of the Reorganisation Act:** Gives sweeping discretionary powers to the L-G, including final say over administrative matters. This will need to be amended to restore full legislative and administrative authority to the elected Chief Minister and Assembly.
  4. **Precedents:** Restoration of statehood is not unprecedented. Goa (carved from the UT of Goa, Daman and Diu in 1987), Himachal Pradesh (1971), and Arunachal Pradesh (1987) show that political will and parliamentary approval are the key drivers.
- Therefore, while technically feasible, statehood restoration is politically contingent upon the central government's intent and perceived security readiness.

**Challenges Ahead and the Roadmap:**

- **Balancing Autonomy with Security:** Restoring statehood must be accompanied by safeguards that prevent misuse of autonomy for secessionist politics.
- **Trust-building with Regional Stakeholders:** Dialogue with mainstream regional parties and civil society is essential for legitimacy and stability.
- **Judicial Oversight:** The Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370 in 2023, but stressed the need for restoring democratic structures.
- **Reinstating Political Confidence:** Restoring full powers to an elected government can reduce alienation and improve grievance redressal, vital for long-term peace.

**Conclusion:**

- The six-year mark post-Article 370 abrogation reveals a mixed picture—tangible gains in governance, security, and investment, counterbalanced by political centralisation and periodic violence. Restoration of statehood represents both a symbolic and substantive step towards normalcy. It will empower the people of Jammu & Kashmir to determine their developmental and political destiny within the framework of the Indian Constitution. However, this requires careful constitutional navigation, strong political will, and a deep commitment to democratic federalism.

**“Democracy in its full form is not just elections—it is empowerment, participation, and trust. J&K’s journey forward must embody all three.”**

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 1.3. EMERGENCE OF THE TECHNOCRATIC WELFARE STATE

**Descriptive Question:**

India’s welfare architecture is transitioning into a technocratic regime driven by data, efficiency, and digital governance. Critically examine the implications of this shift on democratic accountability, constitutional values, and citizen-centric governance.

**Answer:****Introduction**

- India's welfare state is undergoing a profound transformation. With over **1.4 billion Aadhaar enrollments**, **1,206 welfare schemes** linked to **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**, and a growing digital grievance redressal mechanism across states and UTs, welfare delivery is increasingly characterized by **algorithmic governance**, **biometric authentication**, and **data-driven eligibility mechanisms**. While these reforms promise **efficiency**, **transparency**, and **scale**, they also raise crucial concerns around **democratic participation**, **social justice**, and the **erosion of political accountability**.

**I. Emergence of the Technocratic Welfare State:****1. Shift from Political to Algorithmic Decision-Making**

- Traditional welfare systems based on **political negotiations and bureaucratic discretion** are being replaced by automated systems governed by rules of eligibility coded into algorithms.
- Schemes like **PM-KISAN**, **Aadhaar-enabled PDS**, **e-SHRAM**, and **National Social Assistance Programme** deliver services based on **verifiable identity and database cross-linking**, not human assessment or local discretion.
- Welfare has thus moved from deliberative politics to what scholars term a **‘technocratic consciousness’** — privileging metrics over lived realities.

## 2. From Ambiguity to Measurability

- Decision-making once involved subjective assessments by local officials or elected representatives.
- Today, eligibility is determined through **standardised, auditable rules**—such as asset ownership, income thresholds, biometric data, or survey scores (e.g., SECC database).

This transition aims to reduce leakages and favour **objective targeting**, but it sidelines **participatory forums, local knowledge, and constitutional pluralism**.

**EMERGENCE OF THE TECHNOCRATIC WELFARE STATE**

India's transition towards a data-driven welfare state characterized during additional welfare approvals considerate at data, efficiency, and digital governance and digital grievance redressal portals across States and UTs

**SHIFT TO ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE**

Replaces political and bureaucratic decision-making with eligibility rules encoded in algorithms. Examples such as PM-KISAN and Aadhaar-linked PDS determine rules instead of discretion or community-drive, technocratic approach prioritize metrics.

**RISKS TO CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES**

Exclusion: from benefits due to identification failures: Accountability shift from elected officials to centralized digital portals  
Uniform rules overlook India's social diversity across caste, gender, regions

**ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

Reinforce Gram Sabhas & Ward Committees  
Implement rights-based frameworks  
Strengthen political dialogue and social audits

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## II. Democratic and Constitutional Implications

### 1. Erosion of Participatory Democracy

- The technocratic approach weakens **political debate** on 'who deserves support and why'.
- Citizens are seen more as **data points** than active agents with rights. There is less space for **deliberative democracy, community-based decision-making, or bottom-up grievance mechanisms**.

## 2. Weakening of Political Accountability

- Mechanisms like **Centralised Public Grievance Redressal Systems** and digital dashboards create **bureaucratic insulation** by shifting responsibility from elected representatives to automated portals.
- Political leaders may boast about service delivery, but their **direct accountability to citizens is diluted**, creating a form of “technocratic populism”.

## III. Concerns of Social Justice and Inclusion:

### 1. Undermining Constitutional Pluralism

- India’s welfare model has historically accounted for **caste, gender, regional, and livelihood diversities**.
- Technocratic systems, by enforcing uniform rules, may miss such context-specific exclusions, leading to what D.Y. Chandrachud termed a ‘**disembodied governance**’.

### 2. Exclusion by Design

- Studies (e.g., by Jean Drèze, Reetika Khera) show that Aadhaar-based systems have led to **authentication failures, benefit denials, and ghost exclusions** in PDS, pensions, and MNREGA.
- The **post-COVID welfare compression**—with social sector spending dropping from 11% of GDP to 3%—is a stark example of the rollback of expansive welfare under the guise of ‘efficiency’.

### 3. Grievance Redressal without Empowerment

- Though 26 digital grievance portals exist, accountability is fragmented. Citizens find it difficult to attribute blame or seek remedy, as the decision logic lies in black-box algorithms.
- The **Information Commissions, Lokayuktas, and even RTI frameworks** are being bypassed in favour of data dashboards that do not necessarily respond to local context.

## IV. The Need for a Recalibrated Welfare Framework:

To **make welfare both efficient and democratic**, India needs a hybrid model that blends **digital innovation** with **citizen participation**.

### 1. Reinforce Local Democratic Institutions

- Empower **Gram Sabhas, Urban Ward Committees, and Panchayat Development Plans** to co-create welfare lists.
- Learn from models like **Kudumbashree in Kerala**, which uses self-help groups and community audits to ensure inclusive targeting.

### 2. Embed Rights-Based Legal Frameworks

- Welfare delivery must be underpinned by **statutory guarantees** — such as the **right to appeal, right to information, and feedback systems** — to counter arbitrary digital denials.

- Recommendations by the **UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty** to include **human rights safeguards** in digital welfare should be incorporated into Indian law.

### 3. Restore Political Dialogue

- Deliberative platforms like **Jan Sunwais**, **legal aid clinics**, and **social audits** should be institutionalised to foster **bottom-up monitoring**.
- Political parties must be encouraged to offer **ideologically informed welfare visions**, not just digitised delivery pledges.

#### Conclusion:

- India's welfare state is at a critical inflection point. The pivot to a **technocratic architecture** offers undeniable gains in **coverage**, **timeliness**, and **scale**. Yet, without democratic anchoring, this system risks becoming **unresponsive**, **opaque**, and **dehumanised**.
- For a nation as socially diverse and constitutionally vibrant as India, **welfare must be as much about voice and dignity as it is about data and delivery**. A truly inclusive welfare regime must re-embed **citizen rights**, **local contexts**, and **democratic oversight** into the evolving digital governance model. Only then can India's welfare transition be called a **transformation** rather than an **abdication**.

Source: The Hindu

## 1.4. WHO SHOULD DEFINE PATRIOTISM?

#### Descriptive Question:

**"In a constitutional democracy like India, to what extent can the judiciary prescribe norms for patriotic behaviour or define the idea of a 'true Indian'?"**

**Critically examine the implications of judicial overreach into the domain of political and national identity.**

#### Answer:

##### Introduction

- In a democracy rooted in constitutional morality, the judiciary is the guardian of fundamental rights, the interpreter of the Constitution, and the upholder of democratic values. However, when courts begin to make normative pronouncements about who qualifies as a "true Indian" or how patriotism should be expressed, it invites serious concerns about judicial overreach, institutional propriety, and the risks of legitimising exclusionary nationalism. This raises fundamental questions about the nature of citizenship, the role of dissent, and the boundaries of judicial interpretation.

#### I. Background: The Judicial Controversy Over National Identity

- The controversy emerged from the recent remarks of a Supreme Court bench during proceedings involving the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, who had raised concerns about Chinese occupation of Indian territory. Instead of addressing the

substance of the issue raised, the bench reportedly questioned the patriotism of the LoP and suggested that "true Indians" would not make such public statements but raise them only in Parliament.

- Such a judicial posture, which appears to prescribe who is a "true Indian" and what constitutes acceptable patriotism, has sparked concern across constitutional and democratic circles. It is viewed as a troubling shift from judicial interpretation to ideological gatekeeping.

## II. Constitutional Morality vs. Prescriptive Nationalism:

- India's Constitution **does not prescribe a singular national identity**. Rather, it guarantees:
  - **Right to freedom of speech and expression** (Article 19(1)(a))
  - **Freedom of conscience and belief** (Article 25)
  - **Right to dissent and criticise the government**
- The framers of the Constitution envisioned a **plural, inclusive, and deliberative democracy**. The Constitution does not require citizens to conform to a particular ideology or to prove loyalty through sanctioned speech. Therefore, **the idea of a "true Indian" prescribed by the judiciary risks undermining the very essence of democratic citizenship**.

## III. The Problem of Judicial Overreach

Prescriptive statements from the judiciary on patriotism or national loyalty raise concerns on multiple fronts:

### 1. Violation of Institutional Boundaries

- Courts are not designed to define normative political identities.
- Such remarks blur the constitutional line between **government and nation** — a government is a temporary mandate; the nation is a continuous civic aspiration.

### 2. Suppression of Dissent

- Suggesting that certain views are "un-Indian" delegitimises **valid democratic dissent**.
- In a functioning democracy, **criticism of the state** — especially on matters of national security, foreign policy, or governance failures — must be protected, not penalised.

### 3. Marginalisation of Minorities and Non-conformists

- Framing nationalism in homogenous terms excludes citizens who already feel **socially or politically marginalised**, especially religious, caste, or ideological minorities.
- It **replaces constitutional patriotism with cultural or ideological loyalty**, which is antithetical to the inclusive spirit of Indian democracy.

#### IV. Legal and Jurisprudential Implications:

##### 1. Violation of Free Speech Jurisprudence

- Supreme Court judgments like **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)** and **Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962)** have reaffirmed the right to **criticise the state without inviting penal consequences**.

##### 2. Chilling Effect on Political Participation

- Judicial remarks that delegitimise elected representatives' expression, especially in the context of foreign policy or national security, **erode parliamentary privilege** and the role of opposition in a democracy.

**Who Should Define PATRIOTISM?**

**The Role of the Judiciary**

- Guardian of fundamental rights
- Interpreter of the Constitution
- Upholder of democratic values

**Judicial Overreach**

Concerns arise when courts prescribe notion of patriotic behavior or a 'true Indian'

**Constitutional Concerns**

- Right to free speech
- Criticism should not be suppressed
- Risk of marginalizing minorities & dissenters

**The Case for Judicial Restraint**

- Preserve institutional boundaries
- Respect civic pluralism
- Uphold the right to dissent

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##### 3. Dangerous Precedent for Future Rulings

- Once the judiciary begins to evaluate speech on the basis of patriotic merit, **legal safeguards on civil liberties** risk becoming subjective and volatile.

## V. Comparative and Theoretical Perspective:

- Political theorists like **Jürgen Habermas** have argued for **constitutional patriotism** — an allegiance to democratic principles, not ethnic or ideological homogeneity. Similarly, **Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt**, in their work *How Democracies Die*, emphasise the role of institutions — especially courts — in protecting **norms of mutual tolerance and institutional forbearance**.
- When courts act like ideological enforcers rather than independent arbiters, they **threaten the balance of power** among institutions and reduce the space for civic dissent.

## VI. The Need for Judicial Restraint and Democratic Dialogue:

### 1. Restore Institutional Boundaries

- The judiciary must **resist the urge to enter ideological debates** and instead focus on interpreting law with objectivity and restraint.

### 2. Safeguard Civic Space and Pluralism

- Public discourse must accommodate **multiple visions of patriotism**, as long as they remain within the constitutional framework.

### 3. Reaffirm the Right to Dissent

- In light of rising majoritarian pressures, courts must act as **guardians of dissent and liberty**, not gatekeepers of national identity.

## Conclusion:

- The Constitution of India is not a document of **cultural nationalism**, but a charter of **democratic pluralism**. By attempting to prescribe who qualifies as a “true Indian,” the judiciary risks violating its own constitutional mandate and undermining public confidence in its impartiality. True patriotism lies in **upholding constitutional values**, not in conforming to a single narrative. Judicial legitimacy rests not in its alignment with popular sentiment or state ideology, but in its **unwavering defence of civil liberties, democratic dissent, and constitutional morality**. At this critical juncture, the courts must tread carefully, lest they transform from protectors of liberty to arbiters of loyalty.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.5. NEED FOR CHANGING THE AGE OF CONSENT?

### Descriptive Question:

In the context of India's Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, critically examine the case for and against changing the age of consent. Propose a nuanced, multi-pronged reform that protects children from abuse while avoiding the criminalisation of consensual, age-proximate relationships.

#### 1. Introduction: the problem the courts are being asked to solve

- India pegs the age of consent at **18 years**. Under **POCSO (2012)**, *any* sexual act with a person under 18 is a statutory offence; consent is legally irrelevant.
- The **2013 Criminal Law Amendment** harmonised IPC with POCSO, raising the age from 16 to 18.
- A pending matter before the **Supreme Court** has revived the debate: should the law distinguish between **consensual, age-proximate adolescent relationships** and **exploitation/abuse by adults**?
- Ground reports from police, child welfare committees, and trial courts show a growing share of POCSO cases arise from **romantic relationships** among 16–18 year-olds—often from poor or socially constrained families—producing outcomes that undermine both **child protection and girls' agency**.

#### 2. India's legal ecosystem (how the rules interact)

- **POCSO, 2012**: strict liability, mandatory reporting (S.19), special courts, high minimum sentences.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006**: child marriages are voidable (void in aggravated circumstances).
- **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971; amended 2021**: permits termination up to 24 weeks in specified conditions; **mandatory reporting under POCSO** often deters adolescents from seeking safe abortion or antenatal care.
- **JJ Act, 2015**: child in need of care and protection; but welfare systems are thinly resourced.

**Net effect:** A system designed for heinous abuse is frequently triggered in **peer relationships**, pushing girls into shelters, unsafe health pathways or coerced marriage, while boys—often from the same class/caste group—are jailed as “rapists”.

#### 3. What actually shows up in cases: fault lines from the field

- 1) **Romantic/“run-away” cases dominate dockets in many districts.**

- Complaints are frequently filed by parents after discovering a relationship or pregnancy; once FIR is registered, **compounding is barred**, and the case runs its course even if the girl pleads consent.
- 2) **Marginalised girls face a cruel choice.**
- Return to families where **violence, poverty, and pressure to marry** are real risks; or stay in shelters with limited services, while their partner faces prison.
  - Many girls withdraw complaints under pressure or disappear from proceedings; convictions often rest on **technical non-consent**.
- 3) **Health and education harms.**
- Mandatory POCSO reporting chills access to **safe abortion**, contraception and ANC; the adolescent is pushed to unsafe methods or **forced marriage** to “regularise” pregnancy.
- 4) **Criminal justice strain and net-widening.**
- Police and courts lose time meant for genuine child-sexual-abuse cases; high **minimum sentences** deter plea or proportionality.
4. **Arguments for keeping the age at 18 (and what they miss)**

#### Rationale offered

- Adolescents are developmentally vulnerable; coercion and grooming are hard to detect.
- Early sex and pregnancy have health and educational costs.
- Lowering the age may embolden traffickers or normalise child marriage.

#### Counter-points

- The question is **not** whether to protect minors (that remains non-negotiable) but **how** to separate *abuse* from *age-proximate consent*.
- **Blanket criminalisation** does not stop coercion; instead, it **externalises family and community control through the criminal law**, often against the girl’s wishes.
- Many jurisdictions protect minors by **keeping the legal age high** and providing “**close-in-age**” exemptions and **graded offences** that punish adults who exploit adolescents while **avoiding felony labels for peers**.

## Need for Changing the Age of Consent?



**Background**

Age of consent -- ----- at 18 years.

Under POCSO, any sexual act with a person under 18 is a automatic offense

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**Arguments for maintaining age at 18:**

- Adolescents vulnerability to grooming and exploitation 
- Risks of early sex and pregnancy 
- Lowering the age can-bolden traffickers or forced marriage 

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**Problems with blanket criminalisation**



Consensual relationships between adolescents lead to criminal charges

Girls run away from home to escape violence or forced marriage, face coercion or unfamnt

Fear of legal repercussions raise barriers to contraceptive access and safe abortions 

Courts are overwhelmed with minor cases clogging the justice system's docket

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**Charting a nuanced reform**



Create "close-in-age" exemptions for consensual and, non-exploitative teen relationships

Improve access to confidential adolescent health care

Expand comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)


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### 5. Comparative practice (guidance for reform)

- Most OECD and several Asian countries retain 16–18 as the benchmark but create **“Romeo & Juliet”** provisions (typically **2–5 year age difference**, no authority/trust relationship, and **no violence**) and **lower sentencing brackets** for consensual adolescent activity.
- Many public-health systems ring-fence **confidential access** to contraception and abortion for adolescents, coupled with **mandatory counselling and safety assessment**.

### 6. A principled, Indian solution: protect, don't punish

#### A) Keep 18 as the baseline, but carve out age-proximate consent safely

##### 1) Close-in-age exception in POCSO

- No offence (or a lesser, non-cognisable offence) when:
  - Both are **16–18**;
  - **Voluntary** intercourse or sexual contact;
  - **Age gap ≤ 3 years** (Parliament can debate 2–4 yrs);

- **No relationship of trust/authority, no force, intoxication, exploitation or payment;**
  - Proceedings only on **girl's complaint** or with **Child Welfare Committee (CWC) certification** of voluntariness.
    - Convert such matters to **JJB/CWC-led diversion** with counselling, schooling and health services; **seal records**.
- 2) **Graduated offences & sentencing**
- Retain **strict criminality** for adults ( $\geq 18$ ) with minors ( $< 18$ ), with **aggravation** for power/authority/grooming/pornography/trafficking.
  - Introduce **lesser, non-registerable offences** for non-violent peer acts short of intercourse (community service/probation), preserving proportionality.
- B) De-risk health and education**
- **Amend POCSO S.19 to de-link mandatory reporting** by health-care providers when a **competent adolescent** seeks abortion/contraception **without any abuse indicators**—replace with **duty to counsel + safety screen + anonymous data reporting**.
  - Ensure **free, confidential adolescent health clinics**, safe abortion and post-abortion care, and linkage to **PM-POSHAN/hostels/bridging education** for pregnant teens.
- C) Victim-centric justice in real abuse**
- Fast-track **forensic capability**, child-friendly depositions, witness protection, **special prosecutors** and **minimum sentences** where violence, coercion or authority is proven.
  - Clear **prosecutorial guidelines** to **screen out romantic cases** at FIR stage with CWC oversight.
  - **Bail and remand discipline** so that boys in age-proximate cases are not incarcerated for years.
- D) Social protection and prevention**
- Scale **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)** (age-appropriate, rights-based) through schools and skilling centres.
  - Expand **safe shelters** with psychosocial support; cash-plus schemes for girls to **stay in school**; targeted **district action** in high child-marriage blocks.
  - Train police, CWCs, judiciary and health workers to recognise **coercive control/grooming** vs **voluntary peer relationships**; use **risk assessment tools**.
- 7. Addressing common concerns**
- **“Will this encourage early sex?”** Evidence from public-health shows CSE and confidential services **delay sexual debut** and **reduce risk**, whereas fear-based criminalisation drives behaviour underground.

- **“Won’t traffickers misuse the exception?”** Exceptions must **exclude** authority/trust relationships, be **age-gap limited**, demand **voluntariness checks**, and preserve **tough penalties** for grooming, pornography and commercial exploitation.
- **“Will it legitimise child marriage?”** No. PCMA should be **strengthened** (void in more circumstances; better rescue/rehab); any marriage with a person under 18 remains **illegal** regardless of consent.

#### 8. Conclusion:

- India must **protect children uncompromisingly and respect adolescent agency** in age-proximate, non-exploitative relationships. A **blanket reduction** of the age of consent risks normalising exploitation; **blanket criminalisation** harms the very girls the law sought to protect—driving them into **invisibility, forced marriage, unsafe abortions and broken schooling**.
- The constitutionally sound path is **nuanced reform**: retain 18 as the floor, craft **close-in-age exemptions and graded offences**, de-risk access to **health and education**, and strengthen **child-protection capacity** for real abuse. This approach aligns child rights with public health and justice, and keeps the law’s moral centre where it belongs—**on power, violence and exploitation, not on consensual adolescent affection**.

Source: The Indian Express

### 1.6. TOWARDS UNIFIED WELFARE STATE

#### Descriptive Question:

India runs hundreds of overlapping welfare schemes at the Union and State levels. Discuss the case for moving towards a “unified welfare state” that consolidates and orchestrates these programmes through common rails of identification, payments, and service delivery. Explain expected gains, international lessons, design principles (including federalism, fiscal and data safeguards), and a practical roadmap up to 2047.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Why this debate now: background and problem statement

- **Proliferation and fragmentation:** Since Independence, India has built a vast mosaic of *cash and non-cash* social protection schemes (food, pensions, maternity, health, disability, social insurance, jobs, housing, skilling). Many States add their own entitlements. Outcomes are often diluted by **overlaps, gaps, and administrative silos**.
- **Coverage vs capability:** Estimates of India’s effective social protection coverage vary depending on whether State schemes are counted. Regardless of the exact number, citizens face a **“maze problem”**—they do not know which benefits they are eligible for, where to apply, how to prove identity, or how to appeal.

- **Shifting development objective:** A mature welfare state must not only *transfer* but also *translate* support into **capabilities**—health, skills, employability—so that households can climb income ladders.
- **Digital public infrastructure (DPI)** tailwinds: Aadhaar/e-KYC, DBT ecosystem, UPI, e-KYC, e-Shram, UAN/EPFO, and interoperable registries make it technically feasible to **orchestrate** programmes on common rails without centralising ownership of every scheme.

**Core policy question:** Should India remain a patchwork of schemes, or deliberately transition to a **unified, rights-based, fiscally sustainable welfare system** that is federated by design?

## 2. What “unified welfare state” means (and what it does not)

It means:

- A **“one-government” social protection stack:** common rails for *identification (Aadhaar + scheme-specific IDs such as UAN/e-Shram), eligibility determination, enrolment, payments, portability, grievance redress, and monitoring*, while ownership of programmes remains with line ministries and States.
- **Consolidation where duplication is obvious** (e.g., multiple old-age pensions or disability benefits under different names) and **orchestration where services are complementary** (e.g., nutrition + health + skilling + job-linkage).
- **Lifecycle approach:** mapping entitlements to life-stages (childhood, youth, working age, elderly) with clear “ladders” from relief to resilience to mobility.

It does not mean:

- Central takeover of State schemes, or one monolithic mega-scheme. Instead, it is a **federal platform** that *recognises diversity but eliminates friction*.

## 3. Why unify: expected dividends

### 1) Citizen experience

- *Single window, many benefits:* one eligibility assessment, one application, *auto-enrolment* into all eligible benefits, transparent status, and a standard grievance channel.
- *True portability:* a worker moving across districts/states keeps benefits and social insurance seamlessly (using UAN/e-Shram).

### 2) Targeting and integrity

- Eliminates duplicate records, reduces inclusion/exclusion errors through **interoperable registries** and consented data-sharing; enables *outcome-oriented audits* rather than paper compliance.

### 3) Fiscal efficiency

- Consolidation lowers admin overheads, reduces leakage, allows **benefit rationalisation** (stacking, not scattering), and creates fiscal space to increase adequacy of priority benefits (e.g., social pensions).

#### 4) From transfers to capabilities

- Converging cash with *health, nutrition, care services, skilling, and job-matching* shifts households from survival to mobility (self-multiplying instruments).

#### 5) Economic formalisation

- Anchoring payments and savings through **EPFO/UAN and ESIC**, nudging contributions to provident fund, pension, and insurance alongside DBT; improves long-term household balance sheets.

#### 4. What others did: usable lessons

- **Brazil's SUAS** unified social assistance under municipal "single registries," converging benefits and services with strong local delivery capacity.
- **Republic of Korea** rationalised overlapping schemes in the 1990s, investing in *front-line social workers* and integrated information systems.
- **National Health Insurance (several countries)** shows how federated payers can run on common rails with state participation.

**Takeaways:** invest in *front-line capacity*, codify *minimum benefit floors*, build *interoperable registries*, and keep **fiscal rules** transparent.

#### 5. India's starting assets (and gaps)

##### Assets

- **Digital rails:** Aadhaar, DBT/UPI, PFMS, Jan-Dhan, DigiLocker, Ayushman Bharat IDs, **e-Shram** (informal workers), **UAN/EPFO** (formal workers), ESIC, and maturing State citizen portals.
- **Institutional anchors:** EPFO and ESIC that already manage contributory social insurance at scale; they can be scaled as neutral "pipes".
- **Policy signals:** G20 New Delhi Declaration's call for sustainable, universal social protection; domestic emphasis on *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

##### Gaps to fix

- Scheme proliferation and repackaging at State level; weak **benefit catalogues**; fragmented grievance systems; limited **care economy** (elderly, disability, child-care); uneven district-level capacity; and unresolved **data-protection and consent** workflows.

#### 6. Design principles for a unified system

##### 1) Federated, not unitary

- Union sets *floors and rails*; States add *toppers* or local programmes. Use **inter-governmental compacts** for data-sharing and co-financing.

##### 2) Rights and due process

- Clear statutory entitlements (where feasible), *reasoned denials*, appeal timelines, social audits, and citizen charters.

3) **“Stack” architecture**

- Modules for **Identify → Assess → Enrol → Pay → Save/Insure → Provide services → Grievance → Measure**; each module is open-API, standards-based, and privacy-preserving.

4) **Data protection & consent**

- Implement the Digital Personal Data Protection framework: *purpose limitation, consent dashboards, fiduciary accountability, and independent audits*. Default to **minimum necessary data**.

5) **Fiscal sustainability**

- Multi-year **Medium-Term Social Protection Framework**: define floors (e.g., social pension adequacy), set consolidation targets, publish a *social protection balance sheet* (spend, overlaps saved, outcome gains).

6) **Front-line capacity**

- Invest in **gram/ward social protection facilitators**, care workers, and municipal capacity; technology complements, not replaces, human interface.

**TOWARDS A UNIFIED WELFARE STATE**

**India's current system: fragmented & complex**

- Over 500 overlapping social programs at central and state levels
- Hard-to-navigate "maze" of eligibility, application, and benefits
- Lacking in quality-of-life services, sapping productivity
- New digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar, DBT, UPI) now enables coordination

**Why unify welfare programs?**

- Single application portal: truly portable benefits
- Fewer overlaps, leaks, and exclusions
- Streamlined delivery, freeing up fiscal resources
- Boosts well-being and employability over entire lifecycle

**International models**

- Brazil's single registry consolidates aid with local services
- S. Korea rationalised schemes, invested in data and field capacity
- Federated national health insurance systems in Eu

**Principles of a unified system**

- FEDERATED**  
Coordinate with states and local authorities
- RIGHTS-BASED**  
Ensure due process and grievance redress
- ARCHITECTURE & SAFE Modular API**  
design protects persol data

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## 7. What to consolidate first (low-regret actions)

- **Pensions:** Merge overlapping old-age/widow/disability pensions into a single ladder with *portable* payments and uniform service standards; allow States to add top-ups.
- **Scholarships & education DBTs:** One student registry with portability across schools/states; auto-renewals; link with *nutrition, transport, and device support*.
- **Maternity & child benefits:** Converge PMMVY with state schemes; integrate with health (AB-PMJAY), ICDS, and creche/day-care services.
- **Worker protection:** Use **e-Shram + UAN** to seed a **portable social-insurance bundle** (accident cover, term life, pension micro-savings) that travels across jobs; route cash transfers through UAN with voluntary “save a slice” nudges into PF/pension/insurance.

## 8. Safeguards & counter-arguments

- **Fear of centralisation / loss of state autonomy** → Adopt *federal protocols and cost-sharing*, let States own their programmes while using common rails; publish a *benefit catalogue* showing which level funds what.
- **Data/privacy risks** → Privacy-by-design, role-based access, encryption, independent audits, citizen consent dashboards, and redress.
- **Exclusion errors due to digital dependence** → Assisted enrolment, offline tokens, door-to-door drives, and strong grievance redress; keep **paper pathways** where needed.
- **Fiscal stress** → Consolidation savings, better targeting, higher administrative efficiency, and outcome-based budgeting create room to raise adequacy where it matters (e.g., social pensions).

## 9. A practical roadmap to 2047

### Phase 1 (0–2 years): “Rails and catalogues”

- Notify a **National Social Protection Interoperability Framework** (open standards/APIs).
- Publish a **national & state benefit catalogue**; begin **scheme mapping and de-duplication** in pensions, scholarships, and maternity.
- Stand up a **Unified Social Protection Account** view for each citizen (via DigiLocker/Jan Samarth portals) showing eligibility, enrolments, payments, and grievances.
- Adopt **common grievance & appeal rules** across schemes; social audit pilots.

### Phase 2 (2–5 years): “Convergence and portability”

- Make **e-Shram + UAN** the backbone for worker-centric schemes; implement the *portable insurance bundle*.
- Integrate **health, nutrition, and care services** with cash benefits in high-burden districts; fund local **care infrastructure** (creches, elder-care, disability support).
- Introduce **auto-enrolment** triggers (birth, school entry, disability certification, turning 60).
- Build district social protection cells; performance-linked grants to States/ULBs.

**Phase 3 (5–10 years): “From protection to mobility”**

- Link welfare with **skills and jobs** at scale: *Employment-Linked Incentive* style nudges that reward verified job retention and formalisation while protecting the vulnerable.
- Publish an annual **Social Protection Balance Sheet** and **Outcome Report**; adjust floors (e.g., pension amounts) based on evidence.

**10. Conclusion:**

- A unified welfare state for India is not a single mega-scheme; it is a **federal operating system** that lets Union and States deliver *simple, portable, adequate* support and—crucially—**convert transfers into capabilities**. By consolidating scattered entitlements, eliminating duplicate administration, protecting data, and hard-wiring portability and grievance rights, India can move from *populist welfare politics* to **rights-based, investment-oriented social protection**. Built on digital public infrastructure but anchored in strong front-line institutions, such a system can be a cornerstone of **Viksit Bharat 2047**—growth with security, dignity, and opportunity for every household.

**Source:** *The Indian Express*

## 1.7. GATED COMMUNITIES – FEAR CENTERED URBAN GOVERNANCE?

**Descriptive Question**

“Gated urbanism and the politics of fear are reshaping Indian cities.” Discuss the drivers and consequences of fear-centred urban governance—gated communities, surveillance infrastructures and exclusionary regulations.

**Answer:****1. Background: from crime prevention to fear-centred governance**

- In many metros the *idiom of safety* increasingly defines urban design and regulation: boom in **gated communities**, private security, controlled entry/exit, CCTV, automated gates, predictive policing and permit regimes for hawkers and migrants.
- This mirrors global trends: **North American** gated suburbs, **Shanghai’s** guarded enclaves, **Johannesburg’s** surveillance of poor townships, and **São Paulo’s** exclusionary neighbourhoods.
- A newer pattern is visible in India: fear is **manufactured and circulated** through official assertions, speculative rumours and arbitrary actions against vulnerable groups (street vendors, migrants, linguistic/religious minorities). It becomes the *state’s currency* to signal control.

**Key shift:** Fear moves from being a private preference of affluent residents to a **public policy logic**—an urbanism organised around walls (physical, digital and legal).

## 2. Political economy of “gated urbanism”

### 1) Privatisation of security and services

- Affluent enclaves outsource policing, sanitation and maintenance; the urban poor enter as *daytime service labour* and exit after work—creating a *two-city rhythm*.

### 2) Spectacle governance

- Flyovers, plazas, beautification drives, ‘smart’ control rooms and facial-recognition CCTVs produce visible signs of order. These spectacles often substitute for laborious, rights-based improvements in housing, drainage, transit and jobs.

### 3) Administrative shortcuts

- Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) gate public streets; “No-vendor” zones proliferate; public hearings become perfunctory; access for protest is restricted; shelters and rental housing lag.

### 4) Datafied city

- Platforms normalise bulk data capture, algorithmic risk scores and predictive policing with weak oversight, eroding privacy and enabling profiling—especially of the poor.

## 3. Why this governance model is attractive

- **Visible quick wins** for incumbents;
- A **marketable urban brand** for investment and real estate;
- Political payoffs from reassuring middle-class voters;
- Genuine citizen anxiety about crime, congestion and disorder.

## 4. Costs and consequences

### 1) Exclusion & rights deficit

- Curbs on street vending, informal rentals, and night shelters reduce livelihoods and mobility; women, migrants and minorities face frequent checks, suspicion and displacement.

### 2) Security paradox

- Over-securitised enclaves shift crime, do not address causes (youth unemployment, substance abuse, weak lighting/transit, poor tenancy records).

### 3) Weakening of the public realm

- Fewer open parks/streets for common use; civic trust declines; urban poor treated as *threats* not *citizens*.

### 4) Fiscal misallocation

- Crores spent on surveillance rooms and command centres while drains, clinics, rental housing and bus fleets remain underfunded.

### 5) Rule-of-law slippage

- Informal gating of public roads, arbitrary sealing/eviction drives and selective enforcement corrode constitutionalism.

## Gated Communities – Fear-centered Urban Governance?

### Drivers of Fear-centered Urban Governance

- Privatisation of security and services
- Exclusion of women, migrants, minorities
- Spectacle governance
- Public realm weakens
- Administrative shortcuts
- Rule-of-law erosion

### Consequences

- Exclusion of women, migrants, minorities
- Public realm weakens
- Fiscal waste on surveillance
- Rule-of-law erosion

### Reform agenda

- Public Space Code: ban permanent gating, mandate Safe Access Corridors
- Street design: lighting, active frontages
- Worker housing, late-night transport, ward-level social hubs
- Participatory planning, social audits, rights-based vending

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### 5. Counter-arguments and a balanced view

- **Concern:** Crime and harassment are real; women and elderly demand safer spaces.
- **Response:** Evidence worldwide shows *situational prevention* (lighting, active street edges, mixed land use, reliable transit, community policing) is cost-effective and rights-compatible. Private fortification without inclusive services yields **islands of safety** in **seas of precarity**—ultimately unsustainable.

## 6. What should change: principles

- **Right to the city:** streets and parks are public goods; any restriction must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and time-bound.
- **Safety with dignity:** combine prevention and policing with social infrastructure—lighting, transport, toilets, shelters, childcare, rental housing.
- **Data justice:** surveillance must be minimal, accountable and consent-based, with clear deletion and grievance rules.
- **Participation over spectacle:** planning by law, not by barricade.

## 7. Reform agenda (10 actionable items)

### 1) **Public Space Code** for cities

- Ban permanent gating of public roads; mandate open-street hours; create *Safe Access Corridors* around schools, markets, transport hubs.

### 2) **Street design for safety**

- Universal lighting standards, *eyes-on-the-street* design, active ground floors, CCTV only as *supplement* with strict audits; 24×7 helplines integrated with local beat officers.

### 3) **Community policing 2.0**

- Beat constables co-located in ward offices; women's safety patrols; trust-building with migrant communities; standardised response times and public dashboards.

### 4) **Regulate private security & RWA powers**

- Licensing, training, and limits on checking ID/confiscation; RWAs cannot gate public land or restrict lawful movement.

### 5) **Data governance**

- City-level data-protection by-laws aligned with national law: purpose limitation, DPIA for facial recognition/predictive tools, independent audits, citizen redress.

### 6) **Inclusive vending and livelihoods**

- Fully implement the Street Vendors Act with digitised, portable vending certificates, grievance committees, and planned hawker zones.

### 7) **Rental and worker housing**

- Mixed-income zoning, *inclusionary housing* near job centres, large-scale hostels and rental vouchers; enforce employer responsibility for safe transport and housing in peri-urban estates.

### 8) **Mobility at night**

- Reliable late-evening bus/metro frequency; safe last-mile services; monitored taxi/auto stands; well-lit walking routes.

### 9) Social infrastructure

- Ward-level care hubs (toilets, creches, clinics), shelters for women and men, and crisis centres; sustained funding through municipal finance reform and tied grants.

### 10) Participatory planning & oversight

- Ward sabhas with power over local safety budgets; social audits of eviction/sealing drives; annual “state of public space” report.

## 8. Conclusion:

- Walls—of concrete or code—cannot build truly safe cities. When **fear becomes the unit of governance**, it impoverishes both the poor, who lose access to livelihoods and space, and the privileged, who lose the vitality and trust that make cities prosperous. Indian urban policy must pivot from **gated urbanism** to **guaranteed urbanism**: safety by design, services by right, and security by law. Only then can our cities be simultaneously **safe, open and constitutional**.

*Source: The Indian Express*

## 1.8. MAKING CITIZENS CO-PRODUCERS OF HEALTH OUTCOMES

### Descriptive Question:

Recent doorstep healthcare schemes in India aim to deliver services to people’s homes. Analyse why their success hinges on effective civic engagement in health governance, highlighting existing participation mechanisms, key deficits, and a reform roadmap to make citizens co-producers of health outcomes, especially for marginalised groups.

### Answer:

#### 1. Why civic engagement is not a “nice-to-have” but a system need

- **Public health is co-produced:** outcomes depend on behaviours, social determinants (water, sanitation, nutrition, transport, air quality), and trust. These lie outside the clinic and require collective action.
- **Democratic legitimacy & accountability:** participation tempers top-down power, reduces regulatory capture by commercial/medical interests, and aligns services with local needs.
- **Better uptake & continuity of care:** collaboration with front-line workers (ASHAs, ANMs, MPWs) improves screening, adherence and follow-up—vital for NCD programmes like home-based BP/diabetes care under doorstep schemes.
- **Equity:** formal voice platforms enable women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, urban informal workers and remote hamlets to shape services they use the least but need the most.

## 2. India's participation architecture—what exists on paper

- **Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs)** under NRHM; intended for planning, monitoring, and using untied funds for local priorities.
- **Rogi Kalyan Samitis (RKS)/Hospital Management Committees** at facility level for stewardship and patient-centric improvements.
- **Urban platforms:** Ward committees, Mohalla/area sabhas (where notified), and slum-level committees under NUHM.
- **Panchayat/ULB channels:** 15th Finance Commission health grants, Gram Sabhas, social audit mechanisms.
- **Front-line worker interface:** ASHA platforms, *Jan Arogya Samitis*, school health committees, and community-based monitoring pilots introduced with NRHM.

## 3. The ground reality—four persistent deficits

- 1) **Tokenism & 'beneficiary' framing:** people are invited to events but not to decisions. Success is counted in “**targets reached**”, not in whether platforms changed service delivery.
- 2) **Weak, uneven, or absent institutions:** many VHSNCs/RKS exist only on paper; meetings are irregular; untied funds unspent or delayed; urban committees under-activated.
- 3) **Power asymmetries & social hierarchies:** caste, gender, language and migrant status mute voices; elites capture spaces; fear of reprisal reduces complaints.
- 4) **Thin accountability ecology:** grievance systems are hard to use; data are opaque; regulation of conflicts of interest in care and procurement is weak—citizens revert to protests, PILs, or social media storms.

**Result:** doorstep care can deliver services, but without deliberation, co-design and feedback loops, programmes risk being provider-centric, under-utilised, or blind to exclusion.

## 4. Evidence & illustrations

- **Doorstep NCD care** in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka showed high early acceptance where local bodies and SHGs were mobilised to line-list households, accompany screening and track referrals; where committees were inactive, attrition in follow-up rose.
- **Community-based monitoring pilots** (NRHM phase-I) in states like Maharashtra and Odisha improved drug availability, reduced absenteeism, and cut referral delays through public hearings and scorecards.
- **Kerala's local health planning** demonstrates that when panchayats co-budget with health facilities, sanitation and vector control indicators improve.

- **ASHAs & Mitanins (Chhattisgarh)** show that when communities own worker performance (through local forums and timely payments), immunisation and maternal health metrics climb.

## 5. Counter-arguments & risks—and how to manage them

- **“Participation slows decisions / politicises care.”**

*Mitigation:* clear agendas, time-bound decisions, professional facilitation, and escalation paths; reserve clinical autonomy while opening non-clinical choices (timings, outreach sites, last-mile logistics) to co-design.

- **Misinformation may spread.**

*Mitigation:* evidence briefings, community health literacy, transparent dashboards.

- **Elite capture.**

*Mitigation:* quotas/rotation for women, SC/ST, urban poor, migrants; independent observers; social audits; anonymous grievance channels.

## 6. A practicable reform blueprint

### A. Law & policy

- **Right to Participate in Health Governance:** notify rules under existing municipal/panchayat laws (and NUHM/NHM guidelines) mandating quarterly VHSNC/RKS/Ward Health Committee meetings with **quorum, agenda disclosure, minutes online**, and citizen attendance rights.
- **Patients’ Rights & Grievance Rules:** operationalise the national Patients’ Rights Charter; time-bound redress with appellate authorities; link to hospital empanelment and performance pay.
- **Conflict-of-interest regulation:** public declarations for procurement and clinical guideline bodies; bar vendor influence in CME/advocacy that shapes public programmes.

**MAKING CITIZENS CO-PRODUCERS OF HEALTH OUTCOMES**

**WHY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MATTERS**

- Improves public health outcomes by addressing behaviors, social determinants, & building trust
- Ensures community uptake of doorstep healthcare services
- Provides marginalised groups with a voice in shaping services

**PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS**

- Village Health, Sanitation & Nutrition Committees
- Roqi Kalyan Samitis (Patient Welfare Committees)
- Ward/Area Health Committees (Urban)
- Panchayat & Gram Sabhas

**KEY DEFICITS IN PRACTICE**

- Tokenism & tokenism**  
People are invited to events, not to decisions
- Weak institutions**  
Poor functionality of existing committees
- Social hierarchies**  
Power asymmetries mute marginal voices
- Limited accountability**  
Weak grievance mechanisms

**A REFORM BLUEPRINT**

- Quarterly committee meetings with public minutes
- Co-designed plans & participatory budgeting
- Social accountability** tools (e.g. community scorecards)
- Dashboards** of disaggregated health data
- Easy-to-use and responsive grievance systems

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## B. Institutions & processes

- **Revive platforms:**
  - *VHSNCs*—functional bank accounts; training for convenors; SHG/FPO representation; convergence with water, sanitation, nutrition and school health.
  - *RKS*—distinct roles for citizen members; publish service standards; run **patient councils** and *Jan Sunwais* (public hearings).
  - *Urban health committees*—map slums, migrant clusters; hold evening clinics and mobile days co-scheduled with workers' shifts.
- **Co-design cycles:** quarterly *plan–do–study–act* loops where committees choose 2–3 micro-improvements (e.g., medicine stockouts, clinic timing, disability access) with small grants and publish before–after results.

- **Participatory budgeting:** earmark at least 10% of untied facility/ULB health funds for priorities chosen in Gram/Ward Sabhas.
- **Social accountability bundle:** community scorecards, mystery patient audits, death-review public briefs (maternal/infant, disaster events), and citizen charters at all facilities.

### C. Financing

- **Assured, on-time untied funds** to VHSNCs/RKS (with simple utilisation norms); match-funding for innovations that improve equity metrics.
- **Performance-linked transfers** to districts/ULBs against participation KPIs (see metrics below).
- **Micro-grants** for civil society facilitation in hard-to-reach areas; travel stipends and creches to enable women's attendance.

### D. Data, digital & transparency

- **Open dashboards** at facility and district levels: footfalls, stockouts, absenteeism, referral loops, and complaint resolution times—disaggregated by sex, caste, disability and location.
- **Civic tech for voice:** multilingual IVRS/WhatsApp/SMS to (a) register grievances, (b) crowd-report broken services, (c) schedule home visits, and (d) receive evidence briefs; protect privacy by design.
- **Community data stewards:** train SHG/youth groups to run local health registers and assist doorstep programmes with line-listing and follow-up.

### E. Capability & culture

- **Train administrators & clinicians** on participatory methods, plain-language communication and respectful care.
- **Health literacy campaigns** co-created with communities on NCDs, mental health, reproductive rights, antimicrobial resistance, and rational drug use.

## 7. What to measure (hard KPIs)

- 1) **Coverage of platforms:** % facilities with functional RKS; % villages/wards with VHSNC/ward committees meeting **≥4 times/year** with published minutes.
- 2) **Financial use:** share of VHSNC/RKS untied funds utilised on citizen-chosen priorities; time from sanction to spend.
- 3) **Voice & redress:** median grievance resolution time; % complaints resolved to satisfaction; number of public hearings held.

- 4) **Service/equity outcomes:** reduction in stockouts; OPD wait times; community follow-up rates for home-screened NCD patients; gap reduction in key indicators across gender/caste/settlement.
- 5) **Trust:** annual patient-experience scores and repeat-use rates of public facilities.

#### 8. Conclusion:

- Doorstep-care missions can extend the state's reach—but **only citizens can extend its sight**. By moving people from the category of “beneficiaries” to **co-producers**—with enforceable participation rights, financed platforms, transparent data, and respectful deliberation—India can turn scattered programmes into a resilient health-governance ecosystem. The pay-off is two-fold: improved health outcomes and a deeper, everyday practice of constitutional democracy.

**Source: *The Hindu***

### 1.9. SAFEGUARDING DUE PROCESS VS EVIDENCE-BASED REFORMS TO PROTECT WOMEN

#### Descriptive Question:

“The Supreme Court’s order in *Shivangi Bansal v. Sahib Bansal* suspending arrests for a fixed period in anti-cruelty cases (S85, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) has revived the ‘misuse’ debate.”

Examine its constitutional and policy implications, and assess whether low conviction/misuse claims justify such blanket protection. Suggest evidence-based reforms to protect women while safeguarding due process for the accused.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Background & the ruling—what changed?

- **Statutory framework:** The offence of “cruelty by husband or his relatives” introduced as **IPC S498A (1983)**—now **BNS S85**—was enacted to criminalise sustained physical/mental cruelty, dowry harassment and conduct that may **drive a woman to suicide or cause grave injury**. It sits alongside civil remedies under the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA)** and special dowry-related offences.
- **The Court’s order:** In *Shivangi Bansal*, the Supreme Court **validated a High Court-style practice of halting arrests/coercive action in anti-cruelty cases for a period (about two months) after the complaint is filed**, ostensibly to explore settlement/mediation or to guard against “misuse.”
- **Immediate effect:** Police **cannot arrest or take coercive steps** during this cooling-off window except in exceptional circumstances, thereby **offsetting the ordinary scheme of cognizable offences** that allows prompt intervention to protect complainants.

## 2. Constitutional concerns: separation of powers & equality before law

- **Judicial over-reach risk:** A **blanket suspension** of arrest powers in a class of cognizable cases **re-writes Parliament's policy choice** on how urgent state protection should work in domestic-violence-linked cruelty, and resembles rule-making—a **legislative function**—rather than case-by-case adjudication.
- **Article 14 parity:** Creating a **special hurdle only for this offence** (a gender-equality measure) risks **arbitrary under-protection** of a particularly vulnerable class (married women facing in-home violence), while other cognizable offences continue under the normal Code of Criminal Procedure scheme.
- **Procedural justice:** Where there is **immediate risk of bodily harm, intimidation or destruction of evidence**, the **inability to arrest** can **chill complaints**, embolden abusers and distort bargaining power during “family settlement.”

## 3. Evidence check: the “misuse” & low-conviction arguments are weak grounds for blanket stay

- **Low conviction ≠ false cases:** Conviction rates in intimate violence are affected by **hostile witnesses due to pressure, economic dependence, stigma, delayed FIRs, poor investigation, and compromise**, not merely “false reporting.”
- **Administrative bias: Under-registration, poor evidence collection, and dilution to compoundable/minor offences** depress convictions. Courts (e.g., *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar*, 2014) already **curbed automatic arrest** by insisting on **reasons and proportionality**. The remedy for poor police practice is **better investigation**, not **withholding the investigation's teeth**.
- **National datasets** (NCRB's large volume of cruelty/dowry-related cases, NFHS's high prevalence of spousal violence, and continuing **dowry-death numbers**) indicate **under-protection**, not over-criminalisation. (Trends are persistently high across States; precise annual values vary, but the pattern is stable and well-documented.)

## 4. Policy impacts of the cooling-off rule

- **Safety & deterrence:** A **predictable no-arrest window** can **raise the expected cost of reporting** for victims (more time at home with abuser, higher retaliation risk), **reduce deterrence**, and **encourage evidence tampering**.
- **Policing incentives:** Officers may **park files** until the window lapses; the **message is muddled**: this cognizable offence is not truly urgent.
- **Unequal access to justice:** Women with **fewer resources** (no private shelter, legal aid, or social capital) are disproportionately harmed; better-off households can navigate “mediation,” widening inequity.

## 5. What *already* exists against misuse

- **Arnesh-Kumar safeguards:** mandatory **reasoned satisfaction** before arrest; notice of appearance; preference for **summons** where arrest isn't necessary.
- **Perjury/false-case sanctions:** Penal code provisions for **false information (e.g., former IPC S182/211 equivalents)** and **costs** allow sanctioning mala fide complainants post-inquiry.
- **Bail jurisprudence:** Quick, **reasoned bail** for non-heinous facts; **quashing** of manifestly abusive proceedings by High Courts under **inherent powers**.

Hence, a **blanket stay adds little to due-process protection but imposes heavy externalities on genuine victims.**

## 6. A calibrated reform blueprint (law, institutions, finance, data, accountability)

### A. Law & SOPs

- 1) **Withdraw the blanket no-arrest approach;** replace with a **reasoned, risk-based matrix** (threat level, injuries, suicide risk, weapons, prior complaints) embedded in CrPC-aligned SOPs.
- 2) **Time-bound investigation:** 60–90 days outer limit; mandatory **spot-assessment** and **photographic/video documentation** of injuries/damage; protection orders under PWDVA to be sought **within 48 hours** where indicated.
- 3) **Victim-centric bail & no-contact orders:** Bail to incorporate **restraining conditions, electronic monitoring** in high-risk cases, and immediate **return of streedhan** via court-supervised inventory.
- 4) **Penalise malicious complaints ex-post,** not ex-ante: use existing false-case provisions; award **compensatory costs** where courts find deliberate fabrication.

### B. Institutions

- 1) **24x7 Domestic Violence Response Units** at district level pooling: (i) a **women police desk**, (ii) **Protection Officers (PWDVA)**, (iii) **medical/forensic nurse** and **legal aid**, (iv) **social worker** for safety-planning/shelter referral.
- 2) **One-Stop Centres** to be **co-located with district hospitals;** guaranteed **emergency shelter beds** (public & empanelled NGO homes).
- 3) **Independent Supervisory Cells** in each Commissionerate/Range to audit **non-registration**, delays, and SOP compliance; **monthly dashboards** to State DGP/Chief Justice's committee.

**SAFEGUARDING DUE PROCESS  
VS EVIDENCE-BASED  
REFORMS TO PROTECT WOMEN**

The infographic is divided into two main columns. The left column, titled 'SC ORDER SUSPENDING ARRESTS REVIVES "MISUSE" DEBATE', features an illustration of a judge and a scale of justice. It lists 'CONSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS' such as judicial overreach, equal protection, and procedural justice. The right column, titled 'WEAK MISUSE CLAIMS', features an illustration of a person behind bars and lists issues like low conviction rates, administrative bias, and high crime rates. Below this, it details 'EVIDENCE-BASED REFORMS' including risk-based arrest criteria, time-bound investigations, victim-centric bail, and 24x7 DV response units. A 'VS' icon is placed between the two columns. The source 'SosinIAS' is noted at the bottom right.

**SC ORDER SUSPENDING ARRESTS REVIVES "MISUSE" DEBATE**

SC ORDER SUSPENDING ARRESTS REVIVES 'MISUSE' DEBATE

**CONSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS**

- Judicial overreach
- Equal protection
- Procedural justice

**VS**

**WEAK MISUSE CLAIMS**

- Low conviction ≠ false cases
- Administrative bias
- Persistently high crime rate

**EVIDENCE-BASED REFORMS**

- Risk-based arrest criteria
- Time-bound investigation
- Victim-centric bail
- 24x7 DV response units

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### C. Financing

- 1) **Dedicated State DV & Cruelty-Response Fund** (earmarked under Nirbhaya-type head) for shelters, transport, counselling, forensic kits, electronic monitoring, and **victim compensation** (interim within **7 days**).
- 2) **Outcome-linked grants** to police districts and hospitals tied to **SOP compliance rates, time-to-first response, and survivor-satisfaction surveys**.

### D. Data & Digital public goods

- 1) **e-FIR & e-Protection-Order** modules integrated with hospital EMR; **panic-button/112** triggers **geo-tagged dispatch** and auto-creation of medico-legal case.
- 2) **Anonymised, publicly viewable dashboards**: FIRs registered, arrests with reasons, bail conditions, PWDVA orders, safety-plan uptake, and closure reasons—disaggregated by **caste, class, rural/urban** to reveal bias.
- 3) **Evidence integrity**: body-worn cameras for house visits, hash-locked storage for digital evidence; chain-of-custody audit trails.

### E. Accountability & capacity

- 1) **Personal liability & service-record entries** for officers who **refuse/delay FIRs**, ignore risk-matrix, or violate *Arnesh Kumar* (both sides of the error).

- 2) **Annual joint trainings** (police-prosecution-judiciary-medical-POs) on **trauma-informed interviewing**, lethality assessment, and bias mitigation; **bench books** for magistrates on bail conditions and speedy evidence recording.
- 3) **Community oversight**: District **Gender-Justice Committees** (with women’s collectives, bar, medical associations) to hear **monthly open reviews**; social audit reports tabled before the **State Women’s Commission** and placed online.

#### 7. Reconciling victim protection with due process—principles to hold

- **No ex-ante blanket immunities**: Due process is served by **reasoned arrest decisions**, **swift magisterial scrutiny**, and **speedy bail**, not by categorical embargoes.
- **Civil–criminal complementarity**: PWDVA protection orders, counselling and maintenance are **supportive**, not **pre-conditions** to criminal investigation.
- **Co-production, not paternalism**: Survivors must be treated as **rights-holders and co-navigators**, with clear information, choice of pathways, and protection against retaliation.

#### Conclusion:

- The *Shivangi Bansal* approach, though motivated by concerns over misuse, **creates a structural under-protection for women and trespasses into legislative space**. India already has **strong due-process guardrails** (*Arnesh Kumar*, bail jurisprudence, false-case penalties). The genuine way to balance rights is a **risk-sensitive, time-bound, accountable enforcement architecture**, coupled with **transparent data and survivor-centred services**. That is how the State upholds **gender justice and constitutional morality**—without sacrificing the due-process rights of the accused.

Source: The Hindu

### 1.10. RECONCILE ANIMAL WELFARE WITH CITIZEN SAFETY

#### Descriptive Question:

With reference to the Supreme Court’s recent direction to shelter all strays in Delhi–NCR, critically examine India’s legal framework and jurisprudence on stray-dog management. Analyse the public-health context and propose a practicable blueprint to reconcile animal welfare with citizen safety.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Why the issue matters now

- The Supreme Court has asked local bodies in Delhi–NCR to “pick up and house all stray dogs in shelters” within eight weeks after taking suo motu note of a “very disturbing” report about the death of a six-year-old due to dog bites.
- This sits uneasily with the established policy line: both Union rules and earlier court rulings prescribe **in-situ** population control—**sterilisation + vaccination (ABC)**—rather than mass removal.

- Meanwhile, the health burden is real: **~3.7 lakh** dog-bite cases were reported in 2023 (3.05 lakh in 2022). Government data record **54 deaths up to Feb 2025** (50 in 2023; 41 in 2022). India accounts for **~36% of global rabies deaths**; **~96%** of human rabies is dog-mediated. Dog-bite infection of the central nervous system is almost always fatal if PEP is not timely.

## 2. The current legal architecture

### a) Parent law

- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960**: the foundational animal-welfare statute; cruelty is prohibited; unnecessary pain is barred.

### b) Rules & policy

- **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules** (latest 2023): prescribe humane capture, **sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination**, ear-notching and **release “at the same place”** from where the dog was picked. They envisage feeding protocols and cooperation with RWAs/NGOs.
- **Municipal laws** (various States/UTs): provide public-health powers, dog licensing, and, in some States, old rules that once authorised culling. This duality created conflicts.

### c) Jurisprudence

- **Kerala HC (2011)**: local bodies cannot kill strays; bound by PCA & ABC regime.
- **Some HCs** (Bombay, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka): read municipal rules as allowing local action in specific situations, creating a patchwork.
- **Supreme Court (2015–22 lines of orders)**: sought a balance—compassion to animals, **no vigilantism**, designated feeding, and adherence to ABC; in **2022**, a three-judge bench underlined harmonised coexistence and held that human safety and animal welfare must both be protected.
- **2024–25**: in individual cases, the Court has shown impatience with implementation failure (e.g., Delhi–NCR direction), without yet rewriting the ABC framework.

### d) Constitutional frame

- **Art. 21** protects human life; **Art. 47** obliges the State to improve public health.
- **Art. 51A(g)** sets citizens’ duty to show compassion to living creatures; **A. Nagaraja (2014)** recognised animal dignity. The task is **reconciling** these values through reasonable, evidence-based regulation.

## 3. The ground reality & core deficits

- **Implementation gap**: ABC coverage far below the epidemiological threshold (~70% vaccination and sustained sterilisation) needed to bend population and rabies curves.
- **Capacity & logistics**: too few ABC centres, surgeons, dog-catcher teams; weak cold chain for vaccines; poor post-op care; shelters overcrowded where they exist.

- **Fragmented governance:** overlapping mandates—municipal corporations, State animal husbandry departments, health departments, and Animal Welfare Boards—without a single command-and-control room for rabies/ABC.
- **Waste management failures:** open garbage is a constant food source sustaining high dog densities.
- **Data darkness:** unreliable counts of dog populations, sterilisation/vaccination numbers, bite incidence and PEP availability.
- **Community conflict:** feeding wars, vigilantism, and litigation; lack of designated feeding zones and standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- **Pet-ownership externalities:** weak licensing, low compliance with vaccination/sterilisation, abandonment of pets that “go feral”.

## RECONCILE ANIMAL WELFARE WITH CITIZEN SAFETY

### WHY IT MATTERS

- Supreme Court directs **local bodies in Delhi-NCR** to pick up all strays for shelters
- ~**370,000 dog bites** in 2023: 95% of human rabies mediated by dogs
- Order departs from 2023 ABC Rules favoring in-situ stray management

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act</b> Prohibits cruelty and unnecessary pain</li> <li> <b>Supreme Court Bench 2016-22</b> Affirms in-situ stray management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules 2023</b> Prescribes sterilisation, rabies vaccination return/release</li> <li><b>Constitution Duty of compassion (Art: 51A(g))</b></li> </ul>
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### KEY DEFICITS

- Insufficient coverage of sterilisation/vaccination
- Fragmented responsibilities across local bodies, NGOs
- Lack of designated feeding zones, waste control

### A BLUEPRINT FOR CONSENSUS

- Clarify law on exceptions, align municipal by-laws
- One-Health coordination & dog census at city level
- Adequate financing tied to sterilisation/vaccination rates
- Waste control & assured post-exposure prophylaxis<sup>2</sup> (PEP)
- Transparent data & district-led monitoring
- Swift, humane enforcement & grievance redress

### EVALUATING MASS SHELTERING

- Feasibility: Resource-intensive; may contradict ABC Rules

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#### 4. Assessing the “round-up to shelters” approach

##### Feasibility & legality

- **ABC Rules require release at the site of capture** post sterilisation/vaccination; a **blanket, permanent removal** risks **contradicting the rules** unless tied to clear, narrowly tailored exceptions (rabid/aggressive dogs certified by vets; quarantine; construction/large events with risk assessments) and supported by adequate, humane shelters.
- **Mass sheltering is resource-intensive**, often creates disease clusters, and historically has not reduced street-dog populations unless coupled with sustained ABC and waste control.
- **Public safety**: in hotspots (e.g., near schools, anganwadis), targeted, time-bound removal for sterilisation, vaccination, and behaviour assessment, followed by release with monitoring, is consistent with ABC and safer when implemented rigorously.

**Bottom line:** A pure “pick-and-house-all” instruction is hard to execute lawfully and effectively at scale; the **evidence base** favours **high-coverage ABC + vaccination + waste control**, complemented by **risk-based, legal exceptions**.

#### 5. A practicable blueprint: reconcile animal welfare with citizen safety

##### A. Law & policy harmonisation

- 1) **Central clarification** under PCA/ABC: issue a **Model SOP** that (i) reaffirms ABC as default; (ii) defines **narrow exceptions** for temporary removal (rabid, vicious after behaviour assessment, bite clusters near vulnerable facilities), with **maximum timelines**, vet certification, and mandatory rehabilitation or return.
- 2) **Amend/align municipal bye-laws** to mirror ABC 2023: mandatory pet licensing, annual vaccination, sterilisation incentives, penalties for abandonment, and on-leash rules; empower ward-level officers to enforce.
- 3) **Designated feeding & conflict-management rules**: RWA-Municipality-AWB tripartite SOPs for feeding points away from children’s play areas, with cleaning duties and community volunteers.

##### B. Institutions & coordination

- 1) **City One-Health Command** (Municipal Commissioner as Incident Commander; Health, Animal Husbandry, Solid Waste, Education, AWB, Police, NGOs, RWAs): weekly dashboards, hotspot mapping, rapid response to bite clusters.
- 2) **Ward-level ABC Cells** with vetted NGOs: minimum surgical capacity, mobile sterilisation vans, post-op kennels, and community liaison.
- 3) **Shelter standards & accreditation**: BIS-like norms for kennelling, vet-to-dog ratios, quarantine bays, behavioural training; third-party audits; public grievance portals.

**C. Financing**

- 1) **Dedicated ABC–Rabies grants:** earmark funds within Health & Urban Development budgets; 15th/16th Finance Commission–style performance grants released against **coverage milestones** ( $\geq 70\%$  vaccination/sterilisation in each ward).
- 2) **Outcome-based contracts** with NGOs/PPP providers; payments linked to verified sterilisation/vaccination, humane handling, and reduction in bite incidence.
- 3) **Cost-sharing for pet compliance:** discounted licences for proof of sterilisation/vaccination; higher fees and fines for non-compliance.

**D. Data, tech & transparency**

- 1) **Unique Dog ID & microchipping** (for pets) and **QR-tagged ear-notches** (for strays); GIS mapping of dog colonies, ABC coverage, bins, schools, and bite hotspots.
- 2) **Open dashboards:** real-time counts of captures, surgeries, vaccinations, shelter occupancy, and citizen complaints; monthly third-party validation.
- 3) **Rabies surveillance:** integrate IDSP data with hospital PEP logs; 24×7 rabies helpline and stock trackers to avoid PEP stockouts.

**E. Public-health measures**

- 1) **Assured, free PEP availability** within 30 minutes at Mohalla clinics/UPHCs; auto-refill triggers when stocks fall below par.
- 2) **Garbage discipline:** daily lifting, dog-proof bins, penalties on commercial establishments for open waste; link SWM performance to ABC outcomes.
- 3) **School & anganwadi safety plan:** dog-safe perimeters, awareness on bite prevention and first aid.

**F. Accountability & grievance redress**

- 1) **Time-bound SLAs:** capture–sterilise–vaccinate–release within 7–10 days; complaint closure within 72 hours in hotspot wards.
- 2) **Independent oversight:** district magistrate–led quarterly audits; social audit with RWA/NGO participation; publish non-compliance and corrective action.
- 3) **Humane enforcement:** strict penalties for cruelty or illegal culling; equally, action against feeding that obstructs public spaces or endangers children contrary to SOPs.

**6. Conclusion**

- India’s law and jurisprudence favour **humane, science-based, in-situ management** of street dogs; public health demands **measurable reductions in bites and rabies**. The way to reconcile them is **not** ad-hoc round-ups, but **high-coverage ABC and vaccination, waste control, risk-based temporary removals with due process, strong institutions, finance, and open data, and shared civic responsibility**. Done together, these measures protect both **citizens’ right to safety (Art. 21)** and **the constitutional ethic of compassion (Art. 51A(g))**, replacing episodic panic with accountable, city-wide outcomes.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 1.11. REASONS FOR LOW CADAVERIC DONATION

#### Descriptive Question:

Critically examine why cadaveric donation is so low despite the Transplantation of Human Organs & Tissues Act, 1994 (THOTA), and rising transplant volumes.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Background and the scale of the gap

- **Burden:** More than **0.5 million** Indians die each year for want of an organ.
- **Supply:** Transplants have grown (4,990 → **18,378** between 2013–2023), but deceased donors were just **1,099** last year; most grafts still come from living related donors.
- **Rate:** India's **cadaveric donation rate = 0.8 pmp**, far below leaders (>45 pmp) — signalling a systemic, not cultural, failure.

#### 2. Why deceased donation remains low

##### a) Demand–side myths & social barriers

- Fears that donation disfigures bodies, violates religious mandates, or impedes funeral rites.
- Misbeliefs on **age/health** (“only young accident victims can donate”) and confusion about who is eligible.
- Family grief, mistrust of hospitals, and absence of empathetic counselling at the moment of loss.

##### b) Supply–side system gaps

- **ICU and trauma coverage:** limited critical-care capacity; brain-death is under-detected and under-declared.
- **Hospital readiness:** few trained transplant coordinators; weak donor-identification triggers; no routine “donor audit”.
- **Coordination & logistics:** patchy retrieval teams, cold-chain/OR preparedness, and interstate allocation frictions.
- **Governance & ethics:** uneven functioning of NOTTO/ROTTTO/SOTTO grids; variable Authorization Committees; sporadic public data; occasional scandals fuel distrust.
- **Financial disincentives:** hospitals spend unreimbursed time/resources for brain-death testing, counselling, organ maintenance.
- **Legal-procedural friction:** brain-stem death certification not uniformly practiced; family veto prevails even after prior consent; medico-legal cases delay organ retrieval.

##### c) Communication deficit

- Health workers rarely initiate structured, compassionate conversations; public education is episodic, not continuous.

### 3. What India already has—and why it isn't enough

- **THOTA 1994 (amended)** defines brain-stem death, sets ethics committees, prohibits commerce; **Rules** prescribe multidisciplinary brain-death testing and documentation.
- **NOTTO** network exists for allocation/registry; “green corridors” occasionally enable quick transport.
- Yet **operationalisation** is uneven: testing is not routine, coordinators are few, data aren't real-time, and families lack assured support—so lawful possibilities don't convert to donations.

### 4. Ethical north star

- **Respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, justice** (equitable access), and **trust**. Any acceleration must protect rights, prevent coercion, and maintain transparent allocation to avoid “organs for the rich” optics.



## 5. A practicable reform blueprint

### A) Law & consent architecture

#### 1) THOTA+ Rules upgrade to:

- Mandate **routine brain-death determination** for all ventilated catastrophic brain injury in ICUs; require **donor referral** to coordinators.
- Recognise **“soft” presumed consent** (opt-out) only after readiness: start with **opt-in+priority** models (see Israel) where registered donors (and their families) receive allocation priority, then evaluate pilots for opt-out in consenting States with strong safeguards.
- Provide a **family-support legal framework** (bereavement leave, grief services, expense reimbursements) without monetising organs.
- Standardise **family veto** handling where the deceased’s documented consent should be determinative, with sensitive mediation.

### B) Institutions & workforce

- 2) **Transplant coordination cadre**: fund **24×7 hospital-based coordinators** in all tertiary ICUs; certify via a national curriculum; tie hospital empanelment to having coordinators and donor audits.
- 3) **Strengthen NOTTO/ROTTTO/SOTTO**:
  - Real-time **national wait-list** and **organ tracking**; public dashboards on offers, acceptances, cold ischaemia times, outcomes.
  - Inter-State allocation protocols to reduce inequity and organ wastage.
- 4) **Critical-care expansion**: earmark PM-ABHIM & State funds to add **ICU beds, neuro-critical care**, and operating slots at trauma centres; create **mobile retrieval teams**.

### C) Financing & incentives (system-facing, not family-facing)

- 1) **Package reimbursement**: under AB-PMJAY/State schemes, pay hospitals for brain-death testing, donor maintenance, retrieval, and counselling time; performance-linked grants for **donor identification rate** and **conversion rate**.
- 2) **Insurance clarity**: ensure medicolegal coverage for clinicians following protocol; fast-track MLC clearances with **24×7 magistrate nodal desk**.

### D) Data, transparency & accountability

- 1) **Digital backbone**: integrate NOTTO with **ABDM** for verified IDs, e-consent, and audit trails; publish **quarterly outcome and equity reports** (organ offers by income, gender, region).
- 2) **Oversight**: independent **Ethics & Audit Board** to probe deviations, report publicly, and sanction errant facilities—deterrence against sensational incidents that damage trust.

**E) Communication & culture**

- 1) **Clinician-led conversations:** mandatory **communication skills** and **grief-counselling** training; SOPs for family meetings within a defined window after brain-death.
- 2) **Sustained social mobilisation:**
  - School/college curriculum inserts; **peer ambassadors** (recipients & donor families) on TV/social media.
  - **Faith-leader endorsements** compiled in local languages; myth-busting on body integrity and funeral rites.
  - **Annual “Donate Life Week”** with mass on-site registrations (link to DigiLocker/Aadhaar for e-consent) and workplace drives.

**F) Equity & allocation fairness**

- 1) **One nation, one wait-list logic** with **clinical priority** (MELD/urgency scores) and **time-on-list**, plus safeguards against queue-jumping by wealth or geography; publish **post-transplant outcomes** by centre to curb cherry-picking.

**6. Managing legitimate concerns**

- **Coercion risk (under opt-out):** begin with **opt-in plus priority** + robust family-support system; move to opt-out only after independent evaluation shows high protocol fidelity.
- **Commercialisation fears:** strict separation of transplant coordination from treating teams; harsh penalties for brokers; transparency by default.
- **Mistrust after adverse events:** rapid disclosure protocols, no-fault compensation for proven procedural lapses.

**7. What success would look like (measurables)**

- **Brain-death identification rate** and **donor conversion rate** rising year-on-year;
- **Cadaveric donation rate** to **3–5 pmp in 3 years, 10+ pmp in 7–8 years**;
- **Median wait time** reduced; **post-transplant survival** published and improving;
- **Public trust index** (surveys on willingness to donate) trending up.

**Conclusion:**

- India’s problem is **not cultural resistance alone**; it is a **trust-and-systems deficit**. THOTA provides the ethical scaffolding, but delivery lags in ICUs, coordination, counselling, and transparent data. With a **rights-respecting consent pathway**, funded hospital preparedness, accountable registries, and year-round myth-busting, organ donation can shift from sporadic heroism to a **reliable public good**—turning preventable deaths into **second chances at life**.

**Sour: The Hindu.**

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## 1.12. ERODING ACADEMIC FREEDOM ON CAMPUSES

### Descriptive Question:

“Why is academic freedom the core ‘public good’ of universities?”

In the Indian context, examine how regulatory over-reach, politicised control and disciplinary chill have eroded this freedom on campuses.

### Answer:

#### 1. Why academic freedom matters (the first principles)

- **Epistemic good:** Universities exist to ask unsettling questions and contest received wisdom. Curiosity, falsification and argument—not conformity—drive knowledge creation and excellence.
- **Pedagogic good:** Students learn critical thinking only when teachers can freely teach, research and speak (inside and outside the classroom) without fear of sanction.
- **Civic-economic good:** Open inquiry sustains democratic culture, innovation and long-run productivity; constraining it lowers research quality, discourages talent and harms growth.

#### 2. India’s present architecture

- **Constitutional frame:** Art. 19(1)(a) (free speech), Art. 19(1)(g) (profession), and Art. 51A(h) (develop scientific temper) implicitly protect academic freedom, subject to reasonable restrictions.
- **Statutory/regulatory:** The **UGC Act, 1956** and allied regulations govern standards, funding and recognition; autonomous-college and IoE schemes promise graded autonomy; the **NEP 2020** envisages HECI (NHERC/NAC/HEGC/GEC) and multidisciplinary, self-governing universities.
- **Governance practice:** Public universities are created by Central/State laws; VCs and key administrators are appointed through search-cum-selection committees; statutes allow statutes/ordinances for discipline, research, finance and examinations.

#### 3. The core deficits on the ground

##### 1) Politicised control & appointment processes

- Discretionary VC and governing-body selections; external approvals for seminars, speakers and collaborations; intrusive event permissions and last-minute cancellations.

##### 2) Regulatory over-reach & procedural choke points

- Dense compliance with multiple bodies (UGC, state councils, finance, audit, vigilance), causing fear of post-facto objections; heavy reporting burdens crowd out research and teaching.

### 3) **Disciplinary “chill” and extra-mural speech**

- Faculty asked to sign undertakings that they will not criticise governments; social-media posts triggering inquiries; vague codes on “bringing disrepute” used to penalise dissent; ad-hoc/contract appointments amplify vulnerability.

### 4) **Funding and career insecurity**

- Short, uncertain grants; limited peer-reviewed, investigator-led funding; delayed fellowships; high share of temporary teachers; weak research infrastructure and admin support.

### 5) **Campus securitisation**

- Police presence or permissions for discussions; surveillance technologies and “permission raj” converting open forums into managed spectacles.

### 6) **Fragmented accountability**

- Grievance, sexual-harassment and ethics bodies exist but often lack independence, time-bound processes and protection for whistle-blowers.

### 7) **Outcomes**

- Diminished willingness to undertake frontier or policy-relevant research; avoidance of controversial themes in social sciences and humanities; lower international collaborations and talent attraction.

*(Comparative note: Similar erosions have been noted elsewhere—e.g., curbs on CEU in Hungary; culture-war politics in parts of the US—showing that vigilance is a systemic, not partisan, necessity.)*

## 4. **A practicable reform blueprint: Autonomy with responsibility**

### A. **Law & policy**




- **Enact an “Academic Freedom & University Autonomy Act”.**
  - Define academic freedom (teaching, research, intramural governance, extra-mural speech).
  - Make adverse action permissible only under *narrow, clearly-worded* grounds (incitement to violence, unlawful discrimination, gross professional misconduct), with due process.
  - Bar political/ideological vetting in appointments or research approvals; safeguard extramural speech as personal opinion.
- **Amend the UGC Act** to create an **arms-length regulator** with a single-window, risk-based compliance system and a **“comply-or-explain”** approach rather than permissions for everyday activities.
- **Incorporate UNESCO (1997) Recommendations** and **Magna Charta Universitatum** principles into domestic regulations.

**B. Governance & institutions**





- **Depoliticise leadership:** time-bound, transparent search committees with public criteria; diversity & conflict-of-interest disclosures; external observers; published shortlists.
- **Statutory Academic Senates** with decisive say over curricula, research priorities and events; make **faculty–student charters** justiciable within the university.
- **Independent Ombudspersons** (with security of tenure) for speech/discipline disputes; mandatory reasoned orders; appeal to a state-level Academic Freedom Tribunal.
- **Insulate ethics/IRB, grievance and ICC bodies** through external members and fixed terms; protect whistle-blowers.
- **Police-on-campus protocol:** entry only on written request by the head of institution or by court order, with post-event reporting.

**ERODING ACADEMIC FREEDOM ON CAMPUSES**





**WHY ACADEMIC FREEDOM MATTERS**

 <b>Epistemic good</b> Universities exist to ask unsettling <b>questions</b> and contest received wisdom	 <b>Pedagogic good</b> Students learn critical thinking only when <b>teachers can freely teach, research</b>	 <b>Civic-economic good</b> Open inquiry sustains democratic culture, Innovation and long-run productivity
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**THE CORE DEFICITS ON THE GROUND**

 <b>Politicised control &amp; appointments</b> Intrusive event permissions; arbitrary cancellations	 <b>Disciplinary "chill" &amp; extra-mural speech</b> Social-media concern triggers inquiries; penalising dissent
 <b>Regulatory over-reach</b> Heavy compliance burdens; less teaching, more red tape	 <b>Campus securitisation</b> Police controls on assemblies; surveillance tools

**A PRACTICABLE REFORM BLUEPRINT**

 <b>Law &amp; policy</b> Enact an Academic Freedom & University Autonomy Act	 <b>Due process &amp; speech codes</b> Facilitate debate; protect extramural speech; provide reasoned orders
 <b>Governance</b> De-politicise leadership; empower Academic debates	 <b>Financing &amp; careers</b> Stabilise funding; merit based tenure; open science

### C. Financing & careers

- **Shift to block grants** (multi-year) tied to peer-reviewed outputs and research integrity, not to ideological conformity or event permissions.
- **Stabilise academic careers:** reduce ad-hocism; merit-based tenure with periodic review; mobility schemes; sabbaticals; administrative support for grants/IP.
- **Open science infrastructure:** repositories, data management, legal support for OSP/IP, and centralised contracting for collaborations to cut petty vetoes.

### D. Due process & speech codes

- Adopt **AAUP-style** principles:
  - *Intramural* freedom (classroom and scholarship), *extramural* speech (as citizens), and *institutional* autonomy.
  - No discipline without prior notice, clear charge, access to evidence, representation, and an independent panel; reasoned decisions within set timelines.

### E. Data, transparency & accountability

- Publish an **Academic Freedom Dashboard** for each HEI (appointments, disciplinary cases, event denials/cancellations, grant delays, RTI responsiveness).
- Annual “**state of academic freedom**” reports tabled in Parliament/State Assemblies.
- Third-party audits of ethics compliance and research-integrity (not ideology) with corrective-action plans.

### F. Culture & capacity

- Train administrators in **content-neutral regulation**; create campus mediation services; invest in research administrators and legal cells; embed debate & dissent in student orientation.

## 5. Balancing autonomy with accountability

- **Autonomy** is for truth-seeking, not impunity. Therefore:
  - Robust financial audit, plagiarism & research-integrity checks, and affirmative-action compliance must continue.
  - Speech is protected, but hate speech, targeted harassment, and direct incitement to violence are sanctionable under narrowly drafted, viewpoint-neutral codes.

## 6. Conclusion:

- Academic freedom is not a corporate perk of professors; it is a **public good** that underwrites democratic citizenship, scientific discovery and long-run prosperity. India’s dense permission regime, politicised appointments and disciplinary chill corrode this good. A rights-based law, arms-length regulation, due-process guarantees, stable funding and transparent governance can **restore the university’s compact with society**—free minds, rigorous scholarship and fearless debate, with accountability.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 1.13. CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM – INVESTIGATION QUALITY

#### Descriptive Question:

“Recent acquittals in the 2008 Malegaon blast case and the 2006 Mumbai suburban-train blast case expose deep inconsistencies in India’s criminal justice process.”

Critically examine what these trajectories reveal about investigation quality, prosecutorial conduct, due-process safeguards, media–politics influence, and judicial oversight.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Why these two cases matter

- **Malegaon blasts (Sept 29, 2008):** 6 killed, 101 injured. Investigated over years by **Local Crime Branch (Nashik), ATS and later NIA**; the trial ran **17 years** and **all accused were acquitted** for lack of legally sustainable evidence.
- **Mumbai train blasts (July 11, 2006):** 7 coordinated explosions, **187–189 killed, 800+ injured**. ATS charged **13 persons**; trial concluded in **~6 years** with convictions, but on **appeal the Bombay High Court acquitted all 13**, holding that the record did not contain **legally tenable** evidence to sustain guilt.
- Together, they highlight two archetypes of failure: (a) **endless trials ending in acquittal** after destroying lives; (b) **convictions later overturned** because the chain of proof could not meet the “beyond reasonable doubt” standard.

##### 2. What the verdicts said—systemic lapses, not mere technicalities

- Courts stressed: **suspicion ≠ proof**; findings must rest on **reliable, cogent, acceptable evidence**, not on narratives or public perceptions.
- Repeated **investigative defects**:
  - **Chain-of-custody breaks**; “unwarranted procedure in collection of samples”; **failure to perform one’s duty**.
  - **Sanctions under special laws (UAPA)** not properly validated; selective use of executive approvals.
  - **Over-reliance on confessions/“disclosures”**, weak corroboration, and inconsistent witness testimonies.
  - **Administrative/procedural lapses** that courts cannot cure post-facto.
- Message from benches: **Courts are bound by Constitution and precedent**, not by popular moods; they **cannot lower evidentiary standards** to rescue poor investigations.

##### 3. The broader pathologies on display

- **Investigations as instruments of narrative**, not truth: early announcements, selective leaks, and tunnel-vision can contaminate evidence and bias the case theory.
- **Prosecutorial inertia and weak case strategy**: late corrections, poor witness preparation, and inadequate appreciation of forensic science.

- **Media trial & political reaction:** identity-centred narratives distract from facts; post-verdict responses differ across cases, undermining public trust and creating a sense of “unequal justice”.
  - **Time, liberty, stigma:** years of incarceration, bail denials, and social ostracism—followed by acquittal—amount to **punishment without conviction**; victims’ families meanwhile see **no closure**.
- 4. Due-process blind spots under special laws**
- **UAPA & similar statutes** lower thresholds for custody and bail, making **pre-trial incarceration the norm**; when cases collapse, **remedies are thin**.
  - **Sanction** and **authorisation** requirements are frequently mishandled; **forensic standards** lag; digital/physical evidence often fails reliability tests.
- 5. What a just system must secure**
- **Fair investigation** (Article 21 due-process) + **effective prosecution** + **impartial adjudication** + **victim dignity & closure** + **protection against wrongful prosecution**. All five failed in varying degrees.
- 6. Reform blueprint: from first response to final remedy**
- A) Investigation & Forensics**
- 1) **National Investigation Standards Code** under CrPC/BNSS rules: mandatory SOPs on crime-scene preservation, seizure, chain-of-custody, digital forensics, and audio-video recording of searches & interrogations.
  - 2) **Independent Forensic Service** with NABL-grade labs; **court-facing forensic officers**; ISO-based evidence handling; routine **blind proficiency testing**.
  - 3) **Case-theory audits:** periodic external peer review of investigation hypotheses to curb tunnel vision; compulsory **disclosure of exculpatory material** (Brady-like rule).
  - 4) **Time-bound forensic timelines**; sanctions on avoidable delays; **consequence management** for willful lapses (service rules + contempt where appropriate).
- B) Prosecution & Trial Management**
- 1) **Independent Directorates of Prosecution** insulated from police hierarchy; merit-based Special Public Prosecutor panels with case-caps and performance metrics (conviction quality, not rate).
  - 2) **Early & continuous disclosure:** full evidence lists, expert reports, and **electronic case files** to defence; enforce **mens rea of deliberate suppression** as professional misconduct.
  - 3) **Witness care & protection:** relocation, income support, trauma care; scheduled depositions to reduce hostility and attrition.

- 4) **Judicial case-flow management:** split trials where necessary; strict adjournment discipline; **structured judgments** that map every link in the chain of circumstances.

**C) Special laws & custodial safeguards**

- 1) **Tighten UAPA sanctions:** independent Sanction Review Boards; **speaking orders** referencing evidence; automatic judicial review within fixed days.
- 2) **Bail as a rule** after defined investigation milestones unless specific, reviewable risks are shown; **statutory sunset on under-trial detention** crossing thresholds without framing of charge.
- 3) **Mandatory audiovisual recording** of interrogations; exclude unrecorded custodial statements unless independently corroborated.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM – INVESTIGATION QUALITY

KEY CASES SPOTLIGHT	WHAT THESE CASES TEACH
<p><b>MALEAGAON BLAST (2008)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 killed, &gt;100 injured</li> <li>• 17-year-long trial, all accused acquitted in 2025 after no legally sustainable evidence found</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Substantial Proof</b> Courts demand <b>congnigence</b> not narratives</li> <li>✓ <b>Prosecutorial gaps</b> Late strategy shifts, poor witness prep, weak forensics use</li> <li>✓ <b>Media &amp; politics</b> Trial by media, (dentity narratives, post-verdic backlash</li> <li>✓ <b>Pretrial detention</b> Years lost in jail, stigma, no closure for victims</li> </ul>
<p><b>MUMBAI TRAIN BLASTS (2006)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 169 killed,</li> <li>• 6-year trial end with convictions poor procedures, administrative lapses, HC acquitted all</li> <li>• Over-reliance on confessions, inconsistent witnesses</li> </ul>	
<p>“High suspicion isn’t enough to convict” – NIA Court, 2025</p>	<p><b>DUE-PROCES CHALLENGES</b></p>
<p><b>BROADER PATHOLOGIGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔍 <b>Narrative-driven probes</b> Early leaks, biased case theory, tainted evidence</li> <li>🗣️ <b>Prosecution gaps</b> Late strategy shifts, poor witness prep, weak forensics use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔬 <b>Investigation &amp; Forensics</b> National standards code, NABL-grade labs, peer audits</li> <li>⚖️ <b>Prosecution &amp; Trial</b> Independent prosecution, early disclosure, witness protection, trial discipline</li> <li>🏠 <b>Custodial Safeguards</b> Independent sanction boards, automatic judicial review, bail after set milestones</li> <li>👮 <b>Accountability &amp; Remedy</b> Wrongful Prosecution Act fast compensation, public misconduct reports</li> <li>⚖️ <b>Media Guidetines</b> Judicial media cells <b>SosiniAS</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Core message:</b> Malegaon &amp; Mumbai cases expose deep systemic deficits -verified evidence, procedural gaps, narrative prosecutions, and punishment without conviction.</p>	

**D) Accountability & Remedies**

- 1) **Wrongful Prosecution (Prevention & Compensation) Act** at Union/state levels: time-bound declaratory relief, structured compensation, sealing of records, rehabilitation.
- 2) **Internal affairs/independent complaints bodies** for police & prosecution to investigate misconduct; **annual public reports** of lapses and actions taken.
- 3) **Performance dashboards** (open data): arrest-to-charge-sheet times, forensic turnaround, acquittal-after-long-incarceration counts; flags for remedial training.

**E) Victims and Community**

- 1) **Victim liaison officers** and **family information protocols**; access to case diaries' non-sensitive parts; participation rights at key stages.
- 2) **Post-acquittal pathways**: automatic review to identify what failed; dignified public communication to victims and acquitted persons.

**F) Media & Public Communication**

- 1) **Model Media Guidelines** for sub judge matters: fact sheets vetted by prosecution; prohibition of identity-based insinuations; penalties for leaking protected material that can taint trials.
- 2) **Judicial media cells** to supply verified updates and reduce speculation.

**G) Institutional Architecture**

- 1) **Permanent Criminal Justice Reform Commission** to continuously update SOPs, training, and metrics across police–prosecution–forensics–prisons.
- 2) **Capacity building**: specialist terror/complex-crime investigators, digital forensics cadres, and prosecutors trained in circumstantial-evidence mapping.

**7. Conclusion:**

- **The Malegaon and Mumbai trajectories are not outliers; they spotlight a structural deficit of legality—weak investigations, narrative-driven prosecutions, and years of liberty lost before courts finally apply the correct evidentiary bar. A credible justice system must** punish the guilty swiftly and protect the innocent certainly. **That requires** forensic rigour, prosecutorial independence, custodial safeguards, measured use of special laws, and enforceable accountability **for state actors. Only then can India deliver justice that is both effective and equal—to victims, to the accused, and to the Republic.**

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.14. INDIA'S CHANGING CONSERVATION ARCHITECTURE

### Descriptive Question:

In the light of contemporary thinking that treats heritage as living, people-centred and ecological, critically examine India's present conservation architecture (laws, institutions, funding and practice).

### Answer

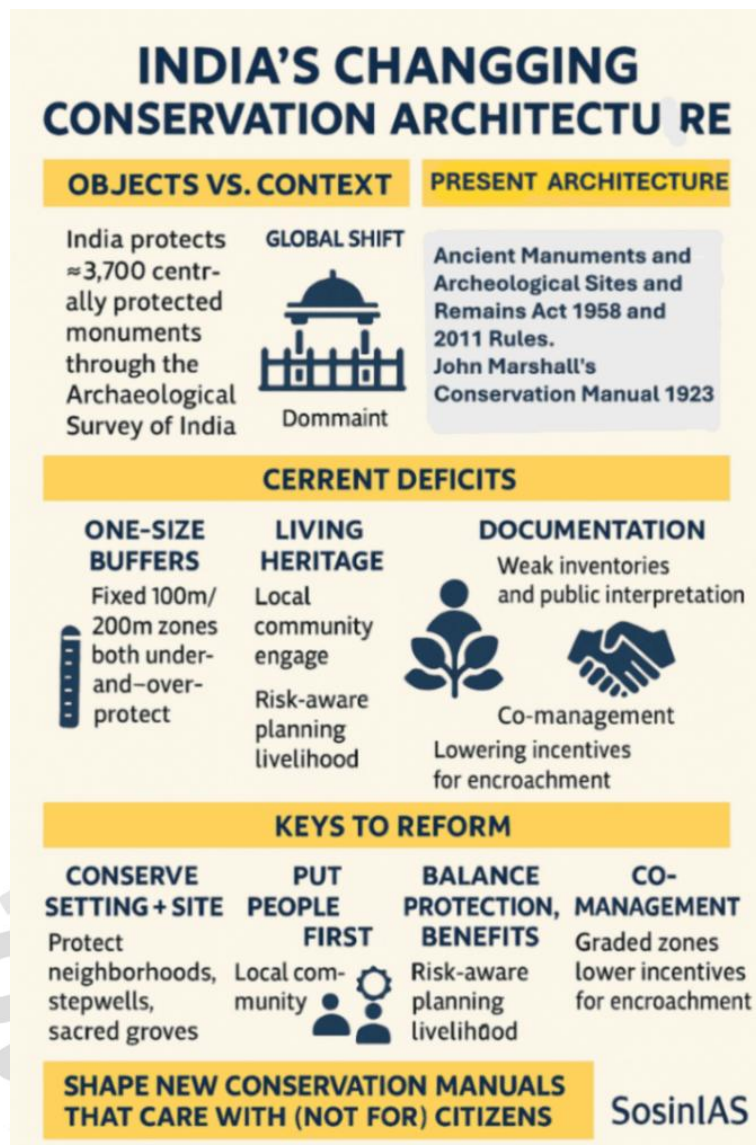
#### 1. Why this debate now

- India protects ~3,700 centrally protected monuments through the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR) and Rules, 2011. The law creates a 100-metre “prohibited” and 200-metre “regulated” zone around listed sites, and vests care in the ASI and State archaeology departments.
- Yet the dominant method remains object-centric: select, fence, repair, polish. A richer, *people-centred* conservation grammar has emerged worldwide—UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach (2011), ICCROM's people-centred frameworks, and risk-informed heritage management—that integrates communities, livelihoods, nature and urban planning.
- India also faces hard truths: a Parliamentary panel confirmed that dozens of listed monuments are “untraceable”, pointing to weak inventories, signage and local anchoring. Climate stresses, biological deterioration (e.g., fungi, biofilms), and rapid urbanisation complicate the old ‘repair and fence’ paradigm.

#### 2. Present architecture—what works, what doesn't

##### Norms & institutions

- **AMASR, 1958/2011 Rules:** clear central authority; uniform buffers; criminal penalties for damage.
- **ASI:** national custodian; issues conservation manuals since John Marshall's 1923 *Conservation Manual*; runs the National Mission on Monuments & Antiquities (NMMA).
- **Schemes & partnerships:** HRIDAY (urban heritage), Smart Cities heritage components, NDMA guidelines on cultural-heritage risk reduction, and exemplary PPP/community projects (e.g., Nizamuddin Urban Renewal linking conservation with health, skills and livelihoods).



### Persistent deficits observable on the ground

- 1) **Object-over-context:** Restoration often isolates a monument from its living neighbourhood, natural systems (water bodies, groves, soils) and traditional building physics (e.g., natural ventilation of havelis), reducing resilience and public ownership.
- 2) **One-size-fits-all buffers:** Uniform 100m/200m rings can both under-protect landscapes (stepwells, temple tanks, riverfront ghats) and over-police lived precincts, breeding resentment instead of stewardship.
- 3) **Weak inventories & interpretation:** Missing/poorly documented sites; monolingual or minimalist signage; limited inclusive storytelling and accessibility.
- 4) **Capacity & science gaps:** Limited mycology, materials science and climate-risk expertise in routine works; ad-hoc maintenance; contractor-led works without rigorous peer review.

- 5) **Fragmented financing & accountability:** Thin, project-wise budgets; weak community benefit-sharing; limited KPIs; few third-party audits.
- 6) **Disaster/climate preparedness** remains inconsistent despite national guidance.

### 3. Principles for a citizen-led “Conservation Manual 2.0”

Drawing from constitutional duties (Art. 49, 51A(f)), global best practice (HUL, ICCROM) and Indian successes (Humayun’s Tomb–Nizamuddin Basti), the new manual should move from a *repair-and-fence* logic to a *care-with-community* logic built on seven principles:

- 1) **Context before object** – conserve site + setting (streets, step-wells, tanks, trees, wind paths, craft clusters).
- 2) **People at the centre** – treat residents, users, pilgrims, artisans and visitors as co-stewards, not bystanders.
- 3) **Many kinds of knowledge** – bring translators, historians, biologists/mycologists, hydrologists, conservation architects and accessibility experts to the same table; communicate in local languages.
- 4) **Risk-informed, climate-ready** – mainstream hazard, bio-deterioration and climate projections into every plan.
- 5) **Open data & learning** – transparent inventories, public archives, periodic peer review.
- 6) **Benefit-sharing** – livelihoods (guiding, crafts, maintenance), skills programmes and small enterprise opportunities for local communities, as shown in Nizamuddin.
- 7) **Ethics & reversibility** – minimum intervention, material authenticity, reversibility of new works, independent oversight.

### 4. The reform blueprint

#### A) Legal & policy

- **Amend AMASR for *graded, context-specific* protection:** Replace rigid rings with risk-based zoning (core, buffer, landscape) aligned with HUL; mandate *Heritage Impact Assessment* (HIA) for all major works; provide for co-management agreements with local bodies and communities.
- **Harmonise town-planning by-laws:** Heritage by-laws in Master Plans; integrate HRIDAY/Smart Cities tools; allow traditional materials and passive-design revival where authentic.
- **Codify rights & responsibilities of local custodians** (resident committees, shrine trusts, craft guilds) under MoUs with ASI/States; create clear do-no-harm protocols for festivals/processions.

#### B) Institutions & roles

- **Site-level Heritage Councils** chaired by ASI/State Archaeology with seats for ward panchayats/ULBs, local historians, women’s groups, persons with disabilities, nature experts and traders’ bodies.

- **Regional Science Hubs** (conservation labs) for stone, timber, lime, bio-growth, and climate modelling; deploy mobile labs and rapid advisory teams during monsoon/flood events.
- **Professional pathways:** accredit conservators; continuous training with ICCROM/INTACH/Universities; embed translators and interpreters as part of project teams.

### C) Finance

- **Multi-source pool:** National Culture Fund + CSR with guardrails; site-retention of a share of ticket revenues; heritage bonds for city-scale precincts; convergence with MGNREGS/AMRUT for water-body and street-improvement works that are heritage-sensitive; micro-grants for community maintenance.
- **Outcome-linked disbursements** with KPIs (condition index, visitor learning scores, jobs created for locals, carbon and water metrics).

### D) Science, conservation & maintenance

- **Mandatory Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)** with: pathology/mycology diagnosis; passive design (e.g., re-opening wind passages in havelis); material compatibility (lime over cement in historic masonry); vegetation/water management; *maintenance* cycles (not one-off projects); and reversible additions.
- **Risk & disaster plans** at every site—evacuation, fire, flood, heat, crowd management—benchmarked to NDMA/UNESCO manuals.

### E) Data, interpretation & participation

- **Open, living inventory:** crowd-map assets through the NMMA; QR-linked multilingual interpretation; tactile and audio guides; school heritage clubs.
- **Citizen science:** structured programmes to monitor cracks, salt blooms, algal growth, vandalism, and water levels—feeding a public dashboard; annual “heritage audit days”.
- **Inclusive storytelling:** interpret inscriptions, foodways, crafts, rituals—bridging built and intangible heritage under the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

### F) Accountability

- Publish CMPs, budgets, tender drawings and *before–after* datasets online; independent peer review panels; social-audit style public hearings; grievance redress with time-bound responses; and ethics codes for contractors.

## 5. Illustrative Indian pathway

- **Precinct-based pilots** (not just single monuments): temple-tank landscapes in Tamil Nadu; baolis-bazaars in Delhi; stepwells and pols in Ahmedabad; river ghats in Varanasi. Apply graded zoning, integrate water restoration, regulate signage, enable artisan livelihoods and women-led guiding cooperatives.

- **Scale what works:** The Nizamuddin Basti model—health, education, crafts and housing tied to the conservation of Humayun’s Tomb and Sunder Nursery—demonstrates how people-centred conservation increases volunteerism, reduces encroachment pressure and sustains upkeep.

## 6. Conclusion:

- India’s conservation journey began with John Marshall’s 1923 manual; a century later, the next manual must be co-written with citizens. By shifting from *objects to ecosystems, from ownership to stewardship, and from projects to care cycles*, India can protect its past while creating dignified local work, greener cities and climate-ready cultural landscapes—turning every monument from a fenced relic into a shared, living classroom.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 1.15. TRUE EMPOWERMENT BEYOND APPLAUSE

#### Descriptive Question:

Critically examine India’s victim-support and justice architecture (police, courts, legal aid, compensation, POSH) and propose a survivor-centred blueprint—law, institutions, finance, psychosocial care, employment and accountability—to ensure courtroom wins translate into safety, livelihoods and dignity.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Why this debate matters

- India has a dense legal grid on violence against women—**IPC/Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita provisions on cruelty/sexual offences**, the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA, 2005)**, **POCSO**, **POSH Act (2013)**, **CrPC/Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita victim compensation (357A) & Witness Protection Scheme (2018)**, **One Stop Centres (Sakhi)** and **free legal aid (LSA Act)**.
- Yet the **lived trajectory** of a low-income complainant is bleak: retaliation, social boycott, eviction from workspaces, long pendency, legal costs, character assassination, and post-verdict insecurity. “Empowerment” is often **performative**—awards and headlines—without **structural scaffolding** to rebuild her life.

#### 2. Gaps across the justice chain

##### a) Reporting & investigation

- Inconsistent registration of **Zero-FIR**, weak trauma-informed interviewing, delayed **forensics** and medico-legal exams, patchy use of special investigators, poor translation/interpretation for migrants and the disabled.
- Digital intimidation/doxing rarely triggers rapid relief.

**b) Prosecution & trial**

- Repeated adjournments, insensitive cross-examination, exposure of identity, and over-reliance on “character” or delay arguments deter pursuit.
- **Special courts** exist but caseloads are high; **victim’s counsel** is not guaranteed in many courts; **video-testimony** and screen shields are underused.

**c) Protection & livelihoods**

- **Witness protection** is uneven; safe housing is scarce; survivors routinely **lose jobs** or clients, particularly domestic and informal workers.
- Compensation under **357A** is slow; out-of-pocket legal/medical costs push families into **debt**; long-term counselling is treated as charity, not a right.

**d) Workplace justice (POSH)**


- Many Internal Committees are formalities; complainants face retaliation, “confidential” settlements that end careers, and weak enforcement for **gig, domestic and informal workers** outside classic employer–employee relations.

**3. Principles for “true empowerment”**

- 1) **Survivor-centred**: informed choice, dignity, and control over pace and process.
- 2) **Whole-of-life remedies**: safety + health + income + justice.
- 3) **Do-no-harm**: trauma-informed policing, prosecution and adjudication.
- 4) **Accessibility & affordability**: no survivor should drop a case for lack of money, language help or transport.
- 5) **Accountability**: measurable outcomes with transparent redress against state and corporate non-compliance.

# TRUE EMPOWERMENT BEYOND APPLAUSE

## SHORTCOMINGS IN INDIA'S VICTIM-SUPPORT & JUSTICE ARCHITECTURE

<b>REPORTING &amp; INVESTIGATION</b>  Zero FIR registration is inconsistent: delays in forensics and special probe teams	<b>PROSECUTION &amp; TRIAL</b>  Case delays and harsh questioning deter pursuit, victim's counsel	<b>PROTECTION &amp; LIVELIHOODS</b>  Safe housing scarce, compensation and job retention are unreliable
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## PRINCIPLES FOR SURVIVOR-CENTRED JUSTICE

 Survivor choice, dignity, and control	 Whole-of-life remedies-- safety, health, income	 Trauma-informed practice by officials Outcome focus and redress for non-compliance
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## BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

 <b>LAW &amp; PROCEDURE</b> Victim's Bill of Rights anti-defamation / doxxing rules POSH 2.0 Fast-tracking	 <b>INSTITUTIONS</b> Survivor navigators in courts, funded litigation units co-located trauma counselling	 <b>SAFE HOUSING &amp; LIVELIHOODS</b> Justice leave Guaranteed compensation Quotas, retention, skills train	 <b>TRAUMA-INFORMED JUSTICE</b> Respectful interviewing, video-testimony Case clocks Victim-judged performance	 <b>COMMUNITY &amp; DIGITAL SAFETY</b> Training family & media, restraining orders for online abuse Private data systems
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4. A practicable reform blueprint

A. Law & procedure

- **Victim's Bill of Rights** in criminal procedure: guaranteed **independent victim-counsel**, timely updates, privacy safeguards, right to submit **victim-impact statements**, and time-bound decisions on protection/compensation.
- **Anti-SLAPP & anti-doxxing** provisions: deter vexatious defamation suits and online harassment weaponised to silence complainants.

- **POSH 2.0:** extend explicit coverage to **domestic/gig/platform workers & students**, mandatory external member training & annual public compliance reports; meaningful penalties for retaliation.
- **Fast forensic pathway:** 24x7 sexual-assault forensic response teams; admissibility rules that privilege forensic integrity over character smears.

#### **B. Institutions that walk with the survivor**

- **Survivor Navigation Cells** in each district court complex: one-stop desks providing case escorts, scheduling help, transport vouchers, childcare, and translation (staffed by trained survivors and social workers).
- **Specialised Survivor Litigation Units** (state-funded) pairing victim-counsel with public prosecutors; capped caseloads; performance judged on survivor satisfaction and attrition reduction.
- **Health-Justice linkages:** One Stop Centres co-located with district hospitals; universal access to **free trauma counselling**, psychiatric care, and physiotherapy with long-term follow-ups.
- **Safe-housing network:** time-bound access to protected shelters and rental-voucher support for women and dependents.

#### **C. Income security & employment**

- **Justice Leave:** paid leave entitlements for complainants and witnesses (on the lines of maternity/jury leave) across public sector and firms above a threshold; job-protection against retaliatory termination.
- **Guaranteed survivor compensation:** floor amounts by offence category, automatic part-payment within 30 days of cognisance; direct benefit transfer; medical & legal expense vouchers.
- **Employment pathways:**
  - 1% **survivor quota** in public recruitment/contracting for a fixed window;
  - municipal/CSR-funded **wage subsidies** for rehiring by MSMEs;
  - skilling in high-demand services (front-office, digital operations, community health, paralegal).
- **Public procurement preference** for women-led and survivor-run enterprises.

#### **D. Policing, prosecution & courts—trauma-informed practice**

- Mandatory **scenario-based training** for IOs, prosecutors and judges; bench books on respectful testimony, child/disabled witness handling, and avoidance of secondary victimisation.
- **Video-link testimony**, closed courts, screen shields, and time-boxed cross-examination as default in sexual/GBV cases.

- **Case clocks:** dashboard tracking of each stage—FIR to chargesheet to trial to compensation—with supervisory review when timelines slip.

#### E. Community & culture change

- **Legal-literacy and bystander programmes** through SHGs, trade unions, Resident Welfare Associations and schools; focus on **masculinities and consent**.
- **Survivor-as-expert:** create a national cadre of certified survivor-counsellors to sit on police training panels, Internal Committees, and legal-aid outreach—translating courage into institutional memory.
- Faith/community leaders enlisted to reduce stigma; **media guidelines** to protect identity and avoid sensationalism.

#### F. Digital safety & data

- Rapid-response **e-FIR** and online restraining orders for cyberstalking/doxing; content-takedown SLAs with platforms; anonymised evidence lockers.
- Privacy-preserving data systems linking police, courts, hospitals and compensation treasuries; annual **gender-budget statements** that show money reaching survivors.

### 5. Priorities for marginalised women

- Tailored protocols for **domestic workers, migrants, Dalit/Adivasi women, women with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons**, and conflict/eviction zones.
- Mobile legal clinics, interpreter pools, and travel stipends; community paralegals drawn from the same social location as survivors.

### 6. What success would look like (KPIs)

- FIR-to-chargesheet  $\leq$  60/90 days; median trial duration reduced by half.
- **T-30 day** interim compensation in  $\geq$ 90% eligible cases; full disbursement within six months.
- 100% availability of counselling within seven days; **job-retention rate** of survivors  $>$ 75% six months after filing.
- Independent audits of POSH compliance; year-on-year fall in case attrition due to intimidation/withdrawal.

#### Conclusion:

- True empowerment is **not a headline or a felicitation**; it is the state, market and community **sharing the cost of courage**. A survivor-centred architecture—guaranteed counsel and compensation, trauma-informed institutions, safe housing, and pathways to dignified work—turns a court verdict from a lonely act of resistance into a **new social contract**: that no woman who stands up to power stands alone.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.16. WHO HOLDS DISCIPLINARY CONTROL OVER ELECTION OFFICIALS?

### Descriptive Question:

Examine the present constitutional and statutory architecture and critically evaluate the federalism concerns and propose reforms to make control over election personnel both effective and accountable.

### Answer

#### 1. Why the question matters

- Periodic stand-offs between the ECI and State governments—most recently over action against officials in West Bengal—revive an old but central query for India’s election machinery: **who controls officials once they are put on election duty, the Commission or their parent governments?** The answer must secure two constitutional imperatives at once: **free and fair elections (basic structure)** and **federal balance/administrative due process**.

#### 2. Constitutional design: independence without a standing cadre

- **Article 324(1)** vests the “**superintendence, direction and control of elections**” in the ECI.
- In the **Constituent Assembly**, B. R. Ambedkar opposed creating a permanent “election service”; instead, the EC would **requisition officials from governments** for limited periods, but the process of conducting elections would **remain outside the executive’s day-to-day control**.
- Parliament later operationalised this through the **Representation of the People Acts (RPA)** and the **Conduct of Election Rules**.

#### 3. Statutory scheme: what the law explicitly provides

##### a) RPA, 1950

- Provides the architecture for **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant EROs, etc.** and enables requisitioning of staff from **State/Central governments, local authorities, universities, public corporations** for electoral work.
- When so requisitioned, such staff **act under the control of the Commission** for electoral purposes.

##### b) RPA, 1951 — the crucial provision

- **Section 28-A** (inserted in the 1990s) deems **Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, polling personnel, and designated police officers** to be **on deputation to the ECI “and subject to its control, superintendence and discipline”** for the period beginning with such designation and ending with the completion of the election.
- This **does not permanently shift cadre/disciplinary authority**; it **temporarily vests operational and disciplinary control for electoral work** in the EC.

**Implication:** During the election period, the EC can **direct, replace, relieve, or suspend from election duty** officials for dereliction in the conduct of polls; long-term penalties (dismissal, reduction in rank, etc.) ordinarily remain with the **competent disciplinary authority** in the parent government, acting on the EC's report/recommendation.

#### 4. Judicial doctrine: wide but not unbounded powers

- **Mohinder Singh Gill v CEC (1978):** Art. 324 confers **plenary powers** to ensure free and fair elections; these are **supplementary** to statute and may be exercised when the law is **silent**.
- **A. C. Jose v Sivan Pillai (1984):** When statute **occupies the field**, EC **cannot act contrary to law**; its residual powers operate only **interstitially**.
- **T. N. Seshan v Union of India (1995):** Upheld the multi-member Commission; **powers of the EC are not diluted**—they flow from the Constitution and statute together. **Takeaway:** The EC's election-time control is **constitutionally strong** but must align with the RP Acts/Rules and **observe due process**.


#### 5. The 1990s–2000 settlement: practical contours of discipline

- A prolonged Centre-State/EC tussle in the 1990s culminated in a **settlement recorded by the Supreme Court (2000)** that has guided practice since:
  - The EC may **suspend officials from election duty** for **dereliction of electoral functions**, substitute them, and **send them back** to their cadres with a **speaking conduct report**.
  - The EC may **recommend disciplinary proceedings** to the **competent authority** (State/Centre), which should **decide within a time limit** (commonly cited as six months) or give reasons for disagreement.
  - The same approach applies regardless of whether the official belongs to State/Central/UT services, local bodies, or PSUs, **for election-related conduct**.
- **Net effect:** Operational discipline (including immediate suspension from poll duty, transfers, and removal from sensitive posts) lies with the EC; **final career-affecting penalties** lie with the **parent government**, acting on EC's report.

#### 6. What control extends beyond the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)?


- The EC's authority **does not depend on the MCC**. It flows from **Art. 324 and Sections under the RP Acts** and therefore covers the **entire election cycle**—from revision of rolls and notifications to counting and declaration. States often argue that action is improper when MCC is not in force; legally, **Section 28-A control during designated periods still applies**, and in roll-related functions the **RP Act, 1950** places officers under EC's direction irrespective of MCC.

## WHO HOLDS DISCIPLINARY CONTROL OVER ELECTION OFFICIALS?



### LEGAL FOUNDATION


Article 324 vests the ECI **superintendence, direction and control** of elections



### SETTLEMENT BY SUPREME COURT

Adherence to 2000 **tortuous** outlines. ECI may suspend or relieve officials from election duty for dereliction


- ▶ Major penalties (eg. dismissal) are with parent government, which is expected to decide in a time-bound manner on ECI's recommendations



### FEDERALISM CONCERNS

Tension between ECI's superintendence, and States' role in cadre management

- ▶ States argue that wholesale transfers and suspensions intrude on their executive functions
- ▶ ECI insists on operational control to ensure free and fair elections



### PROPOSED REFORMS

- Codify the 2000 agreement into RP Acts
- Adopt a SOP for notice req. and hearings before action
- Insulate election officials – or last-minute transfers
- Establish a Centre-Stat-ECI consultative mechanism – on election-related personnel issues

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### 7. Federalism & accountability concerns (critical view)

- **States' case:** Personnel belong to their cadres; wholesale suspensions/transfers by EC can **intrude into State executive domain** and may be **politicised**.
- **EC's case:** Free and fair polls require **neutrality of the field machinery**; ordinary disciplinary channels can be **too slow or conflicted**.
- **Balance to strike:** EC's powers must be **transparent, reasoned and proportionate**, limited to **election-related conduct**, and accompanied by **due process** (notice/opportunity to respond) where feasible without compromising the poll.

**8. Practical tools available to the EC (even amid a tussle)**

- 1) **Invoke Section 28-A & RP Act** provisions formally designating personnel; record the **time window** of deputation.
- 2) **Suspend from election duty/relieve/transfer** officials for **specific electoral derelictions** with **speaking orders**; replace immediately to protect the process.
- 3) **Send detailed conduct reports** to the competent authority recommending **major/minor penalties**; track action on a **time-bound dashboard**.
- 4) When States refuse, **approach the High Court/Supreme Court** for directions to enforce the 2000 framework; courts have repeatedly protected the EC's **operational primacy** during polls.
- 5) **Debar officials from future election duty** and publish anonymised reasons to improve deterrence and public trust.

**9. Reform blueprint: clarify, codify, and insulate****a) Put the 2000 practice into statute:**

- Amend the **RP Acts** to **codify**: (i) EC's power to **suspend/relieve from election duty**; (ii) mandatory **time-limits** and **reason-giving** by the disciplinary authority; (iii) consequences for non-compliance.

**b) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):**

- A **uniform due-process SOP** for election-time action—notice (where feasible), quick hearings, speaking orders—so action is **predictable and defensible**.

**c) Protected tenure & pre-poll insulation:**

- **Secure tenures** for Chief Electoral Officers/DEOs/SPs in election periods; **pre-notified transfer policies** to avoid last-minute manipulation.

**d) Performance & integrity registry:**

- A **national e-registry** of officials' election performance (praise, lapses, penalties) to guide deployment and deter misconduct.

**e) Training & ethics code:**

- Mandatory **poll-duty certification** and an **Election Personnel Code of Ethics**, including social-media neutrality and chain-of-custody protocols (EVM/VVPAT, postal ballots, seizures, cVIGIL complaints).

**f) Federal consultation forum:**

- A standing **Centre-State-EC coordination panel** (without diluting EC's authority) to resolve personnel frictions quickly and preserve cooperative federalism.

**g) Strengthen EC's own accountability:**

- **Reasoned, public orders**, periodic reporting to Parliament on election-personnel actions (aggregated), and **judicially reviewable** guidelines to prevent arbitrariness.

**10. Conclusion:**

- India's model rests on **borrowed officials** working under a **constitutionally insulated referee**. The legal position is clear: **during the election window, personnel designated for poll duty are on deputation to the ECI and under its control, superintendence and discipline**; final career penalties remain with the parent governments, expected to act on the EC's report **expeditiously**. To end recurring Centre-State flashpoints, India should **codify the 2000 settlement, lay down a uniform SOP, protect key poll tenures, and create time-bound accountability loops**. That is the surest way to reconcile **free and fair elections with federal comity**—and to preserve public trust in the electoral process.

***Source: The Indian Express***

### 1.17. ENSURING PROBITY IN PUBLIC LIFE VS POLITICAL PESTER

**Descriptive Question:**

Should the Constitution be amended to mandate removal of a Minister who remains in judicial custody for a fixed period on serious charges? **Examine the present law on appointment/tenure of Ministers (Arts. 75, 164, 239AA and the RP Acts), the Supreme Court's guidance on 'criminalisation of politics', and how the proposal alters the balance.**

**Answer****1. Context and the proposal**

- India periodically confronts the spectacle of Ministers governing while facing grave criminal allegations. A constitutional amendment bill has been introduced to insert a **new disqualification-like clause in Articles 75, 164 and 239AA: if a Minister is in judicial custody for 30 consecutive days in a case punishable with imprisonment of five years or more, the President/Governor/LG must remove the Minister by the 31st day**. Re-appointment would be possible after release/acquittal.
- **Why it matters:** It squarely raises the tension between **probity in public life and presumption of innocence, federal balance and the 'pleasure' doctrine**.

**2. The current constitutional position**

- **Appointment & tenure.**
  - **Art. 75(1)** (Union) and **Art. 164(1)** (States): Ministers are appointed by the President/Governor on the advice of the PM/CM; they **hold office during the President's/Governor's pleasure**, which in practice means **political accountability to the PM/CM**.
  - **Art. 75(5)/164(4):** a non-legislator may be a Minister for **six months** and must get elected.

- **Qualifications/Disqualifications.**

- Constitution requires that a Minister **must be qualified to be a Member** of the legislature. The **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA)** disqualifies on **conviction (s.8), corrupt practices (s.8A), etc. Mere arrest/charge-sheet does not disqualify.**

- **Judicial exposition.**

- **B.R. Kapur v. State of Tamil Nadu (2001):** a **disqualified person cannot be appointed** CM/Minister.
- **Lily Thomas (2013):** immediate **disqualification on conviction**; the earlier protective window for sitting MPs/MLAs struck down.
- **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014):** Court declined to create a bar for charge-sheeted persons, but emphasised **constitutional morality**; the **PM/CM bears responsibility** not to induct those with serious criminal antecedents.
- **Public Interest Foundation (2019):** mandated **full disclosure** of criminal cases and reasons for party selection; left **disqualification at pre-trial stages to Parliament. Net effect:** Today, the **EC & courts** ensure transparency; **removal is ultimately a political decision** of the PM/CM; **legal ouster** follows **conviction** or a clear statutory disqualification.

### 3. What the amendment would change

- Converts what is now **political discretion** (PM/CM asking a tainted Minister to resign) into a **constitutional compulsion** to remove a Minister **upon continuous custody (30 days) for serious offences.**
- Operates **pre-trial**, before guilt is adjudicated; thus it **resembles a temporary disqualification unique to Ministers**, distinct from legislators under the RPA.
- Applies also to **Union Territories with legislatures (Art. 239AA).**

### 4. Merits claimed

- 1) **Integrity of governance:** avoids conflict of interest where an accused Minister oversees the very police/administration investigating the case.
- 2) **Public trust:** aligns with global ministerial conventions (e.g., UK's Ministerial Code expecting stepping aside on serious charge).
- 3) **Uniformity:** removes variability in political responses; **constitutionalises probity.**
- 4) **Speed:** avoids long stalemates while criminal trials crawl.

### 5. Risks and constitutional concerns

- 1) **Presumption of innocence & due process.**
  - **Custody ≠ guilt.** Arrest/remand can occur at very early stages (even before charge-framing); denial of bail may be unrelated to culpability. Automatic removal for **mere custody** risks **punitive effect without trial.**

- 2) **Vagueness & overbreadth.**
    - “Offence **punishable with five years or more**” covers an enormous range, including offences often invoked in political contests (e.g., protest-related charges, generic IPC provisions).
  - 3) **Scope for abuse.**
    - A **30-day custody trigger** could be **weaponised**—especially if investigative agencies controlled by rival governments secure prolonged remand—to **fell governments through process** rather than parliamentary numbers.
  - 4) **Separation of powers & the ‘pleasure’ doctrine.**
    - The Constitution locates removal of Ministers in **political accountability to the PM/CM**; mandatory removal by a formal constitutional trigger **dilutes cabinet responsibility**, shifting power from elected leadership to **police/prosecution dynamics**.
  - 5) **Federalism.**
    - Central agencies’ actions could **indirectly disable State Cabinets**, unsettling **cooperative federalism**.
  - 6) **Unequal treatment.**
    - Legislators continue under the **RPA-conviction standard**; Ministers face **harsher, earlier consequences**, although both are elected representatives.
6. **Comparative cues**
- **UK/Canada/Australia:** No hard law; **ministerial codes** and **political convention** demand stepping aside/resignation on charge or serious ethical breach; **fast, independent inquiries** guide decisions.
  - **South Africa:** Constitutional oath with strong **conflict-of-interest** regimes; removal remains **political**, but oversight bodies are robust.  
**Lesson:** Democracies favour **codes + independent oversight + swift inquiries**, keeping courts/police from determining Cabinet composition.

# ENSURING PROBITY IN PUBLIC LIFE vs POLITICAL PESTER



## CONTEXT

Ministers facing criminal charges can continue to serve, raising concerns about good governance



## NEW PROPOSAL



Amend the Constitution to mandate removal of ministers automatically after 30 days of judicial custody for serious offences

## MERITS CLAIMED

- Enhances integrity of governance
- Boosts public trust
- Avoids lengthy impasses
- Adopts uniform standards



## RISKS NOTED



- Contradicts presumption of innocence
- Susceptible to abuse
- Disrupts federal balance
- Targets ministers more than MPs

## COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

Court-verified charges, "stepping-aside" norms, and independent oversight are preferred in other democracies

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### 7. A calibrated alternative blueprint

#### A. Narrow, judicially-reliable trigger

- Replace "30-day custody" with "**framing of charges by a court**" in **designated heinous offences** (e.g., those with **minimum 7-year** punishment; offences against women/children, corruption, terror, organised crime, NDPS commercial quantity).
- Require that charge-framing occurred **after cognizance** and **not within 6 months of the election notification** (to deter last-minute partisan cases).

**B. Step-aside, not automatic removal**

- Enact a **Ministers' Standards in Public Life Act** to mandate “**step-aside**” without **portfolio** pending trial for such cases; **no control over departments relating to the case**; salary/perks limited; **automatic reinstatement on discharge/acquittal**.

**C. Independent oversight with time-bound review**

- Create a **Statutory Ethics Commissioner** (retired SC/HC judge) to **opine within 14 days** whether the case meets threshold; opinion to be **laid before the House**.
- Provide **reasoned order, right of representation, and limited judicial review** (e.g., writ to HC).

**D. Fast-track justice**

- **Designate special courts** to complete **trial within 1 year** where a Minister has stepped aside; delay beyond this restores full ministerial status **unless prosecution shows cause**.

**E. Strengthen transparency & political accountability**

- Codify in law: **mandatory disclosure** by the PM/CM to the legislature on why a charge-sheeted person is retained/inducted, with **recorded reasons**.
- Make **asset/beneficial-ownership disclosures** quarterly for Ministers; strict **recusal/conflict rules**.

**F. Harmonise with RPA**

- Consider **extending a calibrated charge-framing bar** to **candidates** for only the **heinous-offence basket**, as suggested at various times by the **EC and Law Commission**, coupled with **speedy trials**—to avoid asymmetric standards.

**8. Conclusion**

- **The impulse behind the proposal**—clean, credible governance—**is constitutionally worthy. But a** custody-based automatic ouster **risks** criminalising politics' opponents via process, **unsettling** federalism, **and** penalising without adjudication. **India should** constitutionalise probity through a narrow, court-verified trigger, **a** step-aside mechanism with independent oversight and fast-track trials, **and** transparent political accountability to Parliament/Assemblies. **That path** keeps Cabinets answerable to the House, respects due process, **and still** assures citizens that Ministers meet the highest standards of integrity while in office.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.18. STRAY DOGS TO SHELTERS – ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Descriptive Question:

After the Supreme Court's August 11, 2025 direction to round up all stray dogs in Delhi into shelters (since stayed), critically examine the constitutionality, public-health efficacy and ethics of 'round-up-and-incarcerate' approaches.

### Answer:

#### 1. Context & why this matters

- A top-court direction (Aug 11, 2025) asked Delhi authorities to **capture and house all free-roaming dogs in shelters**; it was **stayed on Aug 22, 2025** pending reconsideration.
- The order triggered a core public-policy question: **What works, and what is constitutional**, for managing street-dog populations and rabies risks in Indian cities?

India's **public-health burden** is real: millions of dog-bite treatments each year; dozens of recorded human rabies deaths annually (almost all from dog bites), with under-reporting likely; repeated outbreaks concentrate among the poor and children. But **policy must be evidence-based and rights-compatible**.

#### 2. Constitutional & legal frame

##### a) Constitutional principles

- **Article 21** protects life and public health; courts have read **dignity, bodily integrity and liberty** into it for humans—and in **A. Nagaraja (2014)** recognised animals' intrinsic value and directed the State to prevent cruelty.
- **Article 51A(g)**: fundamental duty to show compassion to living creatures.
- **Proportionality & due process**: Coercive measures must be **necessary, suitable and least restrictive** to achieve a legitimate aim (public health). Mass incarceration of dogs **fails necessity and least-restrictive tests** when effective, less restrictive alternatives exist.

##### b) Statutory regime

- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**: criminalises cruelty; entrusts the **Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)** with oversight.
- **Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 (ABC-2023)**: India's codified **in-situ sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination** regime; removal/euthanasia is limited to **incurably ill or rabid dogs** under veterinary certification; released dogs must be **returned to the same locality** after surgery and vaccine.
- **National Action Plan for Rabies Elimination (NAPRE)** adopts **mass dog vaccination + post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** for humans as the public-health cornerstone.
- **Municipal laws** (e.g., DMC Act) require civic bodies to manage solid waste, maintain sanitation and implement ABC—the **systemic levers that actually shape dog ecology**.

**Takeaway:** ABC-2023 and NAPRE provide the **binding, rights-compatible** blueprint; mass rounding-up contradicts the governing law.

### 3. What science and global experience say

#### a) Why “round-up-to-shelters” fails

- **“Vacuum effect”:** Removing dogs creates **territorial vacuums**; new dogs immigrate or surviving ones breed faster, returning populations to ecological carrying capacity.
- **Shelter harms:** High-density kenneling spreads disease (parvo, distemper, leptospirosis), **increases aggression and stress**, and is financially unsustainable at urban scale.
- **Perverse externalities:** Scavenging niche left by dogs can be filled by **rats/monkeys**, **raising urban zoonoses**; rodent spikes near dump sites are well-documented when dog populations are abruptly reduced.

#### b) What works

- **Mass dog vaccination (≥70% coverage)** interrupts rabies transmission; **sterilisation** stabilises/slowly reduces populations; **return to same locality** preserves territorial behaviour that **prevents influx**.
- **Human PEP** availability, bite-management (washing + vaccine + RIG for high-risk bites), and **waste control** are the other pillars.
- Cities that combined **high-coverage vaccination**, reliable **PEP**, and **sanitation** achieved sustained bite and rabies declines.

**STRAY DOGS TO SHELTERS – ETHICS**

**CONTEXT**

- A top-court order round up stray dogs in Delhi
- What is effective and constitutional for managing street dogs?

**LEGAL PRINCIPLES**

- Article 21 protects life and public health; courts have read dignity, bodily integrity intrinsic value in liberty
- Mass confinement of dogs is disproportionate

**DOES ROUND-UP WORK?**

- New dogs enter, mass risks and disposals
- Health risks and costs after canine removal
- Rodent spikes after canine removal

**BETTER OPTIONS**

- Mass dog vaccination and+ ABC (PEP)
- Post-exposure prophylaxis
- Institutional fragmentation

**DIAGNOSIS**

- Lack of vaccination coverage
- Solid-waste mismanagement
- Institutional fragmentation

**A HUMANE APPROACH**

- Arbitrium of ABC-2023 as controlling law
- Coordinated vaccination campaigns

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#### 4. Diagnosis of India's on-ground gaps (Delhi as example)

- **Coverage gap:** ABC and vaccination **uneven and under-funded**; no city-wide, audited 70% vaccine coverage.
- **Data deficit: No modern dog census**, GIS mapping or open dashboards; capture, surgery and vaccine events often **unverified**.
- **Procurement & capacity:** Too few quality-assured surgical centres; weak SOPs, post-op care and monitoring; sheltering misused as a substitute for field ABC.
- **Solid-waste mismanagement** creates abundant food for dogs and other scavengers.
- **Human health services: PEP stock-outs**, weak triage, and low community awareness in low-income belts.
- **Institutional incoherence:** Municipal bodies, AWBI, district veterinary services, NGOs and police **work in silos**; litigation oscillations compound uncertainty.

#### 5. Evidence-aligned policy: What should the Court and governments prefer?

##### Principled position

- The State's legitimate aim—**reducing dog bites and eliminating human rabies**—is best served by **ABC-plus-vaccination + human PEP + sanitation**, not by indiscriminate confinement.
- This satisfies **constitutional proportionality** (effective & least-restrictive), honours **statutory ABC-2023**, and advances **One-Health**.

#### 6. A practicable, humane blueprint (law → finance → data → operations)

##### A) Legal & regulatory

- 1) **Re-affirm ABC-2023** as the controlling regime; any departure must pass **strict proportionality** and veterinary certification.
- 2) Issue **Model Municipal By-laws** linking solid-waste standards to dog-management outcomes (penalise open garbage hotspots).
- 3) **Licensing/quality code** for ABC operators (municipal & NGO): surgeon credentialing, anaesthesia, analgesia, asepsis, post-op standards, and third-party audits.
- 4) **Bite-protocol Rules:** mandatory wound-wash, structured risk assessment, free PEP and RIG at notified facilities, with **24×7 availability**.

##### B) Institutions & coordination

- 1) **City Rabies Elimination Cell (CREC)** chaired by the Municipal Commissioner; members: health, veterinary, sanitation, AWBI nominee, Police, Education, NGOs, epidemiologists.
- 2) **Ward-level Joint Action Teams** to plan micro-drives, schedule garbage-point closures and monitor bite clusters.

- 3) **Independent Technical Panel** (veterinary public health, animal ethics, epidemiology) to certify coverage and investigate adverse events.

#### C) Financing & procurement

- 1) **Outcome-linked grants** from State/15th FC-style transfers: pay for **verified vaccination coverage, bite-rate reduction and zero-stockout PEP**.
- 2) Converge NHM, municipal and CSR funds; framework contracts for **WHO-prequalified vaccines** (dogs & humans), **RIG**, surgical consumables; maintain **cold-chain**.
- 3) **Insurance/indemnity fund** for accredited ABC providers and volunteers.

#### D) Data & transparency

- 1) **Open dashboards** with ward-wise: dogs vaccinated/sterilised, coverage %, bite cases, PEP administered, RIG use, deaths, garbage-site closures.
- 2) **Digital dog registry** (QR/ear notch + GPS capture) and **verifiable event logs** (time-stamped, geotagged photographs).
- 3) **Independent audits** every quarter; publish coverage maps to drive community participation.

#### E) Operations & community

- 1) **High-intensity campaigns**: achieve **≥70% vaccination of free-roaming dogs** in 8–10 weeks per zone; follow with **rolling sterilisation** (e.g., 40–50% in year-1, then annual top-ups).
- 2) **Target hotspots**: slums, waste markets, transit hubs; **close garbage points**, enforce **night-time waste discipline** for eateries.
- 3) **Humane handling**: trained catchers, stress-minimising nets, no metal nooses; **same-area release** post recovery; complaint redress in 72 hours.
- 4) **PEP first**: triage desks at casualty; ensure soap/water stations and immediate vaccine access; zero stock-outs tracked at CREC.
- 5) **Civic education**: school modules, IEC on wound-wash, reporting of suspected rabid dogs, and responsible feeding (paired with sterilisation/vaccination).

#### F) When sheltering is justified

- **Short-term clinical care**, quarantine of **suspected rabid** animals, **incurably ill** cases for euthanasia under veterinary orders, and **cruelty/abandonment rescues—never mass, indefinite incarceration**.

### 7. Accountability & metrics (12–24 months)

- **Outcome KPIs**:
  - Human **rabies deaths** → zero;
  - **Dog-bite incidence** ↓ 30–50% in hotspots;

- **Canine vaccination coverage** ≥70% in all wards;
- **PEP/RIG stock-outs** = zero;
- **Open garbage points** ↓ 80%.
- **Process KPIs:** surgery mortality <0.5%; post-op complication <3%; ≥95% dogs released to same locality within 3–5 days; audit compliance ≥90%.

#### 8. Ethical and social justice lens

- Free-roaming dogs are **sentient beings** and part of urban ecologies; indiscriminate captivity **inflicts avoidable suffering** and **burdens the poor** (who rely on street dogs for security and companionship).
- A **humane, evidence-based path** upholds **constitutional compassion**, **protects public health**, and **saves scarce municipal resources**.

#### 9. Conclusion:

- The round-up-and-shelter idea is **poor science, poor public health and poor law**. India already has a **coherent statutory model (ABC-2023 + NAPRE)** aligned with global best practice. The right course for courts and governments is to **enforce and scale that model**—with money, management, and measurement—so cities become **safer for people and kinder to animals**.

**Source: *The Hindu***

### 1.19. FREEDOM OF PRESS VS NATIONAL SECURITY

#### Descriptive Question:

**‘Recent cases of FIRs and summons against journalists for allegedly “provoking unrest” or “undermining national security” under Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) have reignited concerns about freedom of expression in India.’**

**Critically examine the implications of invoking such provisions against the press.**

#### Answer:

#### Introduction: Freedom of Press and the Current Challenge

- A free press is considered the lifeblood of democracy, enabling citizens to hold governments accountable. In India, freedom of speech and expression is enshrined under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. However, recent developments — such as FIRs against journalists like Siddharth Varadarajan and Karan Thapar under Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), accusing them of “provoking unrest” and “spreading narratives against national interest” — highlight the tension between state power and press freedom. This raises fundamental questions about the limits of free expression and the scope of national security.

## Constitutional Context and Judicial Precedents

### 1. Constitutional Safeguards:

- Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech, but Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions on grounds like sovereignty, integrity of India, public order, and security of the state.
- The key principle is that restrictions must be *reasonable, proportionate, and narrowly tailored*.

### 2. Judicial Interpretations:

- *Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras (1950)*: The Court underscored that free political discussion is essential for democracy.
- *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962)*: Sedition laws were upheld only when speech incited violence or created public disorder.
- *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)*: The Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act for vagueness, noting that vague laws lead to chilling effects on free speech.

The current use of Section 152 BNS, which criminalizes acts perceived as “undermining national security” without requiring proof of imminent violence, risks falling afoul of these constitutional safeguards.

## Concerns with Overreach and Misuse

### 1. Chilling Effect on Journalism:

- Summons and FIRs against journalists force them into long legal battles, travel for hearings, and financial burdens, discouraging investigative reporting.
- It promotes self-censorship, undermining the watchdog role of the press.

### 2. Vague Provisions and Broad Discretion:

- Section 152 does not clearly define what constitutes “spreading narratives against national interest,” leaving wide discretion with investigating agencies.
- This allows subjective interpretation of dissent as sedition or conspiracy.

### 3. Impact on Democratic Accountability:

- Journalists play a key role in exposing corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations. Criminalising dissenting voices erodes democratic checks and balances.
- It discourages public debate, replacing scrutiny with fear.

## Counter-Arguments: The Case for Restrictions

### 1. National Security Concerns:

- Governments argue that hostile propaganda can incite violence, spread misinformation, and destabilize society, particularly in sensitive regions.
- Digital platforms amplify the reach of misinformation, necessitating some regulatory control.

## 2. Comparative Perspective:

- Even liberal democracies impose restrictions: the U.S. Espionage Act, the UK's Official Secrets Act, and Germany's laws against Holocaust denial show that speech is not absolute.
- The challenge lies in ensuring proportionality and avoiding misuse.

**Freedom of Press vs. National Security**

Recent probes under the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against journalists for 'provoking unrest' have raised concerns over press freedom in India.

**Implications of Invoking National Security Provisions**

<p><b>Chilling Effect</b></p> <p>Legal actions can intimidate journalists, leading to air-censorship and undermine investigation</p>	<p><b>Vague Laws</b></p> <p>Terms like 'spreading narratives against national interest' risk broad interpretation and misuse</p>	<p><b>Accountability</b></p> <p>Criminalising dissent weakens the press' role as a check on power and deters public scrutiny</p>
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**Reforming the Balance**

<p><b>Clarity</b></p> <p>Require proof of incitement to violence, not just undermining</p>	<p><b>Judicial Oversight</b></p> <p>Require judiciary's prior approval for cases against journalists</p>	<p><b>Independent Oversight</b></p> <p>Strengthen media watchdogs to resolve complaints</p>	<p><b>Legal Protections</b></p> <p>Offer legal cover for truthful reporting in the public interest</p>
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### The Way Forward: Reforming the Balance

#### 1. Clearer Legislative Drafting:

- Offences related to national security should require proof of imminent violence or incitement, not vague terms like "narratives undermining sovereignty."

#### 2. Judicial Oversight:

- Mandatory prior judicial scrutiny before FIRs against journalists are registered under national security provisions.

**3. Institutional Accountability:**

- Independent media councils or ombudsman systems to resolve complaints against reporting, reducing reliance on criminal prosecution.

**4. Strengthening Protections:**

- Amend Section 152 BNS to align with *Kedar Nath Singh* and *Shreya Singhal* principles.
- Incorporate safeguards like protection for bona fide reporting done in public interest.

**5. Encouraging Self-Regulation:**

- Strengthen press councils and ethical codes to balance freedom with responsibility.

**Conclusion:**

- The use of national security laws to criminalize journalistic expression represents a dangerous precedent for Indian democracy. While the state has a legitimate interest in curbing incitement to violence, vague provisions like Section 152 of the BNS risk weaponizing law against dissent. A democratic state must treat critical journalism not as a threat but as an essential safeguard of accountability. A calibrated balance — ensuring genuine threats are addressed while protecting free expression — is imperative for upholding India’s constitutional promise of liberty and democracy.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.20. REGULATING REAL MONEY GAMES

**Descriptive Question:**

- The Indian Parliament has recently passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, amid rising concerns over Real Money Games (RMGs). What are the main provisions of the Act, how does it distinguish between e-sports, social gaming, and online money games, and what regulatory, social, and constitutional challenges does it raise?

**Answer:****Background**

- India’s online gaming industry has seen exponential growth, with over 450 million users and revenues surpassing ₹45,000 crore annually. However, the proliferation of Real Money Games (RMGs) — where outcomes are tied to monetary stakes — has raised public health and policy concerns. The World Health Organization (WHO) has highlighted the addictive risks of such games, linking them to financial ruin, fraud, and even suicides. Against this backdrop, the government introduced and Parliament passed the *Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025*, now awaiting Presidential assent.

**Key Provisions of the Act:****1. Categorisation of Games**

- **E-sports:** Competitive skill-based games recognized under the *National Sports Committee Act, 2025*.
- **Social Gaming:** Non-monetary, entertainment-based platforms.
- **Real Money Games (RMGs):** Any game involving staking or earning money, including formats like rummy, fantasy cricket, poker, etc.

**2. Regulatory Mechanisms**

- RMGs must register with the *National Regulatory Authority* for licensing.
- A strict compliance regime requires adherence to KYC norms, responsible advertising, and protection of minors.
- Platforms must deposit 10% of revenues into a *Player Protection Fund* for addiction treatment and awareness.

**3. Penalties**

- Offering unlicensed RMGs can attract imprisonment up to 7 years and fines up to ₹10 crore.
- Misleading celebrity endorsements attract penal action under both this Act and the *Consumer Protection Act*.

**Rationale and Concerns Addressed****1. Public Health Risks**

- Reports link over 22 suicides in 2024–25 to debts incurred through online betting.
- The Enforcement Directorate has traced illicit flows of over ₹400 crore through RMG platforms, raising concerns of money laundering.

**2. Consumer Protection**

- The Act mandates full disclosure of odds, warnings against addictive play, and bans on targeting children.

**3. Economic Rationale**

- The Indian gaming industry, valued at ₹77,500 crore, is expected to grow at 25% CAGR, but regulatory uncertainty has been hampering investments. The Act seeks to create a predictable framework.

# REGULATING REAL MONEY GAMES

India's Parliament has passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, amid concerns over Real Money Games (RMGs).

## KEY PROVISIONS OF ACT

- 1 Categorisation of Games**
  - E-sports come under National Sports committee Act, 2025
  - Social Gaming:** non-monetary entertainment
- 2 Registration & Lcensing**
  - Operators must register witch National Regulatory Authority
- 3 Penalties**
  - Offering unlicensed RMGs can result imprisonment up to 7 years and fines up to ₹10 crore

## JUDICIAL AND CONSTITUTIONA DIMENSIONS

**Centre vs State Jurisdiction**  
States like Tamil Nadu have banned some RMGs

**Freedom of Occupation (Article 19(1)(g))**  
RMGs are argued 'games of skill'

## Rationale and Concerns Addressed

- Over 22 suicides in 204-25 linked to online betting.**
- Consumer Protection**  
Platforms must disclose odds and warnings
- Economic Rationale**  
₹ 77,500 crore industry hampered by regulatory uncertainty

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Implementation capacity
- Taxation Disputes

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### Judicial and Constitutional Dimensions

#### 1. Centre vs State Jurisdiction

- Gambling and betting fall under **Entry 34, List II** of the Constitution, making it a state subject.
- States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have banned online rummy/poker, creating legal inconsistencies.
- The Supreme Court (SC), in its interim order of 2024, stayed retrospective taxation on RMGs under GST, but upheld states' powers to regulate gambling.

## 2. Freedom of Occupation (Article 19(1)(g))

- Operators argue RMGs are “games of skill” (as upheld in *K.R. Lakshmanan v. State of Tamil Nadu*, 1996).
- However, critics argue monetisation blurs this distinction, necessitating state oversight.

### International Comparisons

- **China:** Enforces strict time limits on online gaming for minors.
- **UK:** Online gaming treated under gambling laws, with strong self-exclusion and anti-addiction norms.
- **USA:** Federally unregulated, with states like Nevada allowing and others banning outright.

India’s approach sits midway — permitting innovation in e-sports/social gaming while tightening controls on money-linked games.

### Challenges Ahead

- 1) **Implementation Capacity:** States vary in enforcement; coordination between Centre and States is vital.
- 2) **Taxation Disputes:** GST at 28% on RMG platforms risks driving players underground.
- 3) **Innovation Concerns:** Over-regulation may stifle India’s aspiration to be a global hub for gaming start-ups.

### Way Forward

- **Clearer distinction between skill and chance:** Legal clarity is essential to balance innovation with protection.
- **Affordable insurance mechanisms:** To protect players from financial ruin due to excessive play.
- **Public education campaigns:** To counter glamorisation of RMGs by celebrities.
- **Constitutional harmonisation:** A model central law with state adoption, akin to GST, could reduce litigation.

### Conclusion:

- The Online Gaming Act, 2025, represents India’s attempt to balance a booming digital economy with social safeguards. By formally distinguishing between e-sports, social games, and RMGs, it brings clarity, but also raises constitutional challenges on federalism and freedom of occupation. The future of India’s gaming economy will hinge not only on the robustness of regulation but also on its ability to evolve with emerging technologies and international best practices.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.21. LEGISLATION IN LITIGATION

### Descriptive Question:

Frequent judicial challenges to Union legislation reveal weaknesses in India's law-making process. Using recent examples, diagnose the procedural and drafting lapses that convert 'legislation into litigation' and propose an actionable reform blueprint.

### Answer:

#### 1. Why this debate now

- Over the past decade, major central laws—across social, economic and criminal justice domains—have been challenged almost immediately after passage.
- Challenges have arisen not only from affected groups but sometimes from MPs who voted for the law, signalling weak deliberation and drafting.
- Courts have repeatedly reminded that the **power to strike down law is exceptional**, yet they are increasingly drawn into correcting basic mistakes (vague definitions, conflicting clauses, money-bill route controversies, etc.). The problem is not judicial overreach alone; it is **legislative under-preparation**.

#### 2. What the rule-book already requires (but often isn't followed)

**Chapter 9 of the Manual of Parliamentary Procedure** lays a robust pre-legislative route: Ministry policy proposal → Law Ministry vetting → Cabinet approval → Introduction → First reading → Reference to a Department-related Standing Committee (DRSC) → Clause-by-clause consideration → Second/Third readings. In practice, however:

- **Inadequate notice** for introduction and consideration is routine.
- **Reference to DRSCs is bypassed or curtailed**, shrinking expert and public input.
- **Clause-by-clause debates are rushed**, with heavy party whips and little time for members to interrogate constitutional and federal implications.
- **Flawed drafting** slips through despite Law Ministry scrutiny.

#### 3. The symptoms: recurring legal pathologies

- 1) **Vagueness & over-breadth**: Open-textured definitions invite arbitrary enforcement (e.g., broad "public order/security" formulations without mens rea and necessity tests).
- 2) **Internal inconsistency**: Cross-references that lead nowhere, penalties out of proportion to offences, or a law in one sector negating standards in another.
- 3) **Conflicts across statutes**: Example often cited by practitioners—different maxima for similar offences in parallel codes—creates unequal treatment and a ready ground for challenge.
- 4) **Federal friction**: Bills touching State subjects are passed without structured State consultation, inviting repugnancy contests under **Article 254**.

- 5) **Procedural shortcuts:** Limited committee scrutiny, skeletal Statements of Objects and Reasons (SoRs) without constitutional analysis, and weak Financial/Delegated Legislation Memoranda.
- 6) **Rights-impact blind spots:** Insufficient analysis of Articles 14/19/21 tests (intelligible differentia, proportionality, least-restrictive means), privacy/data safeguards, and equality implications for vulnerable groups.

# LEGISLATION IN LITIGATION

## WHY THIS DEBATE NOW

- Major central laws frequently challenged after passage
- Signs of weak deliberation and drafting in Parliament
- Courts correcting basic mistakes in laws

## THE RULE-BOOK: REQUIREMENTS

- Inadequate notice for introduction in Parliament
- Reference to committees bypassed or curtailed
- Rushed clause-by-clause debates

## SYMPTOMS OF POOR LAW-MAKING

- Vagueness
- Inconsistency
- Federal conflicts
- Rights blind spots

## A REFORM BLUEPRINT

- Ex-ante review**  
Screening for constitutional/ flaws within Parliament
- Committee scrutiny**  
Opening bills to expertise, evidence and debate
- Drafting discipline**  
Impact assessments and a national lexicon
- Federal process**  
Structured state consultations on relevant bills
- Post-legislative reviews**  
Tracking law effects and repealing defunct/ amended acts

**process**

Judicial Review already part of Basic Structure

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#### 4. Why litigation proliferates

- **Democratic deficit:** When stakeholders and States are not heard ex-ante, they move courts ex-post.
- **Economic cost & uncertainty:** Compliance investments freeze; rules are delayed; implementation splits across benches and jurisdictions.
- **Institutional trust:** Repeated judicial corrections erode Parliament's deliberative prestige and fuel adversarial Centre–State dynamics.

#### 5. Constitutional stakes

- **Judicial review is part of the basic structure;** courts cannot abdicate when the law-making process undermines due deliberation or rights.
- Equally, a court-centric fix is **second-best**. The design goal should be to **catch constitutional infirmities inside Parliament** before a Bill becomes an Act.

#### 6. A practicable reform blueprint

##### A. Build ex-ante constitutional review within Parliament

- 1) **Constitutionality & Rights Note (CRN):** Make it mandatory that every Bill tabled includes a publicly laid CRN signed by the sponsoring Secretary and cleared by the Law Ministry—mapping clause-wise tests under Articles 14/19/21, federal entries, delegated powers, privacy/data safeguards, and proportionality.
- 2) **Activate Article 88:** Institutionalise the Attorney-General's participation during deliberations as a **non-partisan constitutional counsellor** ("retainer-AG" model). Allow structured Q&A with the AG in both Houses; publish written opinions to the record.
- 3) **Independent Legislative Counsel Office (LCO)** in Parliament (akin to the UK's OPC): career drafters to assist members, reconcile cross-statute conflicts, and certify definitional/penalty coherence.

##### B. Restore serious committee scrutiny

- 1) **Default reference** of all Bills to DRSCs with a **time-bound floor** (say, 60–90 days). Any bypass must carry a written reason and super-majority approval.
- 2) **Open hearings & digital evidence rooms:** Live-stream expert depositions; publish drafts, stakeholder submissions and impact notes.

##### C. Make pre-legislative consultation and impact assessment real

- 1) Upgrade the **2014 Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy** to a statutory duty: minimum consultation window, translations, and a **Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)** covering fiscal, federal, gender, disability and small-enterprise effects.

- 2) **Human Rights/Data Protection Impact Assessments** for tech-heavy or surveillance-enabling laws.

#### D. Fix drafting quality

- 1) **National Statute Lexicon**: a shared dictionary of defined terms; penalty bands; uniform offence architecture (cognizable/compoundable/bailable grids); extraterritoriality and savings clauses templates.
- 2) **Delegated legislation discipline**: Hard caps on rule-making powers; mandatory laying with automatic sunset if rules are not notified within a deadline.
- 3) **Plain-language drafting** with model clauses; compulsory **consolidation tables** showing how the Bill affects existing laws to avoid hidden repeals.

#### E. Strengthen federal and fiscal due process

- 1) For subjects touching State entries, **mandatory State consultation** (through Inter-State Council / Law Ministers' Conference) and a published federal impact matrix; avoid colourable use of Union entries.
- 2) **Money-Bill guardrails**: ex-ante certification checklist; automatic reference to a joint committee if a Speaker's certification is contested by a threshold of members.

#### F. Embed post-legislative accountability

- 1) **Post-Legislative Scrutiny (PLS)** after 24–36 months by DRSCs, with outcome metrics; add **review/sunset clauses** to controversial provisions.
- 2) **Single digital statute book** with version control; repeal schedules for obsolete/amending-by-reference laws.

### 7. Balancing innovation with rights

- Parliament must remain nimble—especially in tech, finance and public health—but **speed without safeguards equals instability**. The above reforms **do not paralyse** law-making; they front-load constitutional due diligence so that reform survives in court and in practice.

### 8. Conclusion

- India's Constitution never endorsed British-style parliamentary absolutism; it entrusted **sovereignty to "We, the People"** and subjected legislation to constitutional discipline. When Bills are introduced without rigorous committee scrutiny, thin SoRs, or weak rights analysis, the courthouse becomes the only forum left. The remedy lies **not in curbing courts**, but in **strengthening Parliament's own quality controls**—a standing constitutional review inside the House, professional drafting capacity, genuine consultation, and systematic post-legislative audits. That is how legislation will stop becoming litigation, and democratic trust will be renewed.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.22. RESTORING DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT

### Descriptive Question:

Frequent washouts, summary passage of Bills and rejection of substantive discussions are eroding Parliament's deliberative core. Examine the constitutional–procedural architecture for agenda-setting and scrutiny (Rules, BAC, JPC/DRSCs, sub-judice).

### Answer:

#### 1. Why a washout is more than 'politics as usual'

- Parliament is not only a voting machine; it is meant to **deliberate, authorise, and oversee**. When a whole session is reduced to slogans on one side and **guillotine-style passage of multiple Bills** on the other, three things suffer simultaneously: (i) public reasoning, (ii) the quality and constitutionality of laws, and (iii) trust between Treasury and Opposition that is needed for cooperative federalism and stable policy.

#### 2. Constitutional & rules framework that should enable debate

- **Arts. 107–111**: the ordinary Bill path; **Art. 118** empowers each House to make rules.
- **Agenda/Time-setting**: the **Business Advisory Committee (BAC)** in each House schedules business and allocates time by consensus.
- **Opportunities for discussion**:
  - **Short Duration Discussion** (Rule 193, Lok Sabha; Rule 176, Rajya Sabha).
  - **Calling Attention, Half-Hour, Rule 267 (RS)** to suspend rules for urgent matters; **Adjournment Motion (LS)** for a definite, urgent subject of public importance.
  - **Point of Order** to enforce rules.
  - **Private Members' Business**.
- **Scrutiny mechanisms**:
  - **Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs)**—subject-wise, continuous oversight; traditionally a high share of Bills are referred for clause-by-clause examination.
  - **Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPCs)** for cross-cutting or high-stakes issues (e.g., 1992–93 securities scam; 2001 market episode; 2011 telecom spectrum).
- **Sub-judice convention**: a **convention, not a gag rule**; it restrains prejudicial comment on *specific* live cases, but **does not bar policy debates**.

## Restoring Debate in Parliament

**Why does debate matter?**

- Public reasoning
- Quality laws
- Trust between government and opposition

**Causes of Erosion**

- Frequent protests
- Rushing legislation
- BAC underused
- Scrutiny bypassed
- Broad "sub-judice" bar

**Practicable reform blueprint**

- Guarantee time for minority parties
- Restore committee scrutiny
- Mandatory public consultation
- Transparent BAC meetings
- Codify narrow "sub-judice" rule
- Post-legislative review

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### 3. What went wrong this session (diagnosis from practice)

- 1) **Systemic denial of discussion:** opposition notices on issues of national salience were turned down—often with two broad shields: “*sub-judice*” and “institution(s) like the Election Commission cannot be discussed”. Both are **over-broad** readings.
- 2) **Rushed legislation:** several Bills were taken up and passed with **minimal or no debate**; in some cases only the Minister spoke. Clause-by-clause committee scrutiny was skipped.
- 3) **BAC under-functioned:** the opening BAC meeting was delayed and key government members were reportedly absent; the time allocation that should be negotiated **ex ante** became a unilateral push **ex post**.

- 4) **Procedural choke points:** points of order disallowed, motions for deeper inquiry (e.g., JPC) not admitted or kept advisory with little follow-through.
- 5) **Cumulative effect:** the Opposition resorted to repeated protests; the Treasury pressed ahead citing urgency. The **veto-by-noise** vs **majority-by-haste** spiral produced a near total washout.

#### 4. Costs—democratic and economic

- **Rule-of-law risk:** Bills passed without testing often face **litigation, stays or serial amendments**, raising compliance uncertainty.
- **Policy quality:** absent pre-legislative consultation, fiscal notes and committee scrutiny, drafting defects, federal conflicts and unintended impacts rise.
- **Erosion of minority rights:** the **right to be heard**—a core of parliamentary democracy—diminishes; the street replaces the floor.
- **Administrative overhang:** with fewer clarifications and weaker oversight, rule-making drifts to the executive; Parliament's **authorising function** shrinks.

#### 5. Counter-arguments & a balanced view

- **Government's case:** productivity must be protected against disruptions; urgent legislation cannot be hostage to filibusters; sensitive matters under investigation should avoid politicisation.
- **Rejoinder:** (i) Conventions allow debate on **policy** even when **cases** are sub-judice; Speakers/Chairpersons can craft reasoned, narrow rulings. (ii) **Time-boxing** debate (not eliminating it) and a **mandatory committee stop** reconcile urgency with quality. (iii) When BAC functions transparently, the Opposition has an incentive to cooperate because floor time is guaranteed.

#### 6. A practicable reform blueprint

##### A. Guarantee time for the minority, certainty for the majority

- 1) **Annual sitting calendar in the Rules** (e.g., ~120 LS, ~100 RS) and a **session-wise Business Charter** published after BAC's first meeting.
- 2) **Opposition/Backbench Days** (on UK model): fixed number of days where agenda is set by non-government business.
- 3) **Debate floor-minimum** per Bill (e.g., 4–6 hrs LS, 3–4 hrs RS) unless *two-thirds* waive it; Money Bills still get structured discussion in RS.

##### B. Restore scrutiny

- 1) **Default reference to DRSCs/JPC** unless a **reasoned Speaker/Chair order** explains bypass; DRSCs get 30–60 days with power to take evidence; dissent notes published.

- 2) **Pre-legislative package** made mandatory: public draft, 30-day comments, **Legislative Impact Assessment**, **Fiscal/Regulatory note**, and **constitutional conformity certificate** from the Law Ministry.
- 3) **Post-legislative review clause** in every Act (sunset or review in 3 years), with a Special Intensive Revision sitting to consider the review report.

#### C. Make BAC effective and accountable

- 1) **Statutory transparency**: minutes and time allocations published; all parties represented; if consensus fails, a **reasoned majority decision** recorded.
- 2) **Points of Order protocol**: short speaking order on admissibility; video/record kept public to reduce mistrust.

#### D) Calibrate 'sub-judice'

- 1) Codify a **narrow rule**: bar only prejudicial reference to facts in a case; **allow policy debate**. Chairs must issue **speaking orders** when refusing motions.

#### E) Strengthen knowledge & federal voice

- 1) **Parliamentary Budget/Legislative Office** to provide independent fiscal and constitutional vetting.
- 2) **Committee hearings open & webcast**; invite states/experts when State List interests are implicated.
- 3) **Training & research staff** for MPs; more Faculty-of-Practice experts as advisers to committees.

#### F) Behavioural guardrails

- 1) Escalating sanctions for repeated disruption **and** for repeated refusal to discuss duly-admitted notices; both sides face costs for bad behaviour.
- 2) **Structured time-allocation** (not guillotine by surprise) so the majority gets passage predictably while the minority secures speaking time.

### 7. Conclusion

- Parliamentary democracy balances **numerical power** with the **right to be heard**. Washouts signal that this balance is off. The remedy is not grand constitutional surgery but **credible rule-level guarantees**: assured debate time, **committee first**, transparent BAC, a narrow sub-judice bar, and post-legislative review. These reforms allow the government to legislate with certainty **and** the Opposition to scrutinise with dignity—restoring Parliament's core function: **reasoned law-making in public view**.

**Source: The Indian Express.**

## 2. HEALTH & EDUCATION

### 2.1. LAYING FOUNDATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

#### Descriptive Question:

The National Education Policy 2020 marks a structural shift in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in India. Critically analyse the three major transitions underway in the ECCE framework, and discuss how these changes impact equity, institutional integration, and developmental outcomes for children under six years.

#### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognises **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** as the foundation for lifelong learning, cognitive development, and emotional well-being. It identifies ages 3–8 as the most critical period of brain development and proposes restructuring the schooling system into a **5+3+3+4 format**, beginning with a foundational stage that includes pre-primary years (ages 3 to 6).
- This shift has initiated a profound transformation in India's ECCE landscape. From universalising preschool access to redefining the role of Anganwadis and emphasising home-based care for 0–3-year-olds, NEP's implementation marks a significant policy departure from earlier fragmented approaches.

#### I. Key Structural Shifts in ECCE Under NEP 2020

##### 1. Expansion and Formalisation of Preschool Education in Government Schools

- For decades, India's public ECCE was largely confined to **Anganwadis**, focused more on nutrition and basic health than on structured education. Preschool education was mostly a feature of private schools, creating a sharp inequity.
- NEP mandates the establishment of **Balvatika-1, 2, and 3** (for ages 3 to 6) in all government schools by 2030, ensuring institutionalised access to quality early education.
- This is a significant step toward **universalising ECCE**, addressing the gap where only 14 lakh Anganwadis existed with limited preschool capacity.

#### Implications:

- Requires massive scale-up of ECCE infrastructure, human resource training, and content standardisation.
- Ministries of Education and Women & Child Development must coordinate to manage financing, training, and recruitment of skilled educators and Anganwadi workers.
- However, without adequate curriculum integration and pedagogy alignment, this expansion risks becoming tokenistic.

## 2. Migration from Anganwadis to Primary Schools

- A visible trend is the **shift in enrolment of 3–6-year-olds from Anganwadis to government schools**, especially where Balvatika classes are being implemented.
- Example: The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu introduced preschool classes in all primary schools, prioritising admission for 4–6-year-olds.

### Drivers of Migration:

- Parents perceive schools to offer better **educational outcomes and structured environments**.
- Anganwadis are traditionally viewed as nutrition and childcare centres rather than learning spaces.

### Risks:

- **Anganwadis' role as community-based learning spaces is undermined**, reducing their relevance.
- Emphasis on "schoolification" may pressure young children with age-inappropriate academic content, especially without trained ECCE facilitators.

### Countermeasures:

- Integrate Anganwadis into the school ecosystem through **co-location models**, dual-trained staff, and curriculum harmonisation.
- Prevent over-academisation by focusing on play-based, activity-driven early learning per NIPUN Bharat guidelines.

## 3. Reorientation of Anganwadis Towards 0–3 Age Group and Home Visits

- NEP enables a realignment where schools take over preschool (3–6 years) and Anganwadis focus on **0–3 years**, pregnant and lactating mothers, and **home-based early stimulation**.
- This shift is backed by evidence such as the 'Perry Preschool at 50' study and Yale's Odisha longitudinal studies, showing the highest returns on investment in the **first 1,000 days** of life.

### Challenges:

- Anganwadi workers (AWWs) are already overburdened and primarily trained to work with 3–6-year-olds.
- There is limited systemic capacity and incentive structures for individualised **home visits** or parent engagement.

### Way Forward:

- Empower AWWs through capacity building, mobility incentives, digital tools for home tracking, and community mobilisation.
- POSHAN Abhiyan's "Pohsan bhi Padhai bhi" is a step in the right direction, integrating nutrition with pre-learning.

**LAYING FOUNDATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 restructures Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) into the foundational stage of schooling

**Expansion of Preschool Education**

- Ensure Balvatika classes for ages 3–6 in gov't schools by 2030**
  - Universalize access to ECCE
  - Investment in infrastructure and teacher training
- Migration from Anganwadis to Schools**
  - Anganwadis focused on nutrition and childcare
  - Parents perceive schools as provide better learning

**Focus on Ages 0–3 and Home Visits**

- Anganwadis shift towards infants & parents
- Support early development in Anganwadis workers

**Need Cross Ministerial Convergence**

- Better Utilisation Tracking of funds
- Individualised Home visits

**Impact of ECCE Reforms**

- Equity**: ECCE access through government schools
- Institutional Integration**: Breaks silos between health, nutrition, and education
- Developmental Outcomes** for children under 6 ys

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## II. Policy and Institutional Integration:

- A major innovation of NEP is breaking the silos between **health, nutrition, and early education**.
- It recommends **cross-ministerial convergence** (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Ministry of Health) for holistic ECCE delivery.
- However, states are at different stages of readiness. Some have allocated grants under Samagra Shiksha, but **actual preschool operations are lagging**, and utilisation tracking remains poor.

## III. Implications for Equity and Child Outcomes

- By universalising preschool access through government schools, NEP addresses the **structural inequity** where only wealthier households accessed early education.
- Focus on 0–3 through home visits ensures inclusion of the most vulnerable—infants, girls, tribal children, and malnourished populations.

- However, without proper **monitoring and quality assurance**, these initiatives risk uneven implementation.

**Key metrics to track include:**

- Enrolment rates of 3–6-year-olds in Balvatikas vs Anganwadis.
- Percentage of 0–3-year-olds receiving home visits.
- Training coverage of AWWs and ECCE teachers.
- Learning outcome indicators from the **Foundational Learning Study (FLS) 2022**.

**Conclusion:**

- The NEP 2020 signals a bold reimagination of India’s ECCE framework, grounded in **scientific evidence, equity, and systemic coherence**. Its success, however, hinges on granular-level implementation, policy alignment, and sustained investment in capacity building.
- The challenge now is to prevent premature academic pressure, avoid duplication between institutions, and ensure that **every child—regardless of location or background—receives nurturing, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate care in their foundational years**.
- If implemented effectively, these three structural shifts—universal preschool in schools, migration from Anganwadis, and realignment towards 0–3 home care—can set the stage for transformative outcomes in human capital development, social mobility, and inclusive growth.

**Source: *The Hindu***

## 2.2. CHILD STUNTING CRISIS IN INDIA.

**Descriptive Question:**

**Despite significant progress in food security, India continues to face a persistent child stunting crisis. Critically examine the complex web of socio-economic, nutritional, and policy factors responsible for stunting in India. Suggest holistic measures for overcoming these challenges.**

**Answer:**

**Introduction:**

- Child stunting — defined as a child too short for their age due to chronic malnutrition — is one of India’s most pressing public health challenges. According to the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21)**, about **35.5% of children under five were stunted**, while the **June 2025 POSHAN Tracker** still placed the figure at **37%**, far from the government’s target of reducing it to **25% by 2022 under POSHAN Abhiyaan**. This persistent crisis indicates that food security alone is insufficient; deep-rooted social, cultural, health, and governance factors perpetuate the cycle of undernutrition.

**Background: From Food Security to Nutrition Security:**

- India has successfully overcome the specter of famine and large-scale hunger through policies like the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**, **National Food Security Act, 2013**, and **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**. Yet, the paradox lies in the “hidden hunger” of nutrient deficiencies and stunting despite adequate caloric intake. This signals a shift from ensuring food availability to addressing **nutrition quality, maternal health, and social determinants**.

**Factors Behind Persistent Stunting:****1. Maternal Health and Teenage Pregnancies**

- **6.8% of women aged 15–19 years** had begun childbearing (NFHS-5).
- Teenage mothers often lack adequate nutrition themselves, making them less capable of nourishing infants during pregnancy and lactation.
- Anaemia is widespread: **67% of children (6–59 months)** and **52% of women (15–49 years)** suffer from it, weakening immune systems and perpetuating low birth weight and stunting.

**2. Inadequate Child Nutrition Practices**

- **Exclusive breastfeeding rates remain suboptimal:** Only **41% of children 6–23 months** received a minimum acceptable diet.
- Diets are cereal-heavy, lacking protein, eggs, and micronutrients. Access to diversified foods is especially low among poorer households.

**3. Sanitation and Health Environment**

- Around **19% of households** still lack access to toilets (NFHS-5). Open defecation leads to repeated diarrhoeal infections, which impair nutrient absorption and exacerbate malnutrition.
- Poor maternal healthcare and limited antenatal care further worsen outcomes.

**4. Social and Cultural Barriers**

- **Child marriages** and entrenched gender biases perpetuate poor maternal and child health.
- Feeding practices are influenced by taboos; for instance, in some communities, eggs are avoided for children, depriving them of affordable protein.

**5. Structural and Policy Gaps**

- While POSHAN Abhiyaan aimed at convergence of nutrition programs, progress has been uneven.
- **Anganwadi Services**, though extensive, suffer from inadequate funding, poor monitoring, and low dietary diversity in take-home rations.
- Fragmentation between ministries (Women and Child Development, Health, Food, Rural Development) hampers holistic implementation.

## 6. Economic and Inequality Dimensions

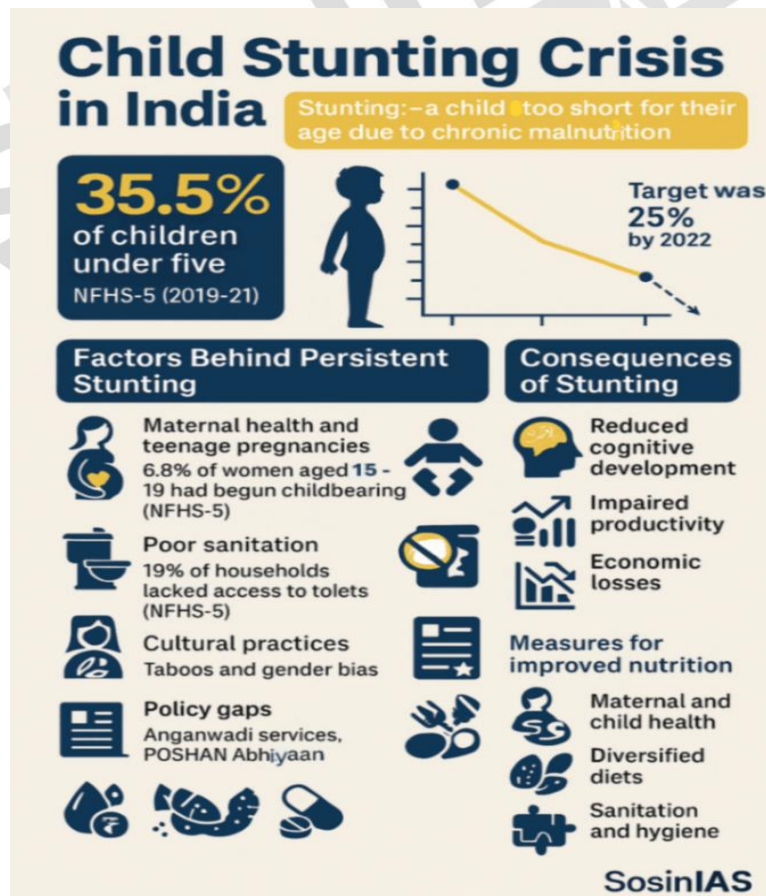
- Poverty, lack of women's education, and rural-urban disparities compound malnutrition. States like **Uttar Pradesh (48.8%)** and **Bihar (42.3%)** record alarmingly high stunting compared to **Kerala and Punjab (14–17%)**, showing inequality in governance capacity and social infrastructure.

### Consequences of Stunting:

- Long-term impacts on **cognitive development, school performance, and economic productivity**.
- WHO notes that adults who were stunted as children earn up to **20% less income** on average.
- At the macro level, India faces a '**nutrition trap**': reduced workforce productivity, higher healthcare burden, and obstacles in reaping its demographic dividend.

### Progress made:

- Progress has been made:** Stunting has declined from **48% in 2005–06 to 35.5% in 2019–21**.
- Government programs like **POSHAN 2.0, Anaemia Mukt Bharat**, and food fortification initiatives (rice fortification under PMGKAY) have shown promise.
- Yet, the pace of decline remains insufficient, indicating the need for systemic reform.



## Way Forward: Towards Holistic Nutrition Security

### 1. Strengthening Maternal and Child Health

- Delay age of marriage and pregnancy through stricter enforcement of **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** and social awareness.
- Universalise antenatal care and iron-folic acid supplementation under **Janani Suraksha Yojana** and **Anaemia Mukta Bharat**.

### 2. Improving Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices

- Ensure universal access to diversified diets (protein, pulses, eggs, milk, fortified foods).
- Intensify nutrition literacy campaigns, particularly in rural areas.

### 3. Sanitation and Public Health Infrastructure

- Strengthen **Swachh Bharat Mission** and expand water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs.
- Focus on diarrhoea prevention through ORS, zinc supplementation, and vaccination.

### 4. Convergence and Accountability

- Foster integration between health, women and child development, education, and agriculture departments under POSHAN 2.0.
- Deploy technology-enabled dashboards for monitoring outcomes at the district level.

### 5. Economic and Social Empowerment

- Invest in girls' education, skill-building, and nutrition-sensitive social protection programs.
- Promote women's decision-making in households to improve food allocation and child care.

### 6. Research and Localised Solutions

- Context-specific interventions: for instance, egg distribution in mid-day meals has worked well in Tamil Nadu and Odisha.
- Encourage community kitchens and farmer-producer organisations for local nutrition security.

### Conclusion:

- India's child stunting crisis is not merely a nutritional issue but a **multi-dimensional development challenge** rooted in health, gender, sanitation, inequality, and governance. While progress has been visible, the persistence of high stunting levels even after seven years of POSHAN Abhiyaan reveals the gap between policy intent and on-ground outcomes. A holistic strategy that integrates **maternal health, diversified diets, sanitation, education, and social empowerment** is indispensable if India is to transform from food security to true nutrition security, and harness its demographic dividend.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 2.3. INADEQUATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING?

#### Descriptive Question:

“India has built one of the world’s largest vocational and skilling networks, yet only a small share of workers has formal training and ITI utilisation, quality and placement rates remain low.”

Diagnose the demand- and supply-side causes of this ‘skills paradox’ and its consequences for productivity and employability.

#### Answer

##### 1. Why VET matters now

- **Growth and jobs:** When external demand is weak and firms face technology churn, a productive, adaptable workforce becomes the engine of demand-led growth. Globally, well-designed VET **raises employment odds and formal job entry**, especially for youth.
- **India’s paradox:** Despite a vast institutional footprint—~14,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), state missions and many short-term schemes—**only ~4% of India’s workforce has formal VET**. Seat capacity is ~25 lakh but **enrolment is closer to half**, and graduate employment outcomes trail countries like **Germany, Singapore, Canada (often 80–90%)**.
- **Demographic window:** With a young labour force, weak skilling suppresses productivity, earnings, firm competitiveness and the tax base.

##### 2. What is not working — a diagnosis

###### A. Demand-side (employer & labour market)

- 1) **Low employer pull:** MSMEs dominate; many are informal, thin-margined and reluctant to train or take apprentices because of compliance, supervisor bandwidth and uncertain demand.
- 2) **Weak apprenticeship ecosystem:** Enrolments remain modest; stipends, mentoring quality and pathways to absorption are uneven.
- 3) **Information frictions:** Employers struggle to find verified skills; trainees cannot see clear wage premia or job ladders.

###### B. Supply-side (institutions & delivery)

- 1) **Fragmented governance:** Multiple ministries, sector skill councils (SSCs), state missions and regulators; overlapping standards and slow course revision.
- 2) **Curricula & equipment:** **Outdated, theory-heavy**, mis-aligned with local industry; limited digital and green skills; labs poorly maintained.
- 3) **Instructors:** **Chronic vacancies** (often >1/3rd), limited ToT and industry exposure; little performance-linked progression.


- 4) **Quality assurance:** ITI grading exists but is irregular; tracer studies and placement data are sparse; accreditation not tied to outcomes.
- 5) **Pathways & stigma: Few stackable credits** or credit transfers into diplomas/degree programmes; social perception treats VET as a cul-de-sac, depressing uptake by high-ability students.
- 6) **Financing:** India spends **~3% of total education outlay on VET** vs **~10–13%** in high performers. Funds largely input-based, not outcome-linked.
- 7) **Equity gaps:** Women, rural youth, and persons with disability face mobility/safety barriers; hostel and childcare support are rare.

### 3. Consequences

- **Low employability & under-employment**, especially for first-generation learners.
- **Firm-level productivity drag;** higher unit labour costs in manufacturing and services.
- **Macro impacts:** slower total factor productivity growth, lower export competitiveness, and a narrower tax base.


## INADEQUATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING?

**WHY IT MATTERS**

 Only 4 % of India's workforce has formal VET\*


Low productivity and employment in a young nation


ET vocational education & training




**DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS**

**SUPPLY-SIDE**

 Low employer participation

 Weak apprenticeship system

 Few bridge programs, limited funding

Fragmented governance  
Outdated curricula, poor equipment

Insufficient, undertrained instructors

Equity gaps, low female participation rates

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\*VET=vocational education & training

#### 4. What world-class systems do

- **Germany/Austria: Dual system;** contracts split time between firm and school, with chambers of commerce as quality anchors; strong social prestige and wage ladders.
- **Singapore: Industry-led curricula,** rigorous instructor certification, **SkillsFuture** credits for lifelong learning, and clear **progression routes** from ITE to polytechnic to university.
- **UK:** Apprenticeship levy; large employers co-finance; standards co-designed with institutes.
- **Australia:** Competency-based training packages and robust RPL (recognition of prior learning).

**Common threads:** stable governance, employer co-ownership, stackable credentials, rigorous instructor development, and **transparent outcomes data**.

#### 5. A practicable reform blueprint for India (3–5 years)

##### A. Governance & data

- 1) **Create a single “Skills India Authority”** (by executive order MoU-based with states) to set national norms, aggregate demand forecasts, and publish **district skills dashboards** (jobs posted, wages, placement & retention by course).
- 2) **One taxonomy:** Align NSQF, National Credit Framework (NCrF) and SSC standards; mandate **stackable micro-credentials** that bridge ITI → diploma → degree.

##### B. Financing that rewards outcomes

- 1) **Outcome-linked grants** to states/ITIs based on **placement + 6/12-month retention + wage growth**, adjusted for local labour-market difficulty.
- 2) **Learner-side financing:** Skills vouchers/fee waivers for priority groups; income-share or skill loans with earnings-contingent repayment.
- 3) **Employer co-financing:** A light-touch **apprenticeship rebate** or SSC-managed training funds for MSMEs; public procurement preference for firms with strong apprenticeship records.

##### C. Curriculum, standards & equipment

- 1) **Annual industry refresh** of courses via SSCs & chambers; embed **digital, AI assisted operations, cybersecurity, energy efficiency, EV maintenance, green construction** modules across trades.
- 2) **Cluster labs:** Shared **Centre-of-Excellence (CoE)** workshops per industrial cluster (automotive, electronics, food processing, logistics) with modern equipment; ITIs book time slots.

##### D. Instructors & pedagogy

- 1) **Fill vacancies fast** through lateral entry and **3-year industry secondments**; require **annual CPD hours**; pay progression linked to certification and placement outcomes.
- 2) **Teach-and-earn model:** Co-teach with industry master trainers; use **simulation & AR/VR** where equipment is scarce.

### E. Apprenticeships & work-based learning

- 1) **Universal apprenticeship semester** for NSQF 3–5 programmes; digital contract, stipend floor indexed to local wages, mentor ratio norms.
- 2) **District Apprenticeship Facilitators** to onboard MSMEs, reduce paperwork, and match trainees; integrate **gig-work projects** with credits where appropriate.

### F. Pathways & prestige

- 1) Guarantee **credit transfer**: ITI (NSQF 4–5) → polytechnic diploma → B.Voc/B.Tech lateral entry; publish **wage ladders** by pathway.
- 2) **Career services** in every ITI: alumni networks, employer days, placement cells with six-month follow-up.

### G. Quality assurance & transparency

- 1) **Revamp ITI grading**: annual, public, outcome-weighted; close or merge persistently low-performing centres; encourage **autonomy for high performers**.
- 2) **Mandatory tracer studies** and **employer satisfaction surveys**; publish course-wise **ROI dashboards**.

### H. Inclusion & support services

- 1) **Women’s participation**: safe transport/hostels, creches, targeted stipends, and employer incentives; expand trades where women’s demand is rising (health tech, logistics, electronics assembly, solar O&M).
- 2) **RPL at scale** for informal workers; bridge courses in math/English/soft skills.

## 6. Quick wins (next 12 months)

- Fast-track **NSTI faculty recruitment** and CPD.
- **Top-20 clusters** get CoEs with industry MoUs.
- Launch **district apprenticeship sprints** with simplified portals and stipend support.
- Publish the **national skills outcomes dashboard**; tie 10–15% of central skilling funds to verified outcomes.

## 7. Risks & mitigations

- **Credential inflation** → keep **competency-based assessments** practical and third-party validated.
- **Scheme proliferation** → sunset overlapping schemes; move to a **single learner ID** under NCrf.
- **Exclusion of small firms** → on-site shared trainers; mobile labs; aggregator models.

## 8. Conclusion:

- India’s skills challenge is not about adding more short courses; it is about **building a trusted market for competencies**. That needs **employer co-ownership, instructor excellence, stackable pathways, outcome-based finance and radical transparency**. Done well, VET will shift from being a safety-net to a **launch-pad for productivity, wages and global competitiveness**, while expanding opportunity for women and first-generation learners.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 2.4. DEALING WITH DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AI ERA

### Descriptive Question:

With AI automating tasks and India entering the late phase of its demographic window, can the 'youth bulge' still become a skills dividend? Diagnose the schooling-to-work pipeline—foundational learning, career guidance, VET/HE, and labour-market matching—and propose a 10-year, outcome-led plan to avert a 'demographic time bomb' and build an employable, future-ready workforce.

### Answer:

#### 1. Why this matters now

- India has one of the world's largest youth cohorts (often cited: **800+ million under 35**). The dividend lasts only as long as the working-age share keeps rising; after that, dependency increases.
- **Automation + AI** are shifting job content faster than curricula refresh cycles. Global estimates show **simultaneous job creation and displacement**, with mid-skill, routine roles most at risk. If India cannot **re-skill at scale and speed**, the dividend can flip into high **youth under-employment** and social strain.

#### 2. Ground reality: strengths and fault lines across the pipeline

##### a) Schooling / Foundational learning

- Learning deficits persist: many Class 5 students still struggle to read a Class 2 text or do basic arithmetic.
- Schools are tuned to **content recall and board exams**, not to problem-solving, communication and digital fluency.
- Career awareness is thin; students know few pathways beyond doctor/engineer/lawyer/government services.

##### b) Post-secondary (HE & VET)

- **Employability is uneven**: plenty of degrees, but too few industry-ready graduates in engineering, commerce and humanities.
- Vocational education is **stigmatized**; ITIs/Polytechnics face **faculty and equipment gaps**, weak employer linkages and low progression routes into higher credits/degrees.
- Micro-credentials exist but are not yet **stackable** or **credit-recognised** everywhere.

##### c) Skilling & apprenticeship

- Skill programmes have trained large numbers, yet **placement and earnings outcomes** are patchy.
- **Apprenticeships** remain far below potential for a country of India's size; MSMEs struggle with compliance and cash-flow to host apprentices.

#### d) Labour market & matching

- **Informality dominates**; firms stay small and productivity is low.
- Geographic and skills mismatch is common; women's labour-force participation is improving but still constrained by **safety, mobility, care work and norms**.
- Career services and labour-market information are fragmented; many youth lack **signals** (experience, references, portfolios) employers trust.

#### e) What is working

- Policy architecture has moved: **NEP 2020**, National Credit Framework & Academic Bank of Credits, **Skill India Digital** stack, expansion of **GCCs**, PLI-led manufacturing, and stronger **industry-academia partnerships** in some states/sectors. These must be executed with outcomes discipline.

## DEALING WITH THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AI ERA

### Why India's Youth Bulge Matters

- India's large cohort of youth (over 800 million under 35)
- Dependency ratio will increase as the working-age share peaks
- AI jeopardizes mid-skill jobs, threatening underemployment without rapid re-skilling

### Key Challenges in the School-to-Work Pipeline

<p><b>Foundational Learning</b></p> <p>Deficits in basic literacy and arithmetics</p>	<p><b>Post-Secondary Education</b></p> <p>Low employability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigmatized Vocational training</li> </ul>	<p><b>Labour-Market Matching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak career guidance</li> <li>• Limited apprenticeships</li> <li>• Fragmented information</li> </ul>
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### Outcome-Led Plan for 2025-2035

- Fix foundational learning in primary schools
- Strengthen career guidance programs
- Make vocational education seamless and aspirational
- Create jobs in growth sectors to absorb skilled

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### 3. What AI changes—and why India must pivot

- AI erodes routine cognitive tasks and **rewards hybrid human skills** (domain + data + design + soft skills).
- Demand is rising in **advanced manufacturing, electronics/semiconductors, ER&D, cybersecurity, green and care economies, logistics, creator economy, and public services** digitally transformed.
- The policy problem: **curriculum refresh cycles (3–5 years)** lag **job redesign cycles (months)**. The solution is a **lifelong learning system** with modular, stackable credentials and strong work-based learning.

### 4. A 10-year, outcome-led plan (2025-2035)

#### A) Fix foundations (Classes 1–8)

- 1) **Mission Foundational Learning 2.0**: state-by-state learning recovery targets; teacher coaching; mother-tongue literacy; daily math practice; independent low-stakes assessments with public dashboards.
- 2) **Digital with pedagogy**: evidence-backed EdTech (practice, feedback, adaptive tools) embedded in timetable; device-sharing plus offline content for low-connectivity blocks.

#### B) Career discovery & guidance at scale (Classes 8–12)

- 1) **National Career Services in Schools**: counsellor-to-student norms; career fairs; labour-market infographics in local languages; exposure to **100+ career families**.
- 2) **Experiential learning**: maker spaces, industry visits, service-learning; **summer internships** for Classes 9–12 with basic stipends and insurance.

#### C) Make VET aspirational and seamless

- 1) **Dual System of Training**: mandatory **apprenticeship quotas** (with MSME support) for firms above a headcount threshold; portable apprentice ID, stipend top-ups via public co-funding.
- 2) **NSQF 2.0 & Credit Stack**: every skill course carries credits **stackable** into diplomas/degrees; universal **Recognition of Prior Learning**; national **skills wallet** for youth to buy approved courses.
- 3) **Modernise ITIs/Polytechnics**: industry-chaired boards, outcome-based funding; upgrade labs in **automation, robotics, AI, EVs, solar, HVAC, precision machining, healthcare support**.

#### D) Rewire higher education for employability

- 1) **Practice-heavy degrees**: 20–30% credits via co-ops/apprenticeships, capstone with industry mentors, and **micro-credentials** (cloud, data, cybersecurity, design thinking) embedded into majors.

- 2) **Faculty-of-Practice tracks** and adjuncts from industry; outcome-linked grants to colleges based on **placement/earnings/entrepreneurship** metrics.

**E) Make job creation the centrepiece (demand side)**

**1) Sectoral missions** with explicit job targets and skill maps:

- **Manufacturing** (electronics, auto/EV, textiles/technical textiles, defence, toys), linked to cluster apprenticeships.
- **Green & care economies** (rooftop solar, retrofitting, repair/reuse, elder/child care) with certified career ladders.
- **Digital services & GCCs** beyond coding—**product management, UX, sales engineering, compliance, finance ops.**
- **Construction & housing** with safety certification and migrant support.
- **Creative economy** (AVGC, audio, sports, tourism).

- 2) **Women's work enablers:** safe transport, **creches** near worksites, hostels for single women, flexible work norms, zero-tolerance POSH enforcement; targeted hiring incentives in sunrise sectors.

- **Mobility & inclusion:** inter-state portability (ration, health, skills wallet), rental housing in growth hubs; specialised skilling for aspirational districts.

**F) Governance, data and finance**

- 1) **Outcomes compact:** all government-funded training publishes **placement and median earnings at 6/12 months**, audited.
- 2) **Skill vouchers & outcomes-based contracts** so funding follows the learner/provider that delivers jobs. Tax credits for **apprentice hosts**; blended finance/skill impact bonds for hard-to-place youth.
- 3) **Inter-operable Digital Public Infrastructure for skills:** unique **Skill ID**, credential registry (QR-verifiable), e-portfolios and reference letters employers can trust.

**G) AI for all**

- 1) **AI fluency for every learner** (prompting, data literacy, ethics, IP); **compute & maker labs** in ITIs/colleges; public-purpose Indian-language AI resources; internships tied to GCCs and startups.

**5. Equity and risk management**

- Target rural, first-generation learners, and women with **bridging curricula** (English, digital, soft skills).
- **Social protection pilots:** short-term unemployment assistance tied to re-skilling; insurance for apprentices; migration helplines.

- Guard against **low-wage traps** by setting **wage floors** in publicly funded placements and measuring **earnings growth**, not training volumes.

#### 6. Milestones & KPIs (illustrative)

- By **2027**: every district has dual-system apprenticeship hub; all public training on skills wallets; school dashboards show year-on-year gains in foundational learning.
- By **2030**: **10 million active apprentices**, 50% of HE programmes with credit-bearing work-based learning; women's LFPR markedly higher; median earnings of publicly trained youth up **>30%** vs. baseline.
- By **2035**: majority of credentials **stackable**; India ranks among global leaders in **ER&D, green jobs and care work**, with sustained growth in formal youth employment.

#### Conclusion:

- India's window is narrowing, and **AI compresses time** further. The way to avoid a demographic time bomb is not more training **inputs**, but a **capability system** that: builds strong foundations, makes careers visible, treats VET and HE as a **seamless, credit-bearing continuum**, puts **work-based learning** at the core, measures **earnings and placements**, and—crucially—**creates jobs** in sectors where India can lead. Done together, the youth bulge becomes a **skills dividend** that compounds for decades.

Source: The Hindu

### 2.5. NO ENTRY FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED?

#### Descriptive Question:

India's high-stakes entrance examinations (JEE/NEET/CUET/CLAT) have evolved into a coaching-driven, high-pressure regime that raises concerns about equity, reliability and student well-being. Diagnose the problems in the current admissions architecture and design a fair, integrity-assured, and student-centric alternative.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Why this matters now

- **Scale & stakes**: ~70 lakh (7 million) students sit major UG entrance tests each year for a relatively small number of seats. Very narrow funnels have made a single score the gatekeeper to life chances.
- **Systemic symptoms**: a booming coaching industry (starting at ages 13–14), periodic paper-leak/allegation crises, rising mental-health red flags (self-harm, burnout), widening **urban–rural, gender and income gradients**, and an increasingly brittle trust in testing agencies.

- **Public purpose problem:** admissions to public institutions are a constitutional public good (equality of opportunity, Articles 14 & 21). A design that predictably advantages those who can buy high-quality coaching fails the test of substantive equality.

## 2. What exactly is broken?

### a) Equity and “merit”

- *Coaching premium:* Intensive coaching confers large score gains that swamp school learning, transforming “merit” into a proxy for ability to pay, location, and information networks.
- *Distributional bias:* Urban districts, certain boards and boys in some streams are over-represented; first-generation learners and rural board toppers are under-selected despite potential.

### b) Validity & reliability

- Over-weighting a single, time-pressured score weakens **predictive validity** (it measures test-taking skill under pressure more than sustained scholarly potential).
- **Reliability risks** rise with paper leaks, item exposure and weak equating across multiple shifts.

### c) Well-being & ethics

- Early specialization, sleep-deprivation, and high parental debt produce chronic stress. Kota-like ecosystems show how residential coaching towns can magnify risk in adolescents.

### d) Governance

- Fragmented laws, opaque vendor chains (printing/logistics/IT), limited independent psychometric audits, and slow grievance redress erode confidence.


## 3. What can India learn from elsewhere?


- **Netherlands (medicine):** *Weighted lottery* re-introduced (2023). Applicants above a defined academic threshold enter a lottery; higher grades only increase odds, not certainty. Effects: lower pressure, broader diversity, still competent cohorts.
- **China (2021 “double-reduction”):** curbed for-profit tutoring in school subjects to reduce family burdens and inequality; re-emphasized school learning and well-being.
- **US/UK & others:** movement towards *test-optional/holistic* elements; contextual offers; automatic admission for top X% of each school/board (e.g., Texas Top 10%).
- **School lotteries** (charter systems) use audited, transparent draws to ensure fairness where demand exceeds supply.


**Lesson:** Where capacity is constrained, **threshold + randomization** is a legitimate, fair tool when tightly audited; it deemphasizes unhealthy micro-ranking.

## ENSURING ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY AMID IMPORT DEPENDENCY


### WHY ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY MATTERS


 Over 85% of crude oil and 50% of natural gas is imported


 Global supply disruptions, e.g. Russia-Ukraine war, Middle East tensions

 Import dependence raises inflation and economic vulnerability


### FLASHPOINTS IN GLOBAL ENERGY SECURITY


 1973 Arab oil embargo


 2011 Fukushima disaster

 2022 Ukraine war


### GEOPOLITICAL RISKS OF DEPENDENCE


 Russia 2024-25 ~35-40% of crude imports


 Middle East Major energy hub, ongoing instability


 Trade deficit Weakens rupee, rising import bills


### PATHWAYS TO ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY

 Diversify sources and fuels


 Greater domestic utilization (coal, minerals)

 Expand renewables, boost grid stability

 Energy efficiency measures

 Institutional and diplomatic initiatives

### PATHWAYS IN GLOBAL ENERGY SECURITY

 Diversify sources and fuels

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#### 4. A Blueprint to “Detoxify” Admissions

##### Pillar A — Integrity-first testing

- 1) **Convert the testing agency into an Independent Commission** by statute: clear rule-books, security standards, professional psychometric staff, annual external audits.
- 2) **Psychometric best practice:** item-banks with pre-testing, blueprinting, IRT-based equating across shifts, public technical reports, and rapid, fair re-test protocols after breaches.
- 3) **Candidate rights charter:** transparent score reports, appeal windows, fee waivers for low-income candidates, data-privacy and mental-health safeguards.

##### Pillar B — From one score to multiple signals

- 1) **Eligibility thresholds** (subject-wise) using school Board performance (moderated via percentile within each board to respect diversity) + low-stakes national subject tests offered multiple times a year.

- 2) **Contextual score:** small boost for socio-economic disadvantage (parental education, school type, rurality, disability), empirically bounded and transparently disclosed.
- 3) **Banding, then selection:**
  - Create 2–3 **merit bands** (e.g., ≥90th, 80–90th, 70–80th percentile after moderation).
  - Within each band, run a **weighted, audited lottery** to allocate seats; higher bands get higher weights (odds), but **every eligible student has a chance**.
  - Publish the algorithm, seed, third-party hash, and a verifiable draw log to build trust.

#### **Pillar C — Fair opportunity, not just fair selection**

- 1) **Capacity expansion** instead of pure rationing: add seats in *general engineering, health sciences and foundational science*; use multi-campus IIT/NIT/IISER models; promote **first-year common programmes with inter-IIT student exchange** to reduce hierarchical signalling.
- 2) **Diversifying the pipeline:** reserve a **limited share for government-school/rural toppers** (on eligibility thresholds), automatic offers to the top X% of each board, gender balancing where gaps persist.
- 3) **Bridging and mobility:** a funded **foundation year** for under-resourced entrants; lateral transfers after year-1 based on internal performance, not initial rank.

#### **Pillar D — Regulating the coaching economy**

- 1) **Licensing & disclosure:** fee transparency, refund norms, truthful advertising, minimum hostel/safety standards, and counseling support in coaching towns.
- 2) **Public option:** free, high-quality remedial/enrichment through PM SHRI schools, SWAYAM, and state virtual academies; teacher mentoring to keep learning inside schools.
- 3) **Guardrails for minors:** ceilings on weekly hours, night-study restrictions, strict action against predatory contracts. (China’s experience shows regulation must be credible, not symbolic.)

#### **Pillar E — Student well-being and ethics**

- Age-appropriate attempt limits; on-site counselors and 24×7 helplines during exam seasons; mandated “cool-off” days; peer-mentoring and parent education.
- Annual well-being audits of high-pressure districts (Kota-like hubs) linked to district administration action plans.

#### **5. Why “threshold + lottery” is not anti-merit**

- **Merit = competence + potential + fairness.** Thresholds assure competence; the lottery *within* qualified pools reduces noise from tiny score differences driven by coaching intensity or test error.

- It **shrinks arms-race incentives** to start coaching at 13, lowers household debt, and opens doors to talented first-generation learners whose school contexts constrained their test prep.
- Evidence from lottery systems shows **no fall in graduate performance** when thresholds are well-calibrated and bridge courses exist.

## 6. Implementation roadmap (3–5 years)

- 1) **Year 1:** Legal architecture for Independent Testing Commission; publish security & psychometric codes; pilot contextual score; publish open technical reports.
- 2) **Year 2:** Introduce multi-attempt subject tests; begin board-percentile moderation; launch government-school topper track and foundation-year pilots.
- 3) **Year 3:** Roll out **banded weighted lottery** for a defined seat share (say 25%) in selected programmes; expand later based on evaluation.
- 4) **Year 4–5:** Scale capacity (additional seats/faculty), inter-IIT exchange, bridge-to-degree mobility; national coaching-licensing comes into force; continuous evaluation of outcomes (diversity, academic performance, well-being).

## 7. Likely objections & responses

- **“This dilutes standards.”** *Response:* thresholds preserve competence; universities still fail/graduate students by internal standards; foundation courses address preparation gaps.
- **“Boards are uneven.”** *Response:* percentile-within-board + moderation panels + random audits reduce cross-board inequity.
- **“Lotteries feel arbitrary.”** *Response:* arbitrariness lies in micro-ranking by one weekend exam as much as in randomization; lotteries are transparent, auditable, and fair when capacity is scarce.
- **“Coaching will game the new system.”** *Response:* multi-signal design, contextual boosts and strict consumer-protection reduce the coaching ROI; the public option meets genuine learning needs.

## Conclusion:

- India faces a stark choice: a toxic race that over-weights a single number—producing anxiety, narrow learning and inequality—or an admissions architecture that is fair, reliable and humane. A threshold-plus-lottery within merit bands, anchored in strong test integrity, board-percentile moderation, contextual fairness, capacity expansion, and coaching regulation, can detoxify the system. It affirms a simple principle: opportunity should be broad, selection should be trustworthy, and education should nurture people—not just percentile points.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 3. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 3.1. OPTIONS AGAINST COERCIVE TRUMP-STEERING

##### Descriptive Question:

**“India must not allow short-term geopolitical compulsions to compromise its long-term strategic autonomy.” In light of recent coercive U.S. trade and strategic postures under President Donald Trump, critically examine India’s response options and the importance of maintaining foreign policy independence.**

##### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- India's commitment to strategic autonomy—a doctrine deeply rooted in its post-independence foreign policy—faces a renewed test amid growing unilateralism and coercive diplomacy by global powers, notably the United States under President Donald Trump. The imposition of tariffs, sanctions threats, and attempts to penalise India for sovereign decisions like purchasing defence equipment from Russia, or maintaining relations with Iran and members of BRICS+, reflect a broader pattern of transactional geopolitics. While such moves are often framed under trade protectionism, they carry far-reaching strategic implications.

#### I. Contextual Background: Trump’s Coercive Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy

##### 1. Shift from Strategic Partnership to Transactionalism:

- Donald Trump’s second presidency has seen an aggressive assertion of “America First” policies, including punitive tariffs, coercive diplomacy, and weaponisation of trade norms for political ends.
- India faced a 25% tariff on its steel exports, and was warned of retaliatory actions over its procurement of S-400 missile systems from Russia and continued oil imports from Iran.

##### 2. Beyond India: Global Patterns of Coercion:

- Brazil’s example of being slapped with a 50% tariff allegedly for not complying with U.S. political preferences (e.g., on arrest of ex-President Jair Bolsonaro).
- China was forced into tit-for-tat tariff warfare with the U.S., especially concerning rare earths, technology exports, and critical defence inputs.

##### 3. India’s Unyielding Positions Invoked Backlash:

- India's engagements with BRICS+, I2U2, and refusal to condemn Russia in alignment with Western positions placed it at odds with U.S. foreign policy goals.
- Membership in regional arrangements outside U.S. influence, and refusal to back discriminatory international frameworks (like CTBT), have fuelled diplomatic tensions.

**OPTIONS AGAINST COERCIVE TRUMP-STEERING**

**CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**  
 Trump's second presidency has seering of "America First" policies, involving unilateralism, coercive diplomacy, trrisistence to threats on issues like nulearinturism

**INDIA'S HISTORY OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY**  
 Anchored in **Non-alignment** and resistance to global pressure on issues like nuclear testing, and climate targets

**RISKS OF CAPITULATION**

- Erosion of sovereign decision-making
- Loss of leverage in multilateral forums
- Setting a dangerous precedent

**POLICY OPTIONS**

- Rejecting coercive deal-making
- Maintaining domestic economic resilience
- Diversifying strategic partnerships
- Assertive diplomacy and narrative building

**STRATEGIC LESSONS**  
 Beyond short-term costs  
 Enduring short-term for strariegic freedom to take care foreign investment

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## II. India's Strategic Autonomy: The Pillars and Precedents

### 1. Doctrine of Strategic Autonomy:

- Anchored in Nehruvian diplomacy, India has historically pursued multi-alignment rather than alliance-based alignments.
- India has long upheld **policy independence in military procurement, nuclear doctrine, and multilateral diplomacy.**

### 2. Historical Precedents of Resisting Global Pressure:

- In 1968, India refused to sign the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** on the grounds of inherent discrimination.
- India remained a hold-out to the **Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)** in 1995 despite strong pressure, preserving its sovereign right to test.
- In climate negotiations, India resisted binding emissions targets in 2015 until its equity-based stance was partially acknowledged in the **Paris Agreement.**

### 3. Diplomatic Credibility through Consistency:

- India's reputation for **independent judgment** has earned global respect. Upholding this consistency is vital not just for domestic legitimacy, but also for trust among diverse global partners.

### III. Risks of Capitulation to U.S. Pressure

#### 1. Erosion of Sovereign Decision-Making:

- Giving in to unilateral U.S. demands could undermine India's freedom in choosing strategic and commercial partners (e.g., with Russia or Iran).
- May restrict India's ability to diversify energy, defence, and technology partnerships.

#### 2. Setting a Dangerous Precedent:

- Once strategic decisions are seen as vulnerable to external coercion, it could embolden other global powers to extract concessions through pressure.

#### 3. Loss of Leverage in Multilateral Forums:

- Weakening India's assertiveness could jeopardise its leadership on issues like **climate justice, South-South cooperation, and global digital governance.**

### IV. Policy Options and Strategic Pathways for India:

#### 1. Rejecting Coercive Deal-Making:

- India must **firmly reject trade and defence deals** that come with overt political strings or which impinge upon its sovereign policy decisions.
- Engagements must be **mutually respectful**, based on equality, not dictated by asymmetry of power.

#### 2. Diversifying Strategic Partnerships:

- Strengthen ties with **EU, ASEAN, Africa, and BRICS+** as counterweights to unipolar pressure.
- Accelerate bilateral arrangements with Russia, Iran, and Latin American countries in energy, defence, and high-tech cooperation.

#### 3. Maintaining Domestic Economic Resilience:

- Enhance **domestic capabilities in manufacturing and defence production** to reduce dependency on external powers.
- Promote **self-reliance in rare earths, AI, semiconductors**, and high-end technology sectors.

#### 4. Assertive Diplomacy and Narrative Building:

- India must project a **confident diplomatic posture**—not confrontational, but firm on non-negotiable principles.
- In multilateral forums (WTO, G20, UN), India should build coalitions with other countries resisting similar pressures.

### V. Strategic Lessons and The Road Ahead

#### 1. Short-Term Costs, Long-Term Gains:

- Economic pain due to tariffs or temporary geopolitical friction is a price worth paying to preserve **strategic freedom and credibility.**
- India must weigh its decisions not only in transactional economic terms but from the lens of **national interest continuity.**

## 2. Learning from Past Leadership:

- As a developing nation, India stood up to nuclear discrimination in the past and paid a price, but **emerged stronger and respected globally**.
- Today, as a major power with global responsibilities, India must **defend that tradition of principled realism**.

### Conclusion:

- India must navigate an increasingly multipolar and coercive world with clarity of purpose and consistency in principles. Submitting to U.S. demands framed in transactional terms would undermine the country's long-held strategic autonomy. Instead, India should respond through firmness, diversification of partnerships, and moral leadership on global platforms. Upholding **sovereignty, credibility, and strategic agency** must remain at the heart of Indian foreign policy—even if it entails enduring short-term disruptions.

**Source: *The Indian Express***

## 3.2. FROM SCIENTIFIC INTERNATIONALISM TO STRATEGIC TECHNO-CAPITALISM

### Descriptive Question:

**India–U.S. technological cooperation has evolved from scientific internationalism to strategic techno-capitalism. Examine this transition in light of emerging geopolitical and commercial interests. How should India position itself amidst this shift to secure its autonomy and economic resilience?**

### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- The India–U.S. technological relationship once symbolised the ideals of scientific cooperation for human advancement. The 1975 Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) — a joint initiative by ISRO and NASA — remains a symbol of developmental collaboration driven by the Cold War-era belief that technology, shared openly, could elevate humanity. However, the contemporary global tech landscape reflects a stark departure from such idealism. The current phase, driven by techno-capitalism and strategic state-market compacts, is marked by **economic nationalism, digital militarism, and private oligarchies**—notably in Silicon Valley—pursuing geopolitical dominance.

### From Scientific Internationalism to Strategic Techno-Capitalism:

#### 1. The SITE Era and Cold War Collaboration

- The SITE project was envisioned to **uplift rural education and development** by broadcasting programmes to over 2,400 Indian villages using NASA's ATS-6 satellite.
- It reflected a **transnational scientific ethos** — “technology for development,” rooted in the globalist values of the post-World War II liberal order.

This cooperation, despite U.S. private sector involvement (e.g., Fairchild Corporation built the ATS satellite), was fundamentally **state-led** and embedded in **international goodwill**.

## 2. The Strategic Shift in U.S. Tech Policy

- Over the last two decades, the U.S. has reoriented its tech strategy to focus on:
  - **Privatisation and deregulation** of national innovation systems, with NASA now overshadowed by firms like SpaceX;
  - **State-enabled Silicon Valley dominance**, with government funding fueling innovations in AI, biotech, and semiconductors;
  - An increasing **geopolitical framing of technology** — AI, quantum computing, and blockchain are viewed as instruments of global power competition.
- This shift became more apparent during Donald Trump's presidency and has continued under Joe Biden, albeit with a more structured industrial strategy (e.g., CHIPS Act, AI executive orders).



## Techno-Nationalism and Strategic Rivalries

The emerging techno-capitalism is shaped by:

### 1. Geopolitical Competition with China

- The U.S. views **China's state-driven tech ecosystem** as a strategic threat, prompting export controls, tech sanctions, and attempts to block Chinese access to advanced semiconductors and AI chips.
- U.S. strategy now blends **national security with industrial policy**, particularly around supply chain resilience, rare earth elements, and chip manufacturing.

### 2. Militarisation of Digital Infrastructure

- Technologies like **5G, cyber-defence, AI in warfare, and quantum encryption** are not merely commercial frontiers but tools of national power.
- The U.S. has aligned its Department of Defense, private innovators, and global allies to restrict tech flows to rivals while consolidating influence via platforms like IPEF and the Indo-Pacific strategy.

### Implications for India:

India, caught between this tech realignment and its own developmental aspirations, faces several dilemmas:

#### 1. Access vs Autonomy

- India seeks technology partnerships with the U.S. for **semiconductors (e.g., Micron's investment), AI research, and space innovation**.
- However, **data sovereignty, regulatory control over Big Tech, and localisation policies** remain points of friction. The U.S. often resists these through trade and diplomatic pressure.

#### 2. Industrial Catch-up or Dependency?

- While India has opened up sectors like electronics manufacturing, space startups, and drone tech, its **private R&D investment lags** far behind.
- Excessive reliance on U.S. platforms may delay the creation of **indigenous IP** and make India a **tech consumer**, not a co-creator.

#### 3. Strategic Alignment Risks

- Participation in U.S.-led frameworks like the **U.S.–India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)** offers access to cutting-edge domains.
- But India's independent stance on **Russia, digital taxation, WTO reform, and data governance** may increasingly come under pressure as techno-alignment becomes the new litmus test of partnership.

### Counterarguments: Strategic Tech Engagement is Inevitable

- Proponents of deeper tech engagement argue:
  - India can leverage U.S. capital and knowledge to leapfrog in sectors like **semiconductors, space commerce, and AI-driven governance**;
  - It enhances **geostrategic deterrence** against China;
  - Joint initiatives like **NASA-ISRO NISAR, U.S.-India Space Dialogue, and Quantum Cooperation** reflect mutual benefit rather than domination.
- Moreover, the **G20 Digital Economy Working Group**, co-chaired by India, has tried to shape global norms on AI, digital public infrastructure, and inclusion—showing India's active agency.

### Way Forward: Securing Strategic Autonomy in the Tech Era

India must:

- 1) **Strengthen indigenous R&D** through greater public and private sector collaboration under programs like **Digital India, MeitY Startup Hub, and PLI schemes** for electronics and semiconductors.
- 2) **Develop techno-diplomacy** that promotes open standards and **South-South technology collaboration** (e.g., under BRICS, IBSA).
- 3) **Push back against digital hegemony** by enforcing fair taxation of Big Tech, promoting **data localisation**, and setting ethical standards in AI, surveillance, and digital payments.
- 4) **Invest in foundational innovation**, not just commercial deployment — including quantum computing, 6G, and biomedical engineering.

### Conclusion:

- The transition from scientific internationalism to techno-capitalism reflects a deeper **transformation in global order**—from cooperation to competition, from public good to profit-driven strategy. India must engage pragmatically with the U.S. and other powers but with **clarity of purpose and calibrated caution**.
- As the battle for technological dominance intensifies, India must preserve **its autonomy, ethics, and development focus**, ensuring that partnerships remain **mutually beneficial** rather than **strategically extractive**. This is not just about tech—it is about sovereignty, resilience, and India's place in the future global order.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.3. GROWING CHALLENGES TO NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN SOUTH ASIA

#### Descriptive Question:

Given the evolving nuclear doctrines and emerging dual-capable technologies in South Asia, discuss the growing challenges to nuclear deterrence and crisis stability in the region. In this context, assess the relevance of reviving nuclear dialogue and confidence-building measures among India, Pakistan, and China.

#### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- Nuclear deterrence in South Asia has historically rested on precarious balances—between political will and military capabilities, between conventional threats and nuclear red lines. However, the evolving military doctrines, proliferation of dual-use missile systems, and the blurring of conventional-nuclear distinctions have created a volatile and unpredictable security environment in the region. The recent political and military rhetoric post Operation Sindoor, including references to “nuclear blackmail” and “credible deterrence,” has intensified the urgency for a renewed nuclear dialogue among India, Pakistan, and China.

#### I. Background: South Asia’s Interlocked Deterrence Triad

- The South Asian nuclear triangle—India, Pakistan, and China—functions under an interdependent deterrence dynamic:
  - **India-Pakistan:** Since the 1998 nuclear tests, both have engaged in a tense standoff of “minimum deterrence” with periodic crises (Kargil 1999, Operation Parakram 2001-02, Balakot 2019) reinforcing the fragile stability.
  - **India-China:** China has maintained a formal “No First Use” (NFU) posture, but recent expansions in nuclear arsenal and missile systems have raised concerns about doctrinal shifts.
  - **China-Pakistan nexus:** China's growing nuclear and missile cooperation with Pakistan, including delivery systems, adds complexity to the regional balance.
- The increasing opacity around intentions and deployments, coupled with doctrinal ambiguity, has escalated regional security concerns.

#### II. Emerging Trends Disrupting Strategic Stability

##### 1. Dual-Use Missile Systems and Delivery Ambiguity

- China’s People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) now fields missiles like the **DF-17 hypersonic glide vehicle** and **DF-41 ICBMs**, capable of carrying either nuclear or conventional warheads.
- This “**warhead ambiguity**” risks miscalculation, as adversaries cannot ascertain the nature of an incoming strike in real-time.

- **Hypersonic missiles** further reduce decision timeframes, weakening the effectiveness of second-strike postures.

## 2. Development of Low-Yield, Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs)

- Pakistan's shift from a doctrine of "minimum credible deterrence" to "**full spectrum deterrence**" (FSD) includes the deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons like the Nasr missile system.
- These TNWs are designed to counter India's "Cold Start" conventional doctrine by threatening battlefield nuclear use in early stages of conflict.
- India's recent operationalisation of integrated "**Rudra**" **brigades** may be seen as a response to Pakistan's evolving nuclear posture.

## 3. Technological Disruption and Strategic Instability

- Advances in **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **autonomous weapons**, **cyber capabilities**, and **space-based ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance)** systems are eroding the traditional command-and-control stability.
- Concepts like "launch-on-warning" or "launch-under-attack" become riskier in the age of hypersonics and cyber warfare, where misinterpretation could trigger pre-emptive nuclear use.

## III. Doctrinal Divergence and Policy Ambiguity

### India's Position

- India has historically maintained two doctrinal pillars:
  - 1) **Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD)**;
  - 2) **No First Use (NFU)** policy.
- However, growing threats have compelled strategic debates within India on the continued relevance of NFU, especially in light of potential decapitation strikes and dual-use delivery systems.
- India seeks to enhance deterrence by showcasing its readiness to retaliate despite "nuclear bluff" or coercive posturing.

### Pakistan's Stance

- Maintains deliberate ambiguity on first-use, with **no formal NFU policy**.
- Seeks to deter Indian conventional superiority through a **graduated escalation ladder**—from conventional to tactical to strategic nuclear weapons.
- Public messaging around "**nuclear thresholds**" has been inconsistent, further fuelling misperceptions and miscalculations.

**China’s Expansion**


- Officially adheres to **NFU and CMD**, but is rapidly increasing warhead numbers (predicted to exceed **1,000 by 2030**).
- PLARF’s inventory of dual-capable missiles raises doubts about the NFU’s credibility.
- China’s strategic calculus increasingly views India as a nuclear competitor, not merely the U.S.

## GROWING CHALLENGES TO NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN SOUTH ASIA


Nuclear doctrines and emerging dual-capable technologies are creating an increasingly complex and unstable security environment in South Asia.

**INTERLOCKED DETERRENCE TRIAD**


- Tense nuclear standoff with Pakistan
- China adheres to "No First Use," but expanding arsenal
- Growing nuclear cooperation with Pakistan




**EMERGING TRENDS DISRUPTING STABILITY**



**Dual-Use Missiles**  
Multiple warhead options heighten ambiguity and escalation risks





**Tactical Nuclear Weapons**  
Low-yield nuclear capabilities blur line between conventional and nuclear arsenal



**Technological Disruption**  
Advances in hypersonics, AI, cyber, and ISR

**DOCTRINAL DIVERGENCE**

<p> <b>India</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credible Minimum Deterrence</li> <li>• Adheres to 'No First Use'</li> <li>• Debates on potential NFU revision</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Pakistan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity on First Use</li> <li>• Graduated escalation approach</li> <li>• 'Full Spectrum Deterrence' doctrine</li> </ul>
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**NEED FOR REVIVED NUCLEAR DIALOGUE**

- Mitigate rising risks of miscalculation and unintended escalation
- Consider mutual risk reduction measures and arms control

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#### IV. Current Frameworks and Gaps in Dialogue

##### Existing Measures

- **Lahore Declaration (1999)**: India and Pakistan agreed on nuclear risk reduction and confidence-building steps.
- **Agreement on Pre-Notification of Missile Tests (2005) and Hotline Mechanisms.**
- Limited nuclear risk reduction frameworks exist under the **UN Convention on Notification of Nuclear Accidents** and **IAEA Safeguards**.

##### Gaps and Limitations

- None of these mechanisms address emerging threats like hypersonics, cyber intrusions, or battlefield nukes.
- There is **no trilateral forum** among India, Pakistan, and China to address nuclear doctrines or threat perceptions.
- Absence of **transparency on warhead stockpiles**, delivery systems, and launch protocols.

#### V. The Case for Renewed Nuclear Dialogue:

##### 1. De-escalation of Crisis Triggers

- Dialogue could help establish **mutual understanding of redlines**, reduce chance of escalation from conventional to nuclear exchange.
- Crisis communication protocols (hotlines, early warning data sharing) need updating.

##### 2. Risk Reduction and Arms Control

- Propose **India–Pakistan–China Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures (NRRMs)** with:
  - No deployment of TNWs near borders,
  - Ban on first-use of hypersonic delivery systems,
  - Joint declaration on non-targeting of nuclear command centres.

##### 3. Third-party Facilitation (Track-II Diplomacy)

- Use forums like **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** or **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** for initiating low-stakes confidence-building.
- Encourage strategic stability talks under **UN Conference on Disarmament**.

#### VI. Conclusion:

- The current nuclear environment in South Asia is characterised by rapid modernisation, doctrinal opacity, and disruptive technologies—each capable of undermining the already fragile deterrence stability. With conventional and nuclear postures increasingly intertwined, the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation has grown. It is no longer sufficient to rely on Cold War-era doctrines or outdated agreements.

- There is an urgent need to **depoliticise nuclear discourse**, engage in strategic dialogue, and upgrade nuclear risk reduction architecture in the region. This is not just a matter of regional security, but a global imperative to avoid any accidental, unauthorised, or misjudged use of nuclear weapons. A South Asian nuclear code of conduct, backed by transparency, technology safeguards, and political will, could serve as a model for crisis stability in other volatile regions of the world.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.4. EXPORTING TRADE TENSION – US IMPOSES 50% IMPORT TARIFF ON INDIA.

#### Descriptive Question:

"The imposition of a 50% tariff on Indian imports by the United States has sparked concerns about trade imbalance, protectionism, and global supply chains."

Examine the implications of this move on India's economy and bilateral trade with the US. What policy options does India have to safeguard its economic interests while avoiding a trade war?

**Answer:**

#### Introduction:

- The announcement of a cumulative 50% tariff on Indian imports by the United States under President Donald Trump marks a significant escalation in economic tensions between the two nations. Ostensibly triggered by India's continued oil imports from Russia, the tariff has wider ramifications for India's trade balance, manufacturing ecosystem, and geopolitical positioning. This action underlines the growing challenge of navigating **economic nationalism** and **protectionist trade policies** in an increasingly multipolar world.

#### I. The Genesis of the Tariff Escalation:

##### 1. Background Context

- India has been importing heavily discounted crude oil from Russia since the Ukraine war began in 2022. This has helped India manage inflation, meet energy demands, and stabilise its fiscal deficit.
- The US, viewing this as undermining collective Western sanctions, initially announced a 25% tariff on Indian goods. The recent **additional 25%** takes the total to 50%, making India (along with Brazil) among the highest-tariffed nations in US trade.

##### 2. The Pretext of Energy Security

- The US cites India's Russian energy imports as a geopolitical divergence, but this move is also part of a broader trend under Trump of using **tariffs as negotiation weapons**, not just economic instruments.
- Importantly, the US and its allies themselves continue to import oil or LNG from Russia indirectly through third-party arrangements, weakening their moral authority.

# EXPORTING TRADE TENSION

## US IMPOSES 50% IMPORT TARIFF ON INDIA



### KEY INDIA–U.S. TRADE TRENDS

- \$79.7 billion exports to U.S. (2023)
- \$33.1 billion imports from U.S. (2023)
- U.S. is India's largest export market

### ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

#### Widening Trade Deficit

Tariffs could aggravate India's already significant trade deficit with the U.S.

#### Impact on Key Sectors

Textiles, machinery, pharmaceuticals, and leather

#### Inflationary Pressures

Lead to costlier imported goods for consumers

### POSSIBLE POLICY RESPONSES

- Negotiation and dispute resolution via WTO
- Diversify export markets beyond U.S.
- Enhance domestic manufacturing capabilities **SosinIAS**

## II. Economic Implications for India:

### 1. Widening Trade Deficit

- India already suffers a **significant trade deficit** with the US. The CMIE data shows a trade deficit of over **\$23.5 billion in 2024–25**, with the US being a top destination for Indian exports.
- Tariffs will:

- Make Indian goods more expensive and **less competitive**.
- Reduce India's exports to the US, worsening the **current account deficit**.
- Increase the cost of **intermediate goods** imported from the US, especially in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and aviation.

## 2. GDP and Employment Hit

- Tariff barriers disrupt long-standing **supply chains**, especially in **labour-intensive MSME sectors** like textiles, leather, and auto components.
- A small Ludhiana-based apparel exporter losing access to the US market will not only suffer individually but may cause **job losses in clusters**.
- Experts estimate that GDP could decline by **over half a percentage point** if retaliatory effects spread to other sectors.

## 3. Consumption and Inflation Concerns

- Tariffs penalise domestic consumers by making **imported goods costlier**.
- Essential goods sourced from US manufacturers—such as electronics, chemicals, and medical devices—could become expensive, thereby **spurring inflation**.

## III. Strategic and Diplomatic Fallout:

### 1. The Myth of Trade Reciprocity

- While Trump claims to be correcting “unfair” trade, India has already **liberalised many tariffs**, especially under WTO norms.
- India is not a mercantilist power but suffers from **structural trade imbalances**, such as high oil imports and low domestic value addition.

### 2. Undermining of Multilateralism

- The move disregards WTO protocols and **bilateral mechanisms**, replacing them with arbitrary penalisation.
- It contradicts US assertions of supporting a **free and open Indo-Pacific**, where economic interdependence is key to regional stability.

## IV. Policy Options for India

### 1. Immediate Diplomatic Dialogue

- India must initiate **urgent diplomatic engagement** at both political and bureaucratic levels to de-link the Russian oil issue from bilateral trade.
- High-level visits or back-channel communication (e.g., through the Indo-US Trade Policy Forum) can de-escalate the situation.

## 2. Retaliatory Tariffs: A Double-Edged Sword

- India may be tempted to impose **reciprocal tariffs** on US goods, such as Harley Davidson bikes, almonds, and whiskey.
- However, this may only aggravate the dispute, affecting India's **investment climate** and FDI inflows from US tech and pharma companies.

## 3. Legal Recourse Through WTO

- India could challenge the tariff hike through the **World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism**, though outcomes can be delayed or ignored by the US.
- Nonetheless, it asserts India's commitment to the **rules-based order**, gaining moral ground.

## 4. Export Diversification and Value Chain Shift

- India must reduce its export dependency on the US by exploring new markets in **Africa, ASEAN, and Latin America**.
- Promote **domestic value addition** and reduce reliance on low-margin commodity exports.

## 5. Use of Multilateral and Regional Blocs

- India's engagement with **IPEF, QUAD, and G20** offers leverage to argue for economic cooperation and stability.
- Enhancing **rupee trade mechanisms**, especially with non-Western economies, could buffer the shocks of dollar-dominated disruptions.

## V. The Way Forward: Rethinking Trade and Manufacturing:

- This crisis must prompt India to introspect on deeper structural economic issues:
  - Why is India's **manufacturing contribution to GDP** still below 17%?
  - Why are MSMEs under-capitalised and unable to compete globally?
  - What bottlenecks (logistics, credit, labour reforms) are stifling competitiveness?
- Only a strong domestic industrial base will enable India to absorb external shocks, whether from US tariffs or geopolitical disruptions.

### Conclusion:

- The 50% tariff imposed by the United States is not just a trade measure—it is a political message wrapped in economic coercion. It challenges India's ability to uphold strategic autonomy while remaining competitive in a hostile global trade environment. India must respond not with retaliation but with **resilience, negotiation, and reform**. The right mix of diplomacy, legal assertion, and internal economic strengthening will determine whether India emerges from this standoff weaker or more self-reliant.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.5. HOW CHINA LEVERAGED TRADE COERCION

#### Descriptive Question:

Analyse how China's 'buyer power' reshaped Washington's calculus and what this reveals about leverage in trade coercion.

#### Answer:

##### 1) Context and signal from the latest truce

- Washington **extended its truce with China**—pushing back the start of triple-digit duties—after Beijing responded with potent counter-leverage, not just countersanctions.
- Two **non-tariff levers** mattered:
  - 1) **Critical inputs:** China's control over **rare-earths/metals** and magnet supply that feed aerospace, defence, EVs and semiconductors.
  - 2) **Buyer power in food:** China is the **swing importer** of global agri-commodities. In **2024** it imported **~747 mt** soybeans (huge protein feedstock for its hog and poultry sectors). By **shifting soy/corn/sorghum/poultry purchases away from the US** towards Brazil/Argentina and others, Beijing inflicted immediate pain on politically sensitive US farm states—pressuring Washington to keep negotiating.
  - 3) Evidence of buyer leverage: what changed on the ground
- **US farm exports to China slumped:** official US data show big falls in **soybean, corn, poultry** and **dairy** shipments in **Jan–Jun 2025** versus the same period of 2024.
- The drop is **not merely substitution**—it is **targeted**: China increased sourcing from Brazil (soy), and diversified origins in corn/sorghum while signalling readiness to keep rare-earths tight if escalation resumed.
- Result: Washington **re-priced the costs of escalation**—seeing that tariffs invite retaliation in **constituencies that matter electorally** (Midwest farm states), and that decoupling risks **supply vulnerabilities** in magnets and advanced manufacturing.

##### 3. The political-economy logic of Beijing's play

- **Concentrated pain, fast feedback:** Farm incomes and grain elevators feel demand shocks within weeks; that pain travels quickly to Congress.
- **Systemic risk, slow substitution:** Rare-earths processing capacity and magnet lines cannot be rebuilt overnight in the US; the mere threat raises costs for downstream industries.
- **Negotiating script:** Use *credible, reversible* import switches (agri) and *credible, hard-to-reverse* technology chokepoints (rare-earths) to secure **talks first, settlement later**.

#### 4. Contrast with India's situation

- **India faced a 50% US tariff wall** on selected goods linked—politically—to its Russian oil buys, despite India not violating any UN mandate.
- **China, by contrast, extracted a pause** on US escalation while avoiding new punishments—because it **imposed costs** where the US is vulnerable (farm states) and **held options** on critical inputs.
- Trade pattern: while **US farm exports to China fell ~51% (Jan–Jun 2025 vs Jan–Jun 2024)**, **India's agricultural exports to China rose ~41%** in the same window. This underlines Beijing's ability to **reallocate** buying swiftly to amplify or reduce political pressure.

#### 5. Lessons on leverage in trade coercion

- 1) **Demand-side power matters as much as supply:** The **buyer of last resort** in thin global markets (soy, LNG, urea, potash, edible oils) can move prices and politics.
- 2) **Chokepoints trump broad tariffs:** Control over **narrow, critical inputs** (rare-earths, battery materials, APIs, advanced magnets) yields outside bargaining power.
- 3) **Concentrated domestic lobbies decide outcomes:** Hitting **geographically concentrated** sectors (Midwest farms) is politically more effective than diffuse consumer costs.

#### 6. A bargaining-chip strategy for India

##### A) Build credible chips

- **Agri-import switch options:**
  - Negotiate **term TRQs** and seasonal quotas with the US on **soybean meal, almonds, apples, pulses** in exchange for **tariff rollbacks**; keep **alternative origins** (Brazil, Australia, Central Asia) lined up to preserve option value.
  - Use **government/PSU procurement windows** (e.g., NAFED/FCI for specific pulses/oils) to **signal demand reallocation** capacity.
- **Energy & aviation purchase diplomacy:**
  - **Multi-year LNG/aviation orders** (Boeing/Airbus balance), and **refinery catalysts/crude swaps** can be sequenced with tariff relief milestones.
  - Continue Russian-Middle East-US **crude mix hedging** to avoid single-source vulnerability that others can weaponise.
- **Critical inputs & standards:**
  - Accelerate **rare-earths processing in India** (with Australia/Vietnam tie-ups), **battery precursors, semiconductor ATMP**, and **pharma APIs** to gain future cards.
  - Offer **trusted-tech market access** (5G/ORAN pilots, cloud locations, safety standards) as a quid pro quo for **tariff normalisation**.

**B) De-risk markets for Indian exporters**

- **Diversify demand:** Fast-track **India–EU FTA, GCC CEPA, and Africa corridors** (FTWZ + rupee trade) to cushion US exposure.
- **SPS and logistics stack** for farm exports: end-to-end **cold chain, residue testing, GRASP/GlobalGAP** compliance clusters, and **export credit**; use **APEDA-led** crop-specific missions (grapes, shrimp, basmati, horticulture).
- **Legal track:** Seek **WTO consultations** where the 50% wall breaches MFN/national-treatment spirit; keep it subordinate to a negotiated bilateral rollback.

**C) Domestic shock-absorbers**

- **Tariff-swap fund:** a temporary rebate/drawback scheme to neutralise incremental US tariff incidence for labour-intensive MSME lines tied to export jobs.
- **FX and price hedges:** RBI/EXIM-backed instruments for commodity-linked exporters to ride volatility until tariffs normalise.

**7. Negotiation blueprint (time-sequenced)****1) 0–3 months:**

- Table a **Trade–Energy–Agriculture mini-deal:** limited **tariff standstill** by the US in return for **time-bound increases in specific US agri/LNG buys** and **IP/customs enforcement** deliverables; lock quarterly review.
- Announce **pilot SPS corridors** with the US to unlock India’s horticulture/seafood entries.

**2) 3–12 months:**

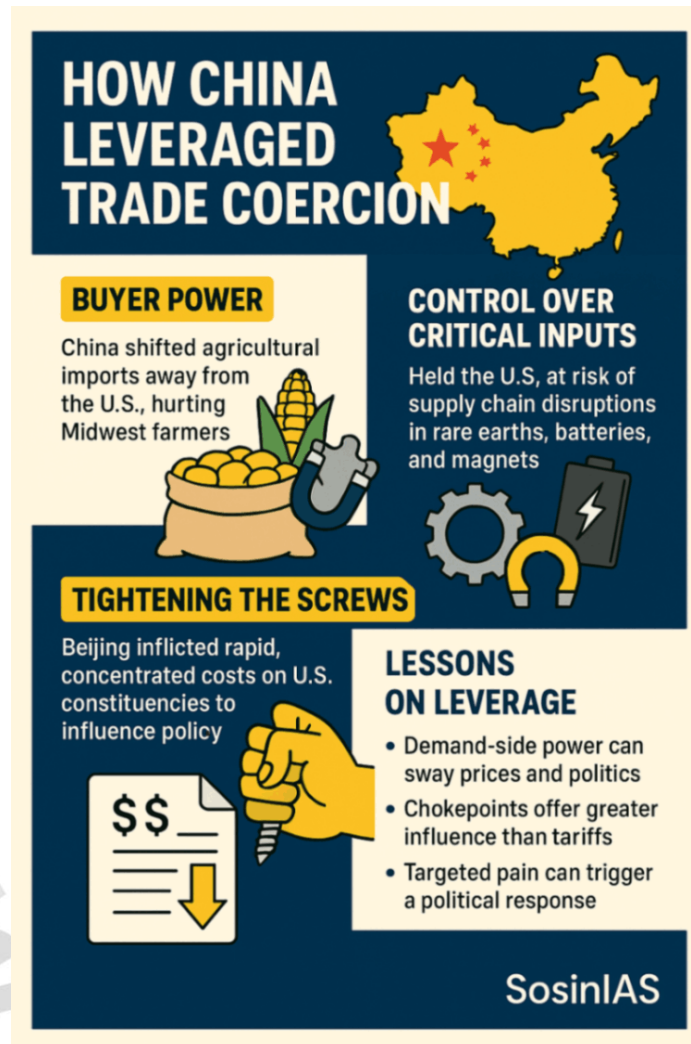
- Convert the standstill into **scheduled tariff step-down** linked to **procurement milestones** and **market-access swaps** (services visas, medical devices PLI sourcing, digital standards).
- Operationalise **rare-earths/battery precursor JVs** in India with friendly partners; publish a **critical inputs roadmap**.

**3) 12–24 months:**

- Anchor **EU/GCC deals**, expand **Africa demand nodes**, and reduce **single-market export dependence** below a defined threshold (e.g., no single country >17–20% share for any top 10 product line).

**8. Risks and how to manage them**

- **Tit-for-tat escalation:** Keep **quiet channels** open; pair each retaliatory option with an **off-ramp**.
- **Farmer backlash at home:** Any import TRQ must be **seasonal, calibrated** and paired with **domestic price-support/insurance**.
- **Over-reliance on China market:** Gains in exports to China should not morph into **single-buyer dependency**—maintain **Japan/ASEAN/West Asia** balance.



### 9. What success looks like (measurables)

- **US tariff rollback** on Indian lines within agreed milestones; **no fresh sanctions linkages** to energy.
- **Share of top-3 export markets** individually below a concentration cap; **positive farm terms-of-trade** and **stable CPI food**.
- **Commissioned rare-earths/battery precursor capacity** in India; increased **LNG diversity**.

### Conclusion:

- China's playbook shows that **trade coercion is blunted by credible, quickly deployable buyer power and slow-to-replace chokepoints**. India need not mirror Beijing; it must craft its **own leverage**—mixing selective purchase power, critical-input capacity, and diversified markets—while shielding farmers and MSMEs. The goal is not confrontation, but **negotiated de-escalation** that keeps Indian growth, jobs and price stability insulated from great-power tariff theatrics.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.6. GAZA - GLOBAL NORTH VS ISRAEL

#### Descriptive Question:

**With the Global North showing unprecedented readiness to recognise Palestinian statehood, analyse the drivers behind this shift in the context of Israel's ongoing Gaza war and its rejection of a two-state solution.**

#### Answer:

##### 1. Background: From Balfour to Today's Geopolitical Realignment

- The Israel–Palestine conflict has been one of the world's most intractable disputes since the British Balfour Declaration (1917) and Israel's creation in 1948. The two-state solution — envisaging an independent Palestine alongside Israel — became internationally endorsed after the Oslo Accords (1993–95).
- Yet, for decades, Western recognition of Palestinian sovereignty was contingent on a negotiated final settlement with Israel, a position that favoured the status quo. Recently, however, countries such as the UK, France, Canada, and Australia have signalled intent to recognise Palestine at the UN General Assembly, marking a sharp policy shift.

##### 2. Catalysts for the Policy Shift in the Global North

###### a) Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

- Over 1,000 Palestinian civilians have reportedly died while seeking food or aid amid blockade-driven starvation.
- UN agencies have labelled the siege as an unprecedented systemic violation of humanitarian norms.
- The optics of mass suffering under occupation have made it increasingly difficult for even Israel's closest allies to justify unconditional support.

###### b) Rising Evidence of War Crimes & Genocide Allegations

- Accusations of deliberate targeting of civilians, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are no longer fringe claims; they are echoed by rights groups and state actors.
- European public opinion has dramatically shifted — June 2025 polling shows only 13%-22% support for Israel in Western Europe, down from previous majorities.
- In the US, a *YouGov/The Economist* survey found 47% backing an immediate ceasefire, with rising belief that Israel is committing genocide.

###### c) Erosion of Israel's Traditional Moral Authority

- Once positioned as a besieged democracy, Israel's image has eroded amid hard-right coalition politics.
- Netanyahu's alliance with ultranationalist ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir fuels global concerns over settler expansion and rejection of Palestinian sovereignty.

## GAZA – GLOBAL NORTH VS ISRAEL

Why more Global North capitals are ready to recognise Palestine (2025)

**HUMANITARIAN SHOCK**

- Gaza war + blockade → mass civilian suffering
- UN agencies flag grave international humanitarian law concerns

**PUBLIC OPINION SHIFT**

- Western Europe: lower support for Israel; strong ceasefire support
- US polls: pluralities back immediate ceasefire

**DIPLOMATIC CALCULUS**

- Recognition seen as leverage to restart credible process

**ISRAELI POLITICS**

- Netanyahu coalition rejects two-state formula
- Settlements expansion; hard-right ministers influence policy

**WAR CRIMES & ACCOUNTABILITY**

- ICJ ordered provisional measures (2024-25)
- ICC prosecutor sought arrest warrants (2024)

**OUTLOOK**

- Best case: recognition + ceasefire + monitored rebuilding
- Most likely: symbolic steps; sporadic escalation

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### 3. Israel's Ideological Shift: From Two-State to "No-State" Settler-Centric Strategic Doctrine

- Netanyahu's administration is openly committed to preventing any Palestinian statehood.
- Policy goals include permanent occupation of Gaza, retention of West Bank settlements, and rejection of withdrawal in exchange for peace.
- Defenders frame this as security necessity; critics label it as formalised apartheid.

#### Domestic Political Survival

- Ending the war risks political collapse for Netanyahu, whose far-right partners oppose ceasefire without "total victory".
- The war prolongs his leverage against judicial and corruption trials, making political incentives for peace minimal.

### 4. Implications for Regional Stability and International Law

#### a) Collapse of the Oslo Framework

- Without credible commitment to two-state talks, the diplomatic infrastructure from 1993 onwards risks becoming irrelevant.

- This will embolden hardliners on both sides, including Hamas and far-right Israeli factions.

**b) Legal & Normative Fallout**

- If recognised genocide charges proceed, Israel’s leaders could face proceedings at the International Criminal Court.
- A precedent may emerge for international recognition of occupied peoples despite lack of bilateral settlement — a possible shift in global sovereignty norms.

**c) Security Repercussions**

- Regional actors like Hezbollah (Lebanon) and the Houthis (Yemen) could escalate proxy conflict.
- Gulf–Israel normalisation efforts under the Abraham Accords could stall, altering US strategic calculus in West Asia.

**5. Global Rules-Based Order: Double Standards and Strategic Alignments**

- Recognition of Palestine by Western states undermines long-standing accusations that the Global North applies selective morality in international law (e.g., Ukraine vs. Palestine).
- The Global South — including India, which recognised Palestine in 1988 — gains diplomatic validation as its early stance is echoed in the North.
- China and Russia are likely to capitalise on this shift to portray themselves as defenders of anti-colonial justice.

**6. The Road Ahead: Possible Diplomatic Configurations**

- **Best-Case:** Coordinated recognition tied to an enforceable ceasefire, humanitarian rebuilding in Gaza, and resumption of mediated talks under an expanded Quartet framework (US, EU, UN, Arab League).
- **Most Likely:** Symbolic recognition without enforcement, prolonged occupation, and periodic escalations.
- **Worst-Case:** Entrenchment of a “one-state reality” with institutionalised inequality, regional proxy wars, and erosion of global human rights architecture.

**7. Conclusion:**

- The emerging readiness of Global North powers to recognise Palestine reflects a convergence of humanitarian outrage, shifting public opinion, and disillusionment with Israel’s ideological intransigence. While symbolic recognition may carry moral weight, without enforceable political mechanisms it risks entrenching conflict rather than resolving it. For the rules-based order to survive, this recognition must be embedded in a binding multilateral framework that reconciles Israel’s security needs with the Palestinians’ right to sovereign statehood.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 3.7. RELATIONSHIP WITH NAMIBIA – A TEMPLATE FOR AFRICA!

#### Descriptive Question:

India's engagement with Namibia signals a quieter, partnership-led template for Africa—built on shared histories, capacity-building, digital public infrastructure and issue-based coalitions. Critically assess this approach.

#### Answer

#### 1. Background: from solidarity to structured partnerships

- India's Africa policy has long drawn on anti-colonial solidarity, UN peacekeeping and development cooperation (ITEC training, tele-education/tele-medicine networks). The current recalibration prioritises **quiet, adaptive engagement**, aligning India's "offer" (digital public infrastructure, skills, health, climate resilience) with Africa's "ask" (jobs, connectivity, reliable finance and technology), and moving away from episodic, symbolism-heavy outreach.

#### Recent moves in Namibia typify this shift:

- **Digital rails & fintech:** In July 2025, the Bank of Namibia and NPCI International signed an MoU to explore **UPI-style payments** in Namibia—aimed at faster, cheaper retail payments and remittances.
- **Capacity building:** The **India–Namibia Centre of Excellence in IT** and a proposed India–Namibia 'India Wing' at the University of Namibia's Ongwediva campus target youth skilling and tech readiness.
- **Rules-and-standards coalitions:** Namibia's accession to India-launched platforms—the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** and the **Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)**—anchors cooperation in public-goods agendas.
- **AFRICAN DPI fit:** India's open-source digital public goods (e.g., **MOSIP**, an Aadhaar-compatible identity platform incubated in India) are already adopted or piloted by several African countries (Morocco, Ethiopia, Togo, etc.), creating a natural ecosystem for UPI-like systems and e-governance.

#### 2. Why Namibia is a force multiplier

- **Political stability**, rule of law and a long record of engagement with India create predictable operating conditions. **Mineral endowments (notably uranium)** and **logistics advantages** (Walvis Bay) fit India's clean-energy and supply-chain priorities. A youthful population and strong tech interest enhance absorptive capacity for skilling-led partnerships. This makes Namibia a credible **pilot country** to scale models elsewhere in Southern Africa.

### 3. The logic and strengths of the “Namibia template”

- **Issue-based coalitions over aid conditionality:** Rather than sanctions-or migration-linked assistance, India is co-building standards and operating rails (UPI-like systems, CDRI, GBA) that **reduce transaction costs** and **crowd-in local enterprise**.
- **Knowledge & institution building:** Centres of excellence, faculty development, and joint curriculum (AI, cybersecurity, agri-tech) strengthen **state capacity**, not just projects.
- **DPI for inclusion:** Identity + payments + data-exchange (consent-based) can formalise MSMEs, digitise social protection and lower remittance costs—critical when India–Africa trade has expanded but still underperforms potential (India–Africa trade is widely reported in the **\$80–90 bn** band in recent years).

## Relationship with Namibia – A Template for Africa!




### FROM SOLIDARITY TO PARTNERSHIPS

- India's Africa policy has long drawn on anti-colonial solidarity
- Recent MoU on UPI-style payments, implement in FTEC training development programmes in IT, a proposed India-Namibia wing
- Recent moves: In India – Namibia Centre of Excellence in IT, and Namibia's accession to Indian-led disaster resilience and biofuels platforms

### WHY NAMIBIA?

- Political stability and rule of law
- Valuable minerals (uranium)
- Logistics advantages (Walvis Bay)

### STRENGTHS OF THE 'NAMIBIA TEMPLATE'

- Issue based coalitions reduce transaction costs
- Knowledge & institution building Centres of excellence, joint curriculum
- Inclusion in DPI and lowering remittance costs

### RISKS AND GAPS TO ADDRESS

- Implementation deficits
- Finance & risk-sharing
- Data governance
- Narrow sectoral focus
- Geopolitical sensitivity

### ROADMAP FOR SCALE

- Institutional anchor: Use India–Africa Forum Summit
- Triangular cooperation with African Institutions, UN agencies

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#### 4. Risks and gaps to address

- **Implementation deficits:** Africa often sees big MoUs but slow delivery; success hinges on **standards, training, and local maintenance networks**, not hardware alone.
- **Finance & risk-sharing:** Excess reliance on LoCs without project preparation can stall.
- **Data governance & trust:** DPI must embed privacy-by-design, local data protection, cyber-resilience and transparent pricing; otherwise “tech for good” can be seen as extractive.
- **Narrow sectoral focus:** Over-indexing on fintech and IT without parallel investments in health manufacturing, agri-value chains and climate adaptation limits development impact.
- **Geopolitical sensitivity:** Namibia’s uranium and green-energy play invite multiple suitors; India must compete on **reliability** and **skills transfer**, not just price.
- **Continental scale:** Africa is not monolithic; institutional capacity and regulatory maturity vary widely.

#### 5. A practicable blueprint (2025–30)

##### A. Institutions & governance

- 1) **India–Africa Digital Partnership Facility (IADPF):** pooled fund (MEA–MEA/MeitY–Exim Bank–SIDBI) to finance DPI sandboxes (UPI, account aggregators, digital IDs), with open APIs and **Africa-first developer grants**.
- 2) **Standards & safeguards:** Joint **Data Protection and Cybersecurity Working Group** with AU bodies; adopt privacy-by-design, consent dashboards, and independent audits for DPI. Build on MOSIP/UPI open-source communities.
- 3) **Delivery labs** in Windhoek & Walvis Bay to turn MoUs into 18- to 24-month **time-bound sprints** (UPI pilot; school-to-skills pipelines; disaster-resilient infra codes under CDRI/GBA).

##### B. Finance & market creation

- 1) **Blended finance window** (Exim + NIIF + African DFIs) with project-prep grants, viability-gap support and local-currency hedging.
- 2) **SME on-ramps:** ONDC-like open networks for ports, tourism and agro-processing; local procurement targets to avoid enclave economics.
- 3) **Remittance & retail-payments pilots:** UPI-interoperable corridors (through NIPL) with fee caps and consumer-protection mandates; publish metrics on cost and uptime.

##### C. Technology & skills

- 1) **India–Namibia Skills Mission:** 1,000 trainers in 3 years (AI/ML, cybersecurity, welding, EV maintenance, medical tech); dual-certification with NSDC International and UNAM.

- 2) **GovTech fellowships:** embed Indian and Namibian fellows in ministries/municipalities to operationalise DPI, land-records modernisation, and disaster risk systems (via CDRI).
- 3) **Health & climate manufacturing:** small-volume vaccine fill-finish, diagnostics kits, and solar-pump assembly with gender-inclusive hiring.

#### D. Accountability & inclusion

- **Public dashboards** for every MoU (milestones, spend, service uptime); social audits for skilling outcomes; open grievance redress.
- **Rights-respecting DPI:** adopt **purpose limitation**, independent security testing and community consultations before scale-up.

#### 6. Roadmap for scale beyond Namibia

- 1) **Institutional anchor:** Use the upcoming **India–Africa Forum Summit** to codify **continent-wide DPI & skills compacts**, with AU endorsement and country-chosen modules.
- 2) **Triangular cooperation:** Work with AUDA-NEPAD, AfDB and UN agencies to co-finance last-mile delivery; crowd-in African tech start-ups.
- 3) **Trade & logistics:** Leverage IORA and SAGCOT-like corridors; connect Walvis Bay to Indian ports through green shipping pilots.

#### 7. Conclusion:

- The **Namibia template** puts **trust, standards and state capacity** at the centre of India’s Africa engagement. If New Delhi now couples its soft-power advantages with **time-bound delivery, blended finance, robust data safeguards and co-created skills**, it can offer Africa a credible alternative to conditional aid and purely commercial plays. Done right, this manual of **quiet, solutions-first diplomacy** can turn symbolic solidarity into **shared, stress-tested prosperity**.

**Source: *The Hindu***

### 3.8. NAVIGATING RENEWED US-RUSSIA FLUX

#### Descriptive Question:

**Against the backdrop of the Trump–Putin ‘Alaska Moment’, how should India navigate the renewed US–Russia flux?**

**Answer:**

#### A. Why this moment matters for India

- 1) **High exposure to both capitals:** The US is India’s primary partner for high technology, finance, people-to-people ties and the Indo-Pacific. Russia remains central for legacy defence, nuclear energy cooperation and, since 2022, **discounted crude** that helps tame inflation.

- 2) **Coercive tools are back:** Secondary sanctions on buyers of Russian energy, tariff threats, export controls on chips/dual-use items and payment/insurance restrictions raise **macro and energy vulnerability** for India.
- 3) **Uncertainty of 'summitry':** Personalised summit politics can sway optics, but policy from Washington and Moscow is being driven by **transactional and domestic calculations**. India must therefore avoid over-investing in personalities and anchor policy in institutions and deliverables.

#### B. India's interests and red lines

- **Price-stable, adequate energy** with diversified sources and predictable payments/insurance.
- **Strategic autonomy**—no formal blocks, no acceptance of **extraterritorial sanctions** as a norm.
- **Deterrence and supply assurance** against China–Pakistan, which requires keeping **Russian spares and codes** flowing while deepening co-development with the US and Europe.
- **Open access to high-tech** (semiconductors, AI, space, defence electronics) via iCET-like tracks—hence avoiding measures that choke export-control relief.
- **Trade and macro stability**—minimise tariff shocks; protect rupee, inflation and current account.

#### C. Choices before New Delhi—costs and benefits

##### Option 1: Align tightly with Washington's asks

- *Benefits:* Tariff/sanctions relief; faster technology access; smoother iCET, supply-chain and investment flows.
- *Costs:* Risks rupturing defence and nuclear ecosystems with Russia; pushes Moscow deeper into Beijing's embrace; raises costs of spares/AMCs; weakens India's negotiating leverage.

##### Option 2: Dig in behind Moscow discounts

- *Benefits:* Short-term disinflation; strong refining margins; assured defence continuity.
- *Costs:* **Secondary sanctions** on refiners/banks/shipping; loss of market access/tech to the US & allies; WTO-proof tariffs; reputational costs.

##### Option 3: Calibrated hedging (recommended)

- Blend energy diversification and sanctions-law compliance with firm opposition to extraterritoriality; ring-fence legacy defence; accelerate tech and trade with the West—**without** public grandstanding or zero-sum signalling.

**D. Energy security playbook (next 12–18 months)**

- 1) **Source diversification:** Lock medium-term G2G term contracts with West Asia (Saudi, UAE, Iraq), the US and Latin America; keep Russian share flexible—taper if compliance costs exceed netback.
- 2) **Payments & insurance resilience:** Maintain multiple settlement rails (USD-cleared, Euro, rupee-dirham, and escrowed special purpose routes); expand Indian-flag shipping and P&I coverage.
- 3) **Strategic Petroleum Reserve:** Add capacity and institute **rules-based releases** to cushion any sanctions or price spike.
- 4) **Refinery flexibility:** Upgrade for wider crude slates; prioritise products with export resilience to offset tariff losses.
- 5) **Demand-side cushion:** Speed E20 rollout, EV public transport, city gas, compressed biogas and efficiency standards to **shave oil elasticity**.


**E. Diplomacy and lawfare**

- 1) **Institutionalise, don't personalise:** Re-centre the **2+2**, Trade Policy Forum and energy/security working groups; avoid public claims on ceasefires/mediation that politicise India's regional actions.
- 2) **Seek documented carve-outs:** Like earlier CAATSA waivers, press for explicit, time-bound exemptions for energy purchases and defence sustainment; make a **principled case against extraterritorial sanctions**.
- 3) **WTO-consistent response** to unilateral tariffs; simultaneously fast-track **FTAs** (UAE CEPA deepening, UK/EU) to rebalance exposure.
- 4) **Quiet Moscow management:** Pre-contract spares, localisation of MRO for Russian platforms, schedule-bound supply plans for air/ground/naval systems; insulate civil nuclear fuel/services.
- 5) **European/Japanese bridges:** Build a coalition for predictable sanctions policy that does not penalise **Global South energy security**; leverage India's G20 credibility.

**F. Technology & defence hedging**

- **With the US and partners:** Go faster on **trusted telecom, space situational awareness, jet engine ToT, drones, secure micro-electronics, export-control reforms** and joint R&D; deepen private capital and supply-chain shifts into India.
- **With Russia:** Limit to sustainment and a few mature co-development lines (e.g., BrahMos, maintenance & upgrades), avoiding fresh deep dependencies in critical electronics.

## NAVIGATING RENEWED US-RUSSIA FLUX



<p><b>A WHY THIS MOMENT MATTERS FOR INDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High exposure to both capitals</b> The US is India's primary partner for tech, finance, and Indo-Pacific ties</li> <li>• <b>Coercive tools are back</b> Secondary sanctions, Extraterritorial</li> <li>• <b>Uncertainty of "summitry"</b> Politics is driven by transactional calculations</li> </ul>	<p><b>B INDIA'S INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price-stable, adequate energy</li> <li>• Strategic autonomy</li> <li>• Deterrence against China-Pakistan</li> <li>• Open access to high-tech</li> </ul>
<p><b>C CHOICES BEFORE NEW DELHI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ALIGN WITH US</b> Tech Trade friction relief</li> <li>• <b>DIG IN BEHIND RUSSIA</b> Inflation relief • defense continuity</li> </ul> <p><b>CALIBRATED HEDGING (recommended)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy diversification</li> <li>• Green electricity &amp; EV</li> </ul>	<p><b>D ENERGY SECURITY PLAYBOOK (NEXT 12-18 MONTH)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lock medium-term supply contracts Keep Russian imports flexible</li> <li>• Maintain payments/resilience</li> <li>• Add SPR capacity</li> <li>• Refinery flexibility Wider crude upgrades</li> <li>• Demand-side cushion Biofuel, electric EVs</li> </ul>

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### G. Trade, macro and industry preparedness

- **Tariff shock absorbers:** Duty drawback/PLI tweaks for sectors most exposed to US tariff cycles; rupee and oil-price hedging norms for PSUs; contingency guides for banks and insurers.
- **Sanctions compliance capacity:** A whole-of-government **Sanctions & Export Controls Cell** to give binding guidance to PSUs/FIs; expand due-diligence and KYB utilities for refiners and traders.
- **Communication:** Clear, non-triumphalist messaging—India seeks **rules-based flexibility** for essential energy while expanding clean-energy partnerships.

**H. Scenario table—what to do if...**

- **US–Russia thaw holds:** Scale down exceptional channels; lock tech and trade deliverables with the US/EU; retain minimal Russian oil for bargaining.
- **Thaw collapses & sanctions sharpen:** Pre-trigger Russian taper plan; activate SPR; switch to Middle East/US cargoes; seek rapid waiver package citing inflation and maritime security contributions.
- **Tariff war escalates:** Move on WTO + reciprocal but proportionate tariff readjustments; accelerate alternative market access (ASEAN, Africa) and value-added exports.

**I. The doctrine going forward**

- 1) **Substance over summitry:** Judge ties by **embedded institutional outcomes**, not photo-ops.
- 2) **Autonomy with accountability:** Be transparent on legal compliance while defending space for essential imports.
- 3) **No single-point dependency:** In energy, defence or technology, build **optionality**.
- 4) **Be a net provider, not a demander:** Offer concrete Indo-Pacific and West Asia public goods (HADR, maritime security, digital payments, vaccines/health) to earn room for manoeuvre.

**Bottom line:** New Delhi should neither chase credit for others' ceasefires nor lurch into punitive bargains. A calibrated hedge—energy diversification, legal carve-outs, defence sustainment with Russia and a tech-led surge with the US/EU—best preserves growth and deterrence while upholding India's strategic autonomy.

**Source:** *The Hindu*

### 3.9. RESET WITH CHINA

**Descriptive Question:**

**“Amid a more transactional US policy and churn in the global order, should India reset ties with China?”**

**Trace the structural constraints that make a ‘reset’ implausible, explain how rivalry can be managed short of conflict, and lay down a realistic India strategy.**

**Answer:****1. Context and stakes**

- India–China ties are simultaneously **conflictual (border, Pakistan nexus, technology, maritime)** and **interdependent (trade, supply chains, multilateral forums)**.

- The external environment is unsettled: **great-power competition**, sanctions and tariff wars, unpredictable US policy, and fragile global supply chains. This increases pressure on New Delhi to hedge without diluting core interests.

## 2. Why a “reset” is unrealistic

### a) Structural drivers of discord)

- 1) **Unsettled boundary & militarisation**: Competing perceptions of the LAC, repeated friction points since 2013 and the 2020 crisis have eroded trust. Peace and tranquility on the border was the basis for cooperation; without restoration, **political space for a reset does not exist**.
- 2) **Pakistan factor**: Continued **political, military and technology support** to Pakistan—including ISR cooperation and dual-use transfers—directly undercuts India’s security.
- 3) **Asymmetric interdependence**: India’s large trade deficit and dependence on Chinese inputs in electronics, pharmaceuticals, power and telecom create economic leverage for Beijing.
- 4) **Maritime competition**: Expanding Chinese naval presence and dual-use ports in the IOR (Gwadar, Hambantota, Djibouti; access in Myanmar and the East African littoral) intersect with India’s SLOC security.
- 5) **Water and ecosystems**: Dams and hydrological interventions on the **Brahmaputra/upper Yarlung Tsangpo**, with restricted data transparency, generate persistent anxiety for a lower-riparian India.
- 6) **Ideational gap**: Divergent regional orders—Beijing’s hierarchical, sphere-of-influence model vs. India’s preference for **open, multipolar, rules-based** arrangements—leave little convergence.

### b) Contemporary headwinds)

- A **more transactional Washington** complicates alignment management; India must avoid over-dependence on any one major power even as it deepens strategic convergences with the US.
- The **post-pandemic technology and geo-economic race** (chips, AI, telecom, critical minerals) has made technology controls and supply-chain security central—areas where trust with China is low. **Bottom line**: any dramatic thaw that sidesteps the border and security core is **neither credible nor sustainable**.

# RESET WITH CHINA



## Context

- Conflictual > border Pakistan nexus.
- Interdependence- Trade, Supply Chains
- Unsettled external environment; pressure on New Delhi



## Structural Constraints

- Unsettled border
- Pakistan support
- Asymmetric interdependence
- Maritime competition • dams on the Brahmaputra • Divergent regional views



## Rivalry Short of War

- Protracted conflict costly
- Border stability required by both
- Material economic linkages



## A Realistic India Strategy

- Security & deterrence on the LAC
- De-risking via economic statecraft
- Technology & capability building
- Regional diplomacy reform



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### 3. Rivalry without war: why conflict is not inevitable

- **China's recent grand strategy** has privileged **economic and technological power** while avoiding major wars since 1979; protracted conflict with a nuclear-armed India would be costly and distracting.
- Both sides require **border stability** to focus on domestic priorities. In practice, even in tense phases, they have kept channels open (Corps-Commander/WMCC/NSAs), signalling space for **managed competition**.
- Economic linkages remain material; **selective interdependence** gives each a stake in avoiding uncontrolled escalation.

**4. A realistic India strategy: compete, de-risk, and deter—while keeping doors for dialogue****A) Security & deterrence on the LAC (12–36 months)**

- 1) **Deterrence by denial:** Forward infrastructure (all-weather roads, tunnels, airstrips, logistics nodes, ISR, quick-reaction air defence) and **winterised, networked formations** to prevent fait-accompli grabs.
- 2) **Deterrence by punishment:** Long-range precision fires, integrated theatre commands, maritime leverage in the IOR (including **Andaman & Nicobar** posture) and credible escalation ladders.
- 3) **Crisis-management architecture:** Restore/upgrade **CBMs**—buffer zones, disengagement verification, no-patrol/no-fire protocols at friction points, hotlines down to brigade level, standard operating procedures for aerial close encounters.
- 4) **Border precondition:** Maintain the stance that **normalisation of wider ties is contingent on restoration of border peace**, while remaining available for phased, verifiable steps.

**B) Economic statecraft: de-risking, not blanket decoupling**

- 1) **Critical-tech ring-fence:** Tight screening and localisation in **telecom, power electronics, surveillance, ports, grid, fintech, drones, rare-earth processing**, and sensitive health/defence supply.
- 2) **Diversify inputs:** Use PLI + trade facilitation + FTA pathways to shift key imports toward **trusted partners** (semiconductors, APIs, solar, electronics, speciality steel, machine tools).
- 3) **Trade defence with market access:** Where coercion or dumping occurs, apply **WTO-consistent remedies**; elsewhere keep market ties open to benign goods to avoid cost-push inflation.
- 4) **Data & cyber resilience:** Zero-trust architectures, audits for critical information infrastructure, and reciprocity-based data rules.
- 5) **Affordable insurance & finance** for Indian firms scaling China-exposed supply chains (EXIM guarantees, ECGC cover, rupee trade where viable).

**C) Technology & capability building**

- 1) **National missions in chips, batteries, green hydrogen, space, AI for manufacturing**, paired with demand aggregation (public procurement norms) and **time-bound cluster CoEs**.
- 2) **Talent alliances:** Quad/Europe/Japan programmes for PhDs, labs and standards; mutual recognition for vocational certifications to lift manufacturing depth.

**D) Regional diplomacy & coalitions**

- 1) **Immediate neighbourhood first:** Stabilise ties with **Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar** through connectivity (Kaladan, Trilateral Highway, Chabahar–INSTC, Sagarmala/SAGAR), quick-disbursing financing, disaster relief and **maritime domain awareness** sharing.
- 2) **Issue-based minilaterals:** **Quad** for maritime and critical-tech; **IOR/ASEAN** platforms for HADR and supply-chain corridors; keep a working stake in **SCO/BRICS** to avoid exclusionary blocs.
- 3) **Russia and Europe balancing:** Maintain **defence-energy linkages** with Moscow without triggering secondary risks; deepen **Europe/UK** trade and tech compacts to broaden room for manoeuvre.

**E) Domestic political economy**

- 1) **Manufacturing & logistics reforms** (land, power quality, freight, plug-and-play clusters), **labour-skilling** (dual system apprenticeships), and **judicial/contract enforcement** to anchor firms relocating supply chains.
- 2) **Narrative management:** Separate **citizen-to-citizen and commercial contact** from state rivalry where safe; avoid xenophobic policy swings that deter capital.

**5. Benchmarks & timelines**

- **Year 1:** Complete priority border works; publish critical-import risk map; operationalise investment screening; roll out cluster-level supply-chain insurance; resume verified disengagement at chosen points if feasible.
- **Years 2–3:** Achieve double-digit share of trusted-partner inputs in electronics/APIs/solar; field first wave of long-range precision systems and persistent ISR; raise apprenticeship seats in China-exposed sectors by 3×.
- **By Year 5:** Reduce top-10 China-dependent inputs' risk index by half; demonstrate sustained border stability; lift manufactured exports' share and value-added in electronics/engineering.

**6. Conclusion:**

- A **grand “reset”** with Beijing is **neither likely nor advisable** without verifiable border stability and behavioural change. But **perpetual confrontation** is not destiny. India's best course is **competitive coexistence: deter aggression, harden the economy and technology base, widen strategic partnerships, and keep calibrated channels for dialogue**. This approach preserves agency amid great-power flux, protects growth, and lowers the risk of miscalculation while steadily changing the balance of power in India's favour.

**Source: The Indian Express.**

### 3.10. US'S STRATEGIC PARITY BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

#### Descriptive Question:

“Donald Trump’s return to tariff-heavy, transactional statecraft—paired with talk of restoring ‘strategic parity’ between India and Pakistan—poses a stress test for India’s rise.” Critically examine the risks and opportunities for India’s foreign and security policy.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Background: a familiar shock, a different India

- **Policy shock:** steep across-the-board US tariffs, pressure on India’s energy choices, and rhetoric reviving “parity” between India and Pakistan.
- **Historical rhyme:** After the **1998 nuclear tests**, India faced sweeping sanctions and technology denial. New Delhi absorbed the shock, stabilised its economy, managed crises (Kargil), and within three years **re-normalised ties** with Washington on better terms.
- **But the context has changed:** India today is a **\$3.6–3.7 trillion economy**, the world’s **5th largest**, a top-tier digital/space power, and a central node in Indo-Pacific geopolitics. It also carries heavier external interdependence (trade/technology/finance) than in 1998. So the response must combine **strategic poise** with **economic shock-absorbers**.

#### 2. What Trump-era policy means for India

##### A) Strategic and regional risks

##### 1) Parity narrative with Pakistan:

- Encourages Islamabad’s miscalculation that outside powers will redress the balance; historically this fed **adventurism** (1965, Kargil).
- Raises crisis-instability risks when India is already managing a **live border challenge with China**.

2) **Linkage diplomacy:** Trade, technology access and energy purchases are used as **levers** simultaneously. That multiplies pressure channels (tariffs, standards, secondary sanctions, visa regimes).

3) **Reduced bandwidth in Washington:** A volatile US domestic scene can deprioritise India-specific problem-solving even when interests align, raising transaction costs for New Delhi.

##### B) Economic and technology exposure

- The US is India’s **largest export market**, a major technology partner (semiconductors, digital public infrastructure collaborations), and a key source of FDI/portfolio capital.
- Tariffs raise costs and depress orders; **standards-cum-security** measures act as **non-tariff barriers**; tighter US rates/financial conditions lift India’s cost of capital.

### C) Energy and finance

- US pressure on certain energy trades tightens India's **import bill** and **supply diversification**; secondary-sanctions risk complicates maritime insurance, shipping, and payments.
- Dollar-centric finance channels amplify shocks; rupee volatility and imported inflation can follow.

### 3. Why a calibrated, confident response is feasible

- 1) **Strategic equities with the US run deep**: foundational defence pacts (LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA), Quad cooperation, iCET on critical tech, thriving people-to-people and corporate ties. Even under friction, strong constituencies in the US value India.
- 2) **India's multi-alignment works**: energy with West Asia/Russia, defence co-production with several partners, logistics access in the Indian Ocean, growing role in **BRICS/G-20/IOR** forums.
- 3) **Domestic depth**: robust digital rails (UPI, Aadhaar, ONDC), a large internal market, rising manufacturing niches (electronics, renewables, defence), and proven crisis management capacity.

**U.S.'s STRATEGIC PARITY BETWEEN INDIA and PAKISTAN**

**BLOW TO INDIA'S INTERESTS**

- Rhetoric of 'restoring parity' emboldens Pakistan adventurism
- Risk of instability amid live India-China border challenge
- Pressure on Indian exports (U.S.'s top market) and energy imports

**U.S.-INDIA FOUNDATIONS RUN DEEP**

- Defence pacts (LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA)
- High-tech collaboration (iCET initiative)
- Quad partnership with Australia, Japan, U.S.
- Growing Indian influence in G20, BRICS and Indo-Pacific

**ADAPTIVE INDIAN RESPONSE**

<p><b>De-Link Issues</b> Steadfast dialogue; insulate trade; tech partnerships from disputes</p>	<p><b>Assert Strengths</b> Invest in maritime power and anti-terrorism preparedness</p>	<p><b>Diversify Options</b> Broaden trade and payment partners to insulate from shocks</p>
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#### 4. Strategy: absorb pain now, shape the environment

##### A) Diplomacy: steady nerves, hard-nosed engagement

###### 1. De-link issues; avoid zero-sum traps

- Keep **strategic & tech dialogue** with Washington insulated from tariff theatre; use sectoral waivers and product-specific exclusions (pharma generics, medical devices, critical inputs).
- Bind US stakeholders via **supply-security** arguments (India as reliability hedge in Asia, pharma/IT resilience, maritime domain awareness).

###### 2. Neutralise 'parity' talk

- Quietly but firmly underscore the **asymmetry** between India and Pakistan in size, responsibility, and global roles.
- Expand **counter-terrorism cooperation**, FATF compliance narratives, and border-stability CBMs to reduce space for miscalculation.

###### 3. Broaden coalitions

- Deepen **Europe/EFTA, Australia, Japan, UAE, Saudi, ASEAN** tracks—FTAs, MRAs, investment treaties—to diversify leverage.
- Use **Global South convening** (G-20 legacy, BRICS banking/settlement pilots) for agenda-setting on resilient supply chains, food-energy security, and safe tech norms.

###### 4. Neighbourhood insurance

- Double down on **connectivity & credit** (Chabahar/IPGL, INSTC, BIMSTEC, SAGAR) to ensure alternatives if West-led channels get politicised.

##### B) Defence posture: credible deterrence without theatrics

- 1) **Two-front realism**: Maintain an **active-deterrence** stance on the LAC (ISR, logistics, infrastructure) while preserving **counter-terror** readiness on the western front.
- 2) **Maritime primacy**: Invest in **sea control/sea denial**—P-8I fleet, MH-60R, SSN/SSK pipeline, UAV-swarm ISR, Andaman & Nicobar forward presence—to secure SLOCs and energy routes.
- 3) **Co-production & spares sovereignty**: Accelerate **domestic MRO and spares** for Russian legacy platforms; scale joint production with US/France/Israel for artillery, air defence, UAVs, and EW.
- 4) **Crisis communications**: Keep **hotlines and military-to-military** channels functional with both Beijing and Islamabad to cap escalation.

**C) Economic resilience: demand, diversification, and standards**

- 1) **Buffer domestic demand:** Front-load public capex, sustain rural purchasing power (MGNREGA, PM-KISAN timing), and de-bottleneck housing/urban infra to absorb export softness.
- 2) **Trade diversification:** Execute **UAE CEPA, EFTA TEPA, Australia ECTA** fully; pursue MRAs that cut testing/compliance costs; target **Africa/LatAm/West Asia** with Exim lines, warehousing, rupee-trade pilots.
- 3) **Standards as strength:** Launch a **Compliance Accelerator** for MSMEs—subsidised social-labour audits, green/product safety certifications, and traceability tech—so non-tariff barriers don't choke market access.
- 4) **Logistics & inputs:** Reduce tariff inversion on intermediates, expand paperless ports/time-definite rail-sea corridors, and deepen ONDC/OCEN-based **export SaaS** for small firms.

**D) Finance, energy, and currency risk management**

- 1) **Energy hedges:** Lock **long-term crude & LNG offtake** with West Asian suppliers; scale strategic reserves; diversify shipping/insurance pools; accelerate **RE + storage** to cut import exposure.
- 2) **Payments architecture:** Expand **rupee/dirham and rupee-ruble** settlement where feasible, while maintaining compliance shields; bolster FX buffers via **NRI flows and multilateral swap lines**.
- 3) **Capital-market shock absorbers:** Predictable tax/regulatory regime for **SIPs/EPFO/NPS**, deepening domestic savings so external portfolio swings don't destabilise growth.

**E) Technology & narrative**

- 1) **Protect critical tech channels:** Keep iCET deliverables (semiconductor assembly/ATMP, trusted telecom, defence electronics, space) on track; build **home-grown alternatives** where chokepoints persist.
- 2) **Information diplomacy:** Communicate India's **responsible power** identity—net security provider in the IOR, disaster relief leadership, pharma and digital public goods—to blunt “parity” framings.

**5. Counter-arguments & responses**

- **“Hug the US tighter; drop hedging.”**

Over-alignment raises vulnerability to US domestic swings and undercuts autonomy with other key partners (energy, spares, contingencies). **Calibrated alignment** retains bargaining space while cooperating where interests converge.

- **“Retaliate symmetrically on tariffs.”**

Tit-for-tat is costly for a still export-aspirant India. Use **WTO-consistent tools**, targeted safeguard duties where necessary, and **offensive standards diplomacy** instead.

- **“Pivot wholly to BRICS/de-dollar.”**

Useful at the margin but unrealistic as a short-term substitute. India should **pluralise** payments (rupee trade, local-currency lines) without **jeopardising dollar access** that finances growth.

#### 6. Lessons from 1998—and what must differ now

- **Continuity under pressure:** India should keep its strategic course despite near-term costs—then and now, equanimity pays.
- **Faster economic shock-absorption:** Unlike 1998, India’s exposure to global value chains is much larger; hence **automatic stabilisers** (credit guarantees, export refunds, rural support) must kick in quickly.
- **Narrative discipline:** Avoid triumphalism or grievance; project a **calm, rules-based** posture focused on stability in the Indo-Pacific.

#### 7. A concise action agenda

- 1) **Engage Washington constantly**, seek sectoral exclusions, and firewall defence/tech tracks from tariff disputes.
- 2) **Signal zero tolerance to cross-border terror** while keeping escalation control mechanisms alive.
- 3) **Strengthen maritime power and spares autonomy** to insure against supply and energy shocks.
- 4) **Backstop the economy**—domestic demand support, MSME compliance help, logistics/inputs rationalisation.
- 5) **Widen economic partners and payment options**—UAE/EFTA/Australia/Japan/ASEAN/Africa/LatAm; local-currency pilots without endangering dollar channels.
- 6) **Invest in critical technologies and narratives** that underscore India’s role as a **reliable, responsible, resilient** power.

#### 8. Conclusion:

- Trump-era policies test India’s rise, but they need not derail it. A **confident India**—with disciplined diplomacy, credible deterrence, resilient economics, and diversified finance/energy—can absorb near-term pain, avoid strategic traps like false “parity,” and continue its steady march to great-power status. The goal is not to win the next news cycle, but to **shape the balance** of the 2020s so that partners, markets, and even adversaries must factor in India as a **central stabilising pillar** of the Indo-Pacific and the global economy.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.11. LEVERAGING WTO AGAINST TARIFFS

#### Descriptive Question:

The U.S. has announced a fresh round of ‘reciprocal/secondary’ tariffs on Indian goods. Using WTO law and India–U.S. trade structure, critically examine the legality and likely impact of these duties.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Context and why it matters

- The U.S. has imposed **additional 25% duties** (over and above an earlier 25%) on a wide range of Indian products, with a few carve-outs and a short transition for consignments already in the pipeline.
- India’s **goods exports to the U.S. are ~US\$89 bn**; estimates suggest **~55% of this basket is exposed** to the new tariffs—especially **pharmaceutical formulations, mobile phones and parts, electronics, engineering goods, gems & jewellery, and textiles/garments**.
- Labor-intensive sectors face the sharpest pain; supply chains in South/Southeast Asia are ready to capture displaced orders.

##### 2. WTO legality—why the U.S. action is difficult to defend

###### a) Breach of “bindings” (GATT Art. II):

- WTO schedules cap the tariff each member may legally levy on a product. “Reciprocity” or “secondary tariffs” that go **above bound rates**—without using a permitted instrument (anti-dumping, countervail, safeguards)—**violate Article II**.

###### b) MFN and non-discrimination (GATT Art. I):

- Targeting one member’s exports because of bilateral grievances **discriminates** among like products from different countries. This runs against the MFN principle unless covered by a legitimate exception.

###### c) Improper use of exceptions:

- Valid routes are **Anti-Dumping (ADA), Countervailing (ASCM) or Safeguards (Art. XIX)**—each needs rigorous investigations (injury, causation, public notice, due process). Across-the-board “reciprocal” duties **sidestep due process**.
- **Security exception (Art. XXI)** has been narrowly read by recent panels; across-the-board tariffs to pursue commercial or foreign-policy aims are unlikely to pass muster.

###### d) DSU paralysis and practical difficulty:

- With the **Appellate Body non-functional**, a losing party can “appeal into the void,” blunting remedies. Even so, **bringing a case** still matters: it builds a docket, clarifies law, and supports coalition-building with other affected members.

### 3. Channels of impact for India

- 1) **Price effect & margin squeeze:** sudden 25–50% tariff jumps price Indian goods out of the U.S. market unless the exporter or importer absorbs the hit.
- 2) **Order diversion:** U.S. buyers may switch to competitors in **Vietnam, Mexico, Bangladesh, ASEAN** or near-shore suppliers.
- 3) **Working-capital stress** for MSME exporters with goods en route or under production.
- 4) **Value-chain relocation risk:** mobile phones/electronics and pharma formulations can be re-sourced rapidly if uncertainty persists.
- 5) **Macro:** a drag on merchandise export growth; services exports (IT-BPM, global capability centres) remain resilient but cannot completely offset merchandise losses.

### 4. What India can (and should) do—three-track blueprint

#### A) Multilateral track (law + coalitions)

- 1) **File a WTO dispute** (breach of Arts. I & II; non-use/misuse of trade-remedy rules). Even with the AB paralysis, a **panel ruling** shapes global opinion and can deter copy-cats.
- 2) **Explore DSU Art. 25 arbitration** (MPIA-style ad-hoc arbitration) with like-minded partners for enforceable outcomes.
- 3) **Form a coalition** of affected members (those facing similar U.S. duties) to raise pressure in WTO committees (Market Access, Goods Council, TPRB).
- 4) **Prepare calibrated retaliation** consistent with DSU Art. 22 (suspension of concessions) on a **narrow, politically salient list** if consultations fail—keeping escalation controlled and reversible.

#### B) Bilateral track (pragmatic give-and-take)

- 1) **Seek product-wise exclusions** via the USTR process—prioritize sectors with high U.S. consumer harm (generic **pharma, medical inputs**, critical electronics).
- 2) **Linkages & swaps:** offer **time-bound regulatory facilitation** (e.g., accelerated inspections/quality audits), **mutual recognition** where feasible, or **energy procurement schedules** that help U.S. macro goals—**without** conceding on tariffs.
- 3) **Fast-track unresolved market-access asks** on both sides (e.g., Indian agri/seafood, services visas; U.S. asks on certification) to craft a **balanced mini-deal** while the dispute proceeds.
- 4) **Insulate strategic technology corridors** (semiconductors, clean energy supply chains) from the tariff fight through **side-letters** and investment facilitation.

#### C) Domestic track (shock-absorption + competitiveness)

**Immediate (0–3 months):**

- Activate an **Export Tariff Response Cell**: HS-line mapping, buyer communication kits, and templates for U.S. exclusion requests.
- **Bridge finance**: extend **interest-subvention/ECLGS-like credit**, faster **duty drawback/RoDTEP** refunds, ECGC premium rebates for exposed sectors.
- **Logistics relief**: priority rail/wagon allotment and port fee waivers for consignments rerouted to non-U.S. markets.

#### Near-term (3–12 months):

- **Market diversification**: aggressive buyer-seller meets and credit lines for **Africa, Latin America, West Asia, EU**, and **Indo-Pacific**; push **rupee/third-currency settlement** where viable.
- **Rules-of-origin readiness**: help firms comply with origin/traceability to seize preferences under current and upcoming FTAs.
- **Standards & testing infrastructure**: fast scale-up for **electronics, pharma, food** to pass destination-market NTBs.

#### Medium-term (1–3 years):

- **Deepen value-addition at home**: leverage PLI into real ecosystem gains (components, tooling, materials), not just assembly, so exporters have **pricing power**.
- **Services-merchandise bundling**: integrate **after-sales, design, cloud, and software** with hardware exports to lock-in clients.
- **Trade-policy hygiene**: predictable export incentives, stable customs rules, and quick SPS/TBT clearance windows to signal reliability to global buyers.

### 5. Sector-wise pointers

- **Pharmaceuticals (formulations & generics)**: document U.S. patient-cost impact; push for **public-interest exclusions**; widen non-U.S. market approvals (LatAm, Africa, Japan).
- **Electronics & mobiles**: speed up localization of components; negotiate carve-outs for critical sub-assemblies; cultivate **Mexico/EU** as hedging markets.
- **Textiles & apparel**: pivot towards **EU/UK/Japan** fashion cycles, move up to **MMF and technical textiles**; deploy branding and quick-response manufacturing.
- **Gems & jewellery**: leverage **freeport & re-export hubs**; hedge through Middle-East and East Asian demand centres.

# LEVERAGING WTO AGAINST TARIFFS

**CONTEXT**

- 25% reciprocal additional 25% reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods
- India's goods exports to U.S. \$39 billion  
More than half of sectors exposed to mera tariffs: mobile phones, garment

**LIKELY IMPACT ON INDIA**

- Higher prices and margin squeeze
- Order diversion to Vietnam, Mexico, or Bangladesh
- Working-capital stress for MSME exporters
- Value-chain relocation risk

**WTO LEGALITY**

- U.S tariffs breach "bindings"
- Build coalitions with affected members within WTO

**SUGGESTED RESPONSE**

**Multilateral**

- File a dispute in WTO<sup>2</sup>
- Build coalitions with affected members

**Bilateral**

- Pursue product-wise tariff exclusions
- Address unresolved market-access issues

**Domestic**

- Ease credit access for exporters
- Diversify India's export markets in medium term

**Strategic Lesson: Never Concentrate on One Market. Build Market Intelligence.**

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## 6. Strategic lessons for India:

- 1) **Don't over-concentrate on one market**—U.S. is vital, but concentration risk is real.
- 2) **Support export complexity**—more value-added, standards-compliant products suffer less from tariff shocks.
- 3) **Use the multilateral forum even when imperfect**—it creates legal/political costs for violators and strengthens India's case for rules-based trade.
- 4) **Build shock absorbers**—export credit depth, trade insurance, and market intelligence must be treated as strategic infrastructure.

**Conclusion:**

- The new U.S. tariffs are **hard to defend under WTO rules** and will **hit more than half of India's U.S.-bound merchandise basket**, disproportionately affecting labor-intensive sectors. India's optimal response is **three-pronged**: (i) mount a **rules-based challenge** and coalition effort multilaterally, (ii) pursue **surgical, interest-based bargains bilaterally** to secure exclusions and a cooling-off, and (iii) **shield and upgrade the domestic export engine** through finance, standards, logistics, and rapid market diversification. Handled with steadiness rather than brinkmanship, the episode can **accelerate India's move up the value chain** and reduce vulnerability to politically driven trade shocks.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.12. IS H1B NEXT TARIFF ON INDIA?

**Descriptive Question:**

With senior U.S. officials labelling the H-1B programme a 'scam' and voices across the political spectrum seeking an overhaul, critically examine the political economy of H-1B visas. How would tighter rules affect India's tech services, talent mobility and bilateral ties?

**Answer:****1. Context and salience**

- The H-1B is the main temporary work visa for "**specialty occupations**" (typically STEM/IT). It is granted for **3 years + 3 years (max 6)**, is **cap-subject (65,000 + 20,000 for U.S. advanced degrees)**, and requires employers to file a **Labour Condition Application** attesting to **prevailing-wage** payment and non-adverse impact on U.S. workers.
- **Demand far exceeds supply**; hence a lottery. After a pandemic dip (**61,569 visas in FY2021**), issuances rebounded (**206,002 in 2022; 265,777 in 2023; ~219,659 in 2024**).
- **Indians account for >70% of approved H-1B petitions since 2015**, reflecting India's deep integration with the U.S. tech economy.
- The programme is contested from both **Right** (nativist, "hire American") and **Left** (wage-suppression, labour rights) even as industry argues it is **essential for innovation**.

**2. How the programme actually works (and the friction points)**

- **Cap-exempt categories**: universities, non-profits, and certain research bodies can hire outside the cap—one reason many H-1Bs cluster around academia/medical research.
- **Not all petitions are cap-subject**: "continuing employment", transfers, extensions, and amendments fall outside the annual lottery.
- **Compliance levers**: prevailing-wage levels, site visits, anti-benching rules, and (since 2024) **beneficiary-centric registration** to curb duplicate entries.

- **Friction** arises from: layered contracting (“body-shopping”), wage-level gaming (hiring at entry-level wages for experienced work), benching, and green-card backlogs (especially for Indians in EB-2/EB-3), which create long-term precarity.

### 3. The political economy of the current backlash

- **Right-wing critique:** H-1Bs “replace” Americans or hold down wages; offshoring plus on-site staffing by foreign firms is framed as “labor arbitrage”.
- **Left-wing critique:** power asymmetries and loopholes let some firms underpay or tie workers to employers; calls for stronger wage floors and mobility safeguards.
- **Industry position:** persistent skill shortages (AI, chips, cybersecurity), global competition for talent (Canada, UK, Australia), and the innovation spillovers from immigrant founders and researchers.
- **Policy drift:** tightening during the previous Trump term (higher RFEs, proposed wage rules), partial easing later, and now **renewed calls** for curbs or redesign.

### 4. Likely impact of tougher H-1B rules on India

#### a) Indian IT & services exports

- **On-site delivery and client hand-holding** in the U.S. depend on H-1B/L-1 pipelines. Stricter caps, higher wage floors or “U.S.-first” hiring mandates would:
  - Raise **project costs** and compress margins for Indian IT/BPM.
  - **Divert work** to near-shore bases (Canada, Mexico) or to U.S. subcontractors.
  - Accelerate the **shift to Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India** and remote delivery—viable for much work, but not for all regulated or client-facing roles.

#### b) Talent mobility & people-to-people ties

- Longer green-card queues and lottery risk make careers **uncertain** for Indian STEM workers and their families; social costs (spousal work limits, child “aging out”) mount.
- Countries with **friendlier talent pathways** (Canada’s special open-work option for H-1B holders, UK Global Talent, Australia/Europe STEM visas) become magnets, risking a **brain-drain detour away from the U.S.**

#### c) Domestic labour market

- In the short run, return migration plus slower on-site hiring can **increase high-skill supply in India**, which is positive if absorbed by R&D, design, semiconductor, and deep-tech—negative if not matched by quality jobs.

## THE H-1B DEBATE: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA\*

### H-1B

> 74 % of H-B petitions

US officials have labelled the H-1B visa programme a "scam". How would tougher rules affect India's economy and ties?

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### CONTEXT

- H-1B is the main temporary work visa for "specialty occupations"
- > 70% of approved H-1B petitions since 2015

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### POLITICAL DRIVERS

**Critique from the right**

- Claim the programme displaces American workers and keeps wages down

**Concerns from the left**

- Employer abuses, demand higher wages and stricter oversight

---

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON INDIA

- Rising costs and constraints for IT exports
- Brain drain to immigration-friendly countries
- Higher UK, Australia boom

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### A STRATEGIC RESPONSE

1. Engage Washington on fair reforms while protecting worker mobility
2. Move up the value chain and diversify invests to reduce US reliance

**SosinIAS**

#### 5. What the evidence says (balanced view)

- Studies show **heterogeneous wage effects**: abuse exists in segments reliant on staffing layers and entry-level wage filings; conversely, H-1Bs in product companies, research, and top tech roles **earn well above local medians** and **boost patenting, startups and spillovers**.
- For the U.S., the programme's design flaws—not its existence— drive most distortions: weak enforcement in sub-segments, green-card bottlenecks, and misalignment of caps with labour market needs.

#### 6. India's strategy: a three-level blueprint

##### A. Diplomatic & legal engagement with Washington

- 1) **Protect the "innovation corridor"**: ring-fence STEM-PhD hires, national-security/semiconductor roles, and research tie-ups (iCET, CHIPS-linked supply chains) from broader political swings.
- 2) **Back principled reforms** rather than blanket defence:
  - Higher **wage floors indexed to local medians**, priority for **high-skill/high-pay roles**, and strict action against **layered staffing abuses**.

- **Recapture of unused green cards**, faster AOS for STEM advanced degrees, and portability for dependants (spousal work).
  - 3) **Mobility compact**: explore a **Trusted Talent/Skills Mobility Partnership** (fast lanes for vetted firms/roles; reciprocal research visas) and progress on a **Totalisation Agreement** to avoid double social-security contributions.
- B. Industry course-correction in India**
- 1) **Reduce on-site dependence**: architecting, design authority, and client co-creation from India; embed **product & platform** revenue alongside services.
  - 2) **Move up the value chain**: safety-critical software, ER&D, chip design, cybersecurity, industrial AI—areas where pricing power offsets visa shocks.
  - 3) **Build near-shore buffers** prudently (Canada/EU) without hollowing India centres; ensure IP, security and continuity are India-anchored.
  - 4) **Compliance hygiene**: zero tolerance for benching/bonding, wage suppression, or dubious middle-layer contracting—these fuel U.S. backlash and harm workers.
- C. Worker-centric measures**
- 1) **Pre-departure transparency**: standard offer letters, wage-level disclosures, role clarity, and grievance redress tied to Indian missions.
  - 2) **Safety net for returnees**: fast-track lateral hiring, **credit transfer of U.S. experience**, and portable insurance; dedicated portals to match returning talent with Indian deep-tech, academia and startups.
  - 3) **Skills for the new onsite-lite world**: client consulting, regulatory literacy, secure remote delivery, and **AI-assisted productivity**; public skilling aligned to NIST/industry standards.
- 7. Risks to watch and opportunities to seize**
- **Risk**: sudden administrative curbs (registrations, RFEs, site-visit crackdowns) can produce a sharp, temporary **delivery shock**.
  - **Opportunity**: India can turn tighter U.S. mobility into a **domestic capability push**—R&D tax credits, easier university-industry labs, a **Global Talent Visa** to attract foreign experts, ESOP tax fixes to retain returnees, and quicker pathways in sunrise sectors (chips, space, biotech).
- 8. Conclusion:**
- The H-1B debate is less about “scam vs saviour” than **programme design and enforcement**. A blanket clamp-down would hurt U.S. innovation and Indian services alike; a **rules-tightened, wage-honest, talent-focused H-1B** would keep the corridor credible. India should **engage hard on reform, protect its workers, and accelerate up-the-value-chain growth at home** so that visa politics abroad do not hold its economy hostage.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.13. STABLE, TRUSTED AND STRATEGIC – INDIA-JAPAN

#### Descriptive question:

Trace the evolution of India-Japan partnership and critically assess its present drivers—security, trade/ODA, digital–semiconductors, clean energy and connectivity. Identify the key bottlenecks (trade deficit, CEPA underuse, project delays, standards/market access) and suggest a 5–year roadmap to deepen a ‘Special Strategic and Global Partnership’.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Why this partnership matters — the big picture

- India and Japan are long-standing maritime democracies with convergent interests in an open Indo-Pacific, trusted supply chains and high-quality connectivity. The relationship has been steadily upgraded—from the **2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation** to a **Special Strategic and Global Partnership (2014)**; it is now anchored in annual leader summits, a “2+2” Foreign & Defence Ministers’ dialogue, and an increasingly dense economic and technology agenda.
- **Continuity with new priorities:** In 2022 Japan announced a **¥5 trillion (≈US\$42 bn) investment plan in India over five years**, and the two sides set out new pillars: **semiconductors/digital, critical minerals, clean energy, supply-chain resilience, public-interest infrastructure and skills.**

#### 2. Trajectory: from ‘confluence of the seas’ to a technology-led compact

- **Strategic signalling:** PM Abe’s 2007 “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech laid the conceptual foundation for a free and open Indo-Pacific with India as a central partner.
- **Security architecture:** After the **2008 Security Declaration**, defence ties expanded—Japan became a permanent Malabar participant (2015); logistics inter-operability was codified by the **Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Agreement (ACSA, 2020)**; and a **2+2 ministerial** now reviews defence industrial cooperation and joint exercises.
- **Economic spine:** Japan is India’s largest ODA partner; yen loans have financed transformational projects—**Dedicated Freight Corridor, Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, metro systems** and the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR)**. In 2023 JICA approved **₹22,627 crore (7th tranche)** for MAHSR and a fresh **₹10,361 crore ODA package** for other projects.
- **Resilient value chains:** Alongside the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) with Australia**, both sides are building trusted alternatives in electronics, autos and clean energy components.

#### 3. What is new in 2024–25 — the drivers

##### a) Security & the Indo-Pacific

- Shared concerns about coercive maritime behaviour, chokepoints and gray-zone tactics have made **maritime domain awareness, Coast Guard cooperation and**

**defence industrial projects** front-and-centre. The 2+2 has prioritised joint exercises, ISR cooperation and exploring export opportunities from India's shipyards under Japan's refreshed defence export rules.

**b) Trade, investment & ODA**

- **Trade:** Bilateral trade reached **US\$22.85 bn in FY2023/24**; India runs a persistent deficit and remains under-penetrated in Japan's high-standards market.
- **Investment & firms:** The 2022 pledge targets **¥5 tn** of Japanese investment by 2027 while encouraging greater participation of small and medium enterprises and startups. Japanese firms in India report relatively high profitability and expansion intent.
- **ODA:** Japan remains India's premier **long-tenor, low-cost** infrastructure financier—urban metros, multimodal logistics, river bridges in the North-East, water/sanitation and MAHSR.

**c) Digital and semiconductors**

- The **India–Japan Digital Partnership (IJDP)** and the **2023 MoC on semiconductor supply chains** seek to connect design talent, ecosystem incentives and equipment suppliers, with cooperation on **advanced packaging, materials and talent mobility**.

**d) Clean energy & critical minerals**

- Collaboration spans **green hydrogen, ammonia co-firing, battery value chains, grid efficiency** and **critical mineral sourcing/processing**, dovetailing with Japan's **GX (Green Transformation)** finance and India's energy-transition goals.

**e) People-to-people & skills**

- Under **TITP** and **Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)** tracks, India is becoming a source of caregiving, manufacturing and service workers for ageing Japan; mutual recognition/skills testing and language training are scaling up.

**4. Where the shoe pinches — key bottlenecks**

- 1) **Trade deficit & under-utilised CEPA:** The 2011 CEPA has not delivered the expected market access. Indian MSMEs struggle with **stringent standards, certification and business culture**; Japanese buyers seek scale, quality and on-time delivery. CEPA tariff lines need pruning; **mutual recognition of conformity assessment** is patchy.
- 2) **Project execution risks:** **MAHSR** suffered land and cost over-runs; urban projects need faster utility shifting, multi-agency clearances and last-mile multimodal integration to realise productivity gains.
- 3) **Investment climate friction:** Land aggregation, contract enforcement, tax certainty, and **stable localisation rules** are recurring concerns for Tier-2/Tier-3 suppliers.

- 4) **Technology depth:** To make the semiconductor MoC meaningful, India must move from assembly to **tooling, specialty chemicals, equipment servicing and advanced packaging**—areas where Japan is strong but risk-averse without clear demand anchors and IP comfort.
- 5) **Defence industrial cooperation:** Japan's still-evolving export regime and India's offset/local-content rules must align for credible co-development/co-production pathways.



## 5. A realistic 5-year roadmap (2025–30)

### A. Security & regional order

- **Institutionalise MDA (maritime domain awareness)** data-sharing and **tri-service exercises**; leverage ACSA for longer deployments.
- **Co-produce coastal security assets** (patrol vessels, drones, sonar, EW) for India and third countries in the Indian Ocean; link with Quad HADR networks.

**B. Semiconductors & digital industrialisation**

- Stand up **two India–Japan “chip clusters”** (e.g., Gujarat–Maharashtra; Tamil Nadu) with: plug-and-play clean rooms, water/recycling guarantees, **Japanese-tooling service hubs**, and a **talent bridge** (joint curricula, internships, SSW fast-track).
- Launch a **Joint Advanced Packaging Pilot** (OSAT + substrate + metrology), backed by design wins from Indian electronics and automotive OEMs under production-linked incentives.

**C. Clean energy & critical minerals**

- Tap Japan’s **GX loans** for **green hydrogen/ammonia pilots**, city-gas decarbonisation, and **battery recycling**; create an **India–Japan Critical Minerals Fund** to invest upstream in Africa/ASEAN with offtake guarantees.

**D. Trade & CEPA 2.0**

- Time-bound **CEPA review**: deeper tariff cuts on labour-intensive exports (seafood, textiles, furniture), **Mutual Recognition Agreements** for pharma/food, and digital trade disciplines.
- **“Shinkansen for Standards”**: a joint standards/certification help-desk in India that hand-holds MSMEs through Japanese norms (packaging, just-in-time logistics, quality circles).

**E. ODA to productivity**

- Prioritise **multimodal logistics and energy-efficient urban transit**, completing DFC-linked industrial nodes; integrate ODA metros with TOD (Transit-Oriented Development) so that ridership and land values finance themselves.

**F. People-to-people**

- Scale **TITP/SSW** to 200,000 Indian workers in caregiving, manufacturing, construction and ICT over five years; mutual insurance portability and housing support to improve retention.

**6. Conclusion:**

- From **Abe’s “two seas”** to a **semiconductor-and-supply-chain partnership**, India–Japan ties have repeatedly adapted to geopolitical and technological change. The ballast of **trusted ODA, rules-based security cooperation** and a **clear investment pipeline (¥5 tn by 2027)** gives the relationship unusual resilience. Delivering the next leap now hinges on **execution**: a smarter CEPA, faster project delivery, and de-risking technology collaboration. Done well, the partnership can anchor an **open, resilient Indo-Pacific** while powering India’s **manufacturing and green-tech transformation**.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.14. DE-RISKING WITHOUT DECOUPLING!

#### Descriptive Question:

Diagnose the India–China economic imbalance (trade, production structure, finance/FDI) and critically assess whether deeper economic engagement with China can be a solution in the background of US tariffs. Propose a calibrated “de-risking without decoupling” strategy.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Background and the new trigger

- **External shock:** The U.S. has raised “reciprocal” tariffs; India is among the most affected large economies. With global demand uncertainty, the temptation is to **lean on the nearest big market and supplier—China**—to cushion exports and lower input costs.
- **Security context:** This outreach sits atop **post-Galwan distrust (2020)**, restrictions on Chinese apps and FDI, and stalled RCEP entry. Any economic reset must be weighed against enduring border tensions and technology-security risks.

#### 2. The imbalance—what the numbers say

- **Trade structure:** India runs its **largest bilateral goods deficit with China**, driven by **intermediate goods and capital equipment**—electronics parts, telecom gear, chemicals/APIs, solar inputs, machine tools—rather than finished consumer goods alone.
- **Rising dependence:** Official data series (Chart 1 in the article) show **imports from China climbing to ≈\$113.5 bn** while exports are ≈\$14.3 bn; the trade gap is ≈\$99 bn.
- **Why it matters now:** When domestic demand softens or tariffs shut out India from the U.S., **cheap Chinese inputs** can flood Indian markets, undercutting local manufacturers just when capacity creation is needed.
- **Global context:** Charts 3 & 4 show **China is ~33% of world manufacturing gross output and ~29% of global value added**—an order-of-magnitude lead in several value chains.
- **India’s structural weakness:** Since 2019-20, **services GVA has grown fastest, agriculture next, while manufacturing has lagged** (Table in the article). This reveals a competitiveness gap—logistics, scale, energy costs, technology depth, and firm productivity.

**Inference:** India imports “productive capacity” (machines, parts, precursors) from China because it is **cheapest, fastest, and available at scale**. But this **locks India into dependency** and suppresses incentives to invest locally.

#### 3. Do closer ties with China fix or worsen the problem?

##### Arguments for calibrated engagement

- **Input cost relief** for Indian producers facing U.S./EU headwinds.

- **Market access** for bulk commodities and a few niche goods.
- **Stability in critical inputs** (APIs, solar wafers, electronics parts) until Indian plants scale.

#### Counter-arguments

- **Import-surge risk:** China's overcapacity and deflationary pressures can **dump** goods, hollowing out Indian manufacturing in sunrise sectors (electronics, solar, EVs, chemicals).
- **Security & tech risk:** Equipment in telecoms, power electronics, or data-rich products raises **trusted-vendor** issues; IP and data exfiltration concerns persist.
- **Negotiating asymmetry:** A \$100-bn deficit leaves India with **weak leverage** on reciprocity.
- **Policy whiplash:** A "warmth-led reset" can be undone by border incidents; firms will hesitate to invest in long-gestation projects if policy is likely to reverse.

**Bottom line: Deeper engagement cannot substitute for competitiveness.** India should **de-risk, not decouple**—use Chinese inputs tactically while building self-reliance and alternative networks.

#### 4. What success looks like: lessons & comparators

- **Mexico's playbook:** By binding itself to U.S. value chains (USMCA), Mexico turned tariff politics into **near-shoring FDI**, especially autos/electronics. The lesson: **plug into the dominant market's rules and standards**, speed land-labour-logistics clearances, and offer *certainty*.
- **ASEAN's model:** Vietnam combined **standards compliance, industrial parks, and stable tax rules** to capture "China+1" lines.

**India's opportunity:** With geopolitics pushing diversification, **India can be "inside the chain"** (U.S./EU/Japan) rather than just a tariff-protected market.

#### 5. A calibrated strategy for India

##### A) Trade & standards: de-risking without decoupling

- 1) **Prioritise standards over blunt tariffs:** Expand **BIS Quality Control Orders (QCOs)** and **technical regulations** in critical sectors (electronics, chemicals, auto parts, solar) with realistic compliance timelines for MSMEs. This filters unsafe dumping while forcing upgrading.
- 2) **Early-warning & remedies:** A 24x7 **Trade-Remedy Cell** (anti-dumping, countervailing, safeguards) with fast data pipelines from customs and industry.
- 3) **Tariff rationalisation:** Remove **inverted duties** on critical inputs; maintain **calibrated basic customs duties** where predation risk is high.
- 4) **Market diversification:** Accelerate **FTAs** that embed India into rules-based supply chains—EFTA implementation, close UK/EU, deepen IPEF supply-chain pillar, and use **GSP-like** preferences where available.

- 5) **Trusted-tech procurement:** Apply **security-vetted vendor lists** (telecom, power electronics, surveillance, cloud) with transparent criteria.

**B) Industrial policy: from assembly to capability**

- 1) **PLI 2.0 with depth:** Shift incentives to **capital goods and core intermediates**— machine tools, industrial electronics, wafers/ingots for solar, cathode/anode materials, specialty chemicals, APIs, and battery value chains.
- 2) **Scale & speed: Plug-and-play industrial parks** with common environmental clearances, on-site customs, and power at global tariffs; link incentives to **exports and productivity**, not just revenue.
- 3) **Finance & FX:** Larger **export-credit windows**, faster **GST refunds**, and **hedging support** for MSME exporters. Keep the **real effective exchange rate** competitive and stable.
- 4) **Logistics cost <8% of GDP:** Finish **DFC/port connectivity**, de-bottleneck ICDs, digitise the **single window** for trade, and enforce **time-definite containers**.
- 5) **Skill & tech diffusion:** Targeted programmes for **process engineers, tool-makers, and technicians**; expand **design-linked incentives** and **IP sharing consortia** in electronics/auto/chemicals.

**C) Supply-chain security for “must-not-fail” inputs**

- **Stockpiles & dual sourcing** for APIs, solar inputs, semicon consumables, rare earths, and grid equipment; use **public procurement** to anchor Indian capacity.
- **India-plus coalitions:** Co-invest with **Japan, EU, U.S., Australia** in critical minerals and refining; long-term offtake agreements for battery metals.

**D) Diplomatic choreography**

- **A working modus vivendi with China:** Hold firm on the border; pursue **issue-specific deals** (e.g., simplified testing/approvals, SPS/TBT cooperation) **without grand bargains** that trade security for market access.
- **Quiet guardrails:** Re-open limited FDI channels for **non-sensitive manufacturing** with stringent **beneficial-ownership disclosure** and **data-security** undertakings.
- **Public messaging:** Frame policy as **risk management**, not hostility—welcome fair trade, resist coercion and dumping.

**6. Immediate actions (next 6–12 months)**

- 1) **Publish a “China Risk Map”:** product-by-product import reliance, alternative sources, and domestic capacity pipeline.
- 2) **Fast-track QCOs** in four sectors (electronics components, auto parts, solar inputs, APIs) with labs and conformity-assessment capacity.

- 3) **Tariff fix** for inverted structures in electronics/chemicals; expedite **RoDTEP/ROSCTL** rates for labour-intensive exporters.
- 4) **Announce a \$10-bn Export Manufacturing Parks scheme** (plug-and-play, customs on site, 24x7 logistics).
- 5) **Launch an India–U.S.–EU Supplier Matchmaking Portal** to onboard firms moving out of China.

## 7. Risks & mitigations

- **Retaliation or supply squeeze:** Mitigate with **multi-sourcing** and **strategic reserves**; use dispute-settlement and diplomacy.
- **Cost push at home:** Offset with **energy reforms**, competitive industrial power tariffs, and logistics efficiency.
- **Compliance burden on MSMEs:** Provide **shared testing labs**, phased timelines, and design assistance.



**8. Conclusion:**

- India's problem is **not China per se, but being structurally out-competed** in the very goods that build factories—machines, parts, and precision chemicals. A tactical import reliance may be unavoidable in the short run, but **strategic dependence is not**. The answer is **de-risking without decoupling**:
  - **Use standards and smart remedies** instead of blunt protectionism;
  - **Move PLI from assembly to upstream capabilities**;
  - **Lock into trusted supply chains** via high-quality FTAs;
  - **Secure must-have inputs** through stockpiles and alliances; and
  - **Keep a cool, transactional engagement with China** without conceding core interests.

Done well, India converts the tariff shock into a **competitiveness pivot**—building a manufacturing base resilient to both geopolitical pressure and predatory imports, while keeping the door open to fair, rules-based trade with all.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 4. PRELIMS WORK BOOK

1. **Who among the following was recently sworn in as the President of Poland and is supported by former U.S. President Donald Trump?**
  - a) Donald Tusk
  - b) Mateusz Morawiecki
  - c) Karol Nawrocki
  - d) Andrzej Duda
2. **In which of the following cases did the Supreme Court of India lay down the principle that the offence of sedition applies only when there is incitement to violence or intention to create public disorder?**
  - a) Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)
  - b) Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962)
  - c) Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)
  - d) Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras (1950)
3. **The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth) Amendment Bill, 2025, primarily pertains to:**
  - a) Reserving one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies
  - b) Altering the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 131
  - c) Removal/cessation from office of the PM/CM/Ministers detained for 30 days in serious offences.
  - d) Abolishing Legislative Councils in the States
4. **Which Indian State has been declared the country's first *fully digitally literate* State (August 2025)?**
  - a) Karnataka
  - b) Kerala
  - c) Tamil Nadu
  - d) Dehli
5. **During his 2025 visit to Japan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was presented with which cultural symbol, traditionally representing perseverance and good luck?**
  - a) Kokeshi Doll
  - b) Daruma Doll
  - c) Maneki Neko (Lucky Cat)
  - d) Origami Crane

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# **GS - III**

**1. ECONOMY**

**2. ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY**

**3. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

**4. DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**5. SECURITY**

**6. PRELIMS WORKBOOK**

## GS 3

### 1. ECONOMY

#### 1.1. TENSION IN TECH SECTOR

##### Descriptive Question:

With Artificial Intelligence poised to reshape the global employment landscape, critically examine the challenges and opportunities facing India's IT sector. How can India's digital economy adapt to ensure sustained job creation and global competitiveness in the age of automation?

##### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- The Indian Information Technology (IT) sector has long served as a ladder of upward mobility, absorbing lakhs of engineering graduates annually, fuelling the aspirations of India's middle class, and contributing over 7% to the national GDP. However, the recent announcement by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) that it will lay off 12,000 employees—amounting to 2% of its global workforce—has ignited a national debate on the future of employment in India's tech sector.
- The layoff reflects deeper structural shifts rather than short-term cost-cutting. It signals the convergence of two megatrends: the **rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and the **decline of low-value, mass hiring models** that defined India's IT growth story for over two decades.

#### 1. Changing Nature of Work in India's IT Sector

##### a) Decline of Mass Hiring Models:

- India's IT boom from the 1990s onwards thrived on the **"factory model"** — mass recruitment of engineering graduates trained to execute low-to-mid complexity tasks for global clients.
- This model was built on **cost arbitrage, scalability, and process standardisation**.
- With automation and AI tools such as GitHub Copilot, ChatGPT, and low-code platforms, many of the entry-level roles once offered to freshers are **now easily automated**.

##### b) Demand for Specialised Skills:

- Hiring now prioritises **cybersecurity, AI operations, DevOps, cloud architects, chip design engineers**, and data scientists—jobs that require domain depth and constant upskilling.
- As tech firms shift to **high-value, low-volume hiring**, students face an employment market where only those with advanced or niche skills will be absorbed.



# Tension in Tech Sector

The Indian IT industry has long been a driver of economic growth and employment. However, recent layoffs signal deeper structural changes in the sector

## Changing Nature of Work



### Decline of Mass Hiring Models

Mass recruitment of engineering graduates fuelled past IT boom  
Automation and AI now threaten low-to-mid complexity jobs



### Opportunities in AI-led Transformation

Emergence of roles in AI ethics, human-AI collaboration, etc  
AI could add up to \$500 billion to GDP by 2030 (McKinsey)

## AI as Disruptor and Enabler



### Speed and Scale of Disruption

AI automation puts even white-collar IT jobs at risk  
Industry veterans view impact as "deeper and broader" than past tech shifts



### Opportunities in AI-led Transformation

Emergence of roles in AI ethics, human-AI collaboration, etc  
AI could add up to \$500 billion to GDP by 2030 (McKinsey)

## Implications for Youth and Education

- Over 1.5 million engineers are produced annually
- Low employability amid automation and upskilling needs
- Educational overhaul required to boost tech readiness

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## 2. AI as Disruptor and Enabler

### a) Speed and Scale of Disruption:

- Unlike earlier technologies, AI impacts **cognitive, not just manual tasks**, making even white-collar IT jobs vulnerable.
- Industry veterans now view AI's disruption as "**deeper and broader**" than Y2K, ERP transitions, or digital shifts.

### b) Opportunities in AI-led Transformation:

- While some roles will disappear, many **new roles will emerge** across AI ethics, data governance, human-AI collaboration, and intelligent systems design.
- A McKinsey report (2024) notes that **AI could add up to \$500 billion to India's GDP** by 2030 if leveraged efficiently.

### 3. Implications for India's Youth and Education System

#### a) Employability Crisis:

- India produces over **1.5 million engineers every year**, but only 20–25% are considered employable in the tech sector.
- The combination of **layoffs, automation, and high-skills expectations** means that even top graduates face uncertainty.

#### b) Need for Educational Reform:

- Current curricula remain **theoretical, outdated, and exam-centric**.
- A complete overhaul is needed—embedding **digital literacy from middle school**, realigning syllabi to industry needs, and incentivising **interdisciplinary, problem-solving approaches**.

#### c) Digital Divide Risk:

- Urban, well-connected youth may transition smoothly, but **rural and Tier-2/Tier-3 graduates risk marginalisation**.
- Without proactive skilling, the digital economy may deepen inequalities.

### 4. National Strategy for Competitive Resilience

#### a) Government's Role:

- India's **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)** and **Digital University Framework** must expedite integration of AI, coding, and tech fluency at all school levels.
- **Skilling platforms like Skill India, FutureSkills Prime, and Digital India Bhashini** need localisation, AI-specific certifications, and deeper industry partnerships.

#### b) Industry's Responsibility:

- Instead of hiring large, low-skilled batches, firms must invest in **apprenticeships, gig work models, and mid-career upskilling pipelines**.
- Large players must also support start-ups and SMEs via **ecosystem-building**, especially in Tier-2 cities.

#### c) Role of Academia and Think Tanks:

- Public-private research on **responsible AI**, data regulation, and emerging tech must be prioritised, especially as India chairs forums like **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)**.

### 5. Global Comparisons and Opportunities:

- **USA and EU** are focusing on **"AI for productivity"**, not employment replacement, by building policies around augmentation rather than automation.
- **China's tech transition** is investing in **semiconductors, robotics, and AI governance** to mitigate unemployment shocks.
- India must find its own model that balances **youth employability, innovation, and ethical tech deployment**.

**Conclusion:**

- The Indian IT story is not over—it is merely undergoing a transformation. The age of AI will not kill Indian tech, but **it will kill its older assumptions** of cheap talent and high volume. The path ahead lies in how swiftly India can pivot toward **value creation, lifelong skilling, and global leadership in AI-led services**.
- India's demographic dividend can still be its greatest asset—but only if education, employment, and enterprise align around the demands of this fast-evolving digital century. The real test is not AI. The real test is how India builds its **next competitive moat**.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.2. DIGITAL CONCESSIONS IN TRADE TREATIES

**Descriptive Question:**

**In the backdrop of India's recent trade agreements, critically examine the challenges to India's digital sovereignty. What are the strategic implications of digital concessions in trade treaties and how can India formulate a robust digital sovereignty and industrial policy?**

**Answer:****Introduction:**

- In the digital era, sovereignty is no longer confined to geographical borders. It encompasses control over data, digital infrastructure, software ecosystems, and the regulatory authority governing the digital economy. As India enters into free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed economies like the United Kingdom under the India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), there is growing concern that strategic concessions in digital sectors may undermine national autonomy over critical data, technology regulation, and the future of domestic digital innovation.

**1. Understanding Digital Sovereignty and Its Strategic Importance:**

- Digital sovereignty refers to a nation's capacity to independently regulate, control, and benefit from its digital infrastructure, data ecosystems, software standards, and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities without external dependence or coercion.

**Strategic Dimensions:**

- **Economic Control:** Domination over digital infrastructure and data is essential for future industrial policy, job creation, and innovation.
- **National Security:** Control over software, source codes, encryption protocols, and critical algorithms has implications for cyber defence, public health, and autonomous decision-making.
- **Regulatory Autonomy:** Sovereign regulatory frameworks ensure alignment with domestic social, political, and constitutional priorities, such as privacy and public interest.

## 2. India's Recent Compromise: Source Code Disclosure and Open Data Access

- One of the most alarming outcomes of the India-U.K. FTA is India's consent to a clause that **waives rights to seek access to software source code**, including for digital goods or services critical to national interest such as health, energy, transport, or defence.

### Concerns:

- **Precedent-setting:** India had earlier maintained firm opposition at WTO forums against such clauses. Its U-turn weakens its leadership in digital rule-making.
- **National Risk:** Sectors using imported AI and digital tools for governance, health, or defence may become vulnerable due to lack of auditability or oversight of the underlying software.
- **Non-reciprocity:** India concedes access to global firms while its own start-ups and digital products are denied reciprocal benefits abroad.

## 3. Surrendering 'Open Government Data': A Critical National Asset

- The FTA also reportedly includes provisions that oblige India to provide **non-discriminatory access to government-generated data**. This open access to datasets on agriculture, population, energy, etc., while promoting transparency, can allow foreign firms to monetise public datasets and derive competitive AI and digital advantages.

### Key Implications:

- **Loss of competitive edge:** Countries that harness domestic datasets for developing AI solutions retain an edge. India risks losing that advantage.
- **AI weaponisation risk:** Foreign firms could build behavioural profiles of Indian users, influencing consumption, voting, or public behaviour.
- **Dilution of public accountability:** Private use of public data could be unchecked by Indian laws or courts if located abroad.

## 4. India's Policy Shift: From Data Nationalism to Trade-Offs

- Earlier policy articulations like the **Draft e-Commerce Policy (2019)** and **Personal Data Protection Bill** stressed local data storage, source code scrutiny, and digital sovereignty. However, the recent FTA indicates a **shift away from data localisation and regulatory assertiveness**, under external trade pressure.

### Counterview:

- Some argue that **open digital trade** fosters innovation, reduces costs, and integrates India with global supply chains.
- Yet, in the absence of robust **domestic laws, cybersecurity protocols, and digital R&D**, such openness may deepen dependency and increase vulnerability.

## 5. Geopolitical Stakes in Digital Trade: Lessons from the West

- **United States and EU** have created digital trade provisions that allow **regulatory exceptions for national interest**, especially in AI, health, and cyber defence.

- **China** has retained full control over data, digital infrastructure, and algorithms, prioritising national strategy over trade liberalisation.
- The **UK's successful extraction** of digital concessions from India in the FTA highlights an asymmetry in negotiation preparedness and long-term strategic vision.

**Digital Concessions in Trade Treaties**

**Defining Digital Sovereignty**  
 India's ability to control and regulate digital infrastructure, data, software

**Recent Concessions in India-UK FTA**

- Waiver of rights to seek source code of digital goods or services
- Non-discriminatory open access to government data
- **Non-Reciprocity** Indian startups are denied equivalent access abroad

**Key Concerns**

**National Risk**  
Software and AI tools in critical sectors lack auditability and oversight

**Loss of Competitive Edge**  
Foreign firms can monetize public datasets for AI development

**Precedent-Setting**  
Weakens the leadership in Digital rule-making

**Challenges to Digital Sovereignty**

- ✓ Shifting away from regulatory assertiveness
- ✓ Dilution of Public accountability

**Towards a Robust Framework**

- ✓ Legislate Digital Sovereignty Act to safeguard critical digital assets
- ✓ Encourage indigenous R&D for digital innovation
- ✓ Lead equitable digital trade coalitions at WTO and G20

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## 6. Towards a Robust Digital Sovereignty and Industrialisation Framework

To prevent erosion of digital self-reliance, India must adopt a proactive and integrated digital policy approach:

### a) Digital Sovereignty Charter:

- Clearly define **non-negotiable domains** such as source code, encryption, AI algorithms, critical data sectors.
- Legislate **Digital Sovereignty Act**, inspired by European GDPR and China's Cybersecurity Law.

### b) Digital Industrial Policy:

- Encourage **indigenous R&D** in AI, chip design, cloud computing, and open-source software.
- Prioritise **public procurement of Indian tech** and incentives for tech exports.

**c) WTO and Plurilateral Diplomacy:**

- Lead coalitions in the WTO and G20 on equitable digital trade rules.
- Promote **'digital commons' governance**, ensuring fair access without neo-colonial control.

**d) Build Strategic Tech Alliances:**

- Deepen partnerships with nations aligned on **open-source, ethical AI**, and non-surveillance data architectures.
- Invest in **digital universities and skill hubs** for future tech talent.

**Conclusion:**

- India's journey towards 'digital Atmanirbharta' must not be derailed by short-term trade wins. Digital sovereignty is the foundation for economic self-reliance, secure governance, and future geopolitical influence. If trade agreements like CETA compromise this autonomy, they may replicate the **colonial-era economic vulnerabilities** in a 21st-century digital avatar. The way forward is not isolation, but **calibrated openness with sovereignty safeguards**, so that India can remain both globally integrated and nationally secure in the digital age.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 1.3. ECONOMIC HEALTH – LONG TERM GROWTH SUSTAINABILITY

**Descriptive Question:**

**"While India remains the world's fastest-growing large economy, questions about its long-term growth sustainability, sectoral imbalances, and quality of development persist." Critically examine the health of India's economy in the global context using recent comparative indicators.**

**Answer:****Introduction:**

- India, the fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP), has often been hailed as a "bright spot" in an otherwise slowing global economic landscape. However, despite being the fastest-growing large economy, several concerns—such as structural inefficiencies, sectoral vulnerabilities, and uneven job creation—continue to cast a shadow over its economic resilience. A recent global ranking and commentary, juxtaposed against India's performance since the 1990s, reignites the debate over how to assess the true health of the Indian economy.

## 1. Global Growth Context and India's Position

- Recent data from the IMF (World Economic Outlook, 2025) shows India's GDP growing from **\$367 billion in 1995** to a projected **\$5.4 trillion in 2025**, marking a **15-fold increase**. This is in sharp contrast to many advanced economies:
  - **Japan:** GDP only increased **1.7 times** over 30 years.
  - **Germany:** **~2.3 times**.
  - **United Kingdom:** **~2.9 times**.
  - **USA:** **~4 times**.
- India's growth performance, especially after economic liberalisation and particularly post-2003, remains impressive when viewed in absolute expansion terms.

## 2. Strengths Underpinning India's Economic Momentum

### 1) Demographic Dividend:

- A young, working-age population ensures long-term consumption and labour market depth.
- India is projected to supply over **20% of the world's incremental workforce** over the next two decades.

### 2) Services-led Growth:

- The IT and business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors contribute **~55% of GDP** while employing around **30% of the formal sector workforce**.
- Export of services stood at **\$323 billion** in FY24, growing despite global tech layoffs.

### 3) Manufacturing Push through PLI Schemes:

- Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes aim to boost domestic manufacturing and reduce import dependence in sectors like electronics, semiconductors, and medical devices.

### 4) Digital and Infrastructure Expansion:

- India has rapidly scaled up **digital infrastructure** (UPI, JAM trinity).
- Government-led public investment in roads, ports, and power has driven gross fixed capital formation to **~33% of GDP**.

## Economic Health

### Long-Term Growth Sustainability

India remains the world's fastest-growing large economy, questions about its long-term growth sustainability, sectoral imbalances, and quality of development persist.



#### Global Context

India's GDP set to grow 15-fold from 1998 to 2025 (8367 billion to \$5.4 trillion), outpacing major economies

#### Strengths Supporting India's Momentum



**Services Sector Growth**  
IT & BPO contribute to 55% to GDP



**Manufacturing Push**  
Production-linked Incentives boost domestic output



**Digital & Infrastructure**  
Investments in digital paymts in fixed capital formation

#### Sustaining Growth



**Invest in Human Capital**  
Prioritise health, educ, and skills in aids



**Strengthen Manufacturing & Exports**  
Integrate with global value chains



**Boost Rural Incomes**  
Agriculture reform productivity

#### Persistent Concerns



**Jobless Growth**  
Youth unemployment above 18%



**Agrarian Distress**  
Slow rural wage growth



**Export Weakness**  
India's 1.8% of global exports

#### Comparative Economic Performance: Key Takeaways

Country	GDP (Growth)
India	14.8x
China	30.6x
USA	4.0x
Japan	1.7x
UK	2.9x

India's per capita GDP and human capital indicators remain much lower than peer nations.



**Data shows growth disparity**



**Ensure fiscal Prudence**

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### 3. Persistent Concerns and Structural Challenges

Despite these gains, systemic vulnerabilities persist that limit the quality and inclusivity of growth:

#### 1) Jobless Growth and Labour Market Distortions:

- Unemployment among youth remains high at **above 16%**.
- Agriculture still employs **~42%** of the workforce but contributes just **~16-18%** of GDP, reflecting low productivity.

#### 2) Agrarian Distress:

- Despite economic growth, rural wages remain stagnant and real farm incomes have shown slow growth.
- High input costs and erratic climate patterns (floods, heatwaves) affect farm output and inflation volatility.

### 3) Export Weakness and Trade Imbalances:

- India's **share in global exports is just 1.8%**, and trade in goods remains weak due to lack of manufacturing competitiveness.
- Rising import bills, especially for crude oil and electronics, strain the current account.

### 4) Slow Reform Implementation:

- Land and labour reforms remain incomplete or politically contentious.
- Ease of doing business remains skewed in favour of large firms; MSMEs continue to struggle.

## 4. Political Discourse and Perception Gaps

Recent criticism by global leaders—e.g., U.S. President Donald Trump calling India a “dead economy”—sparked domestic political responses. While the data contradicts such a label, the perception of sluggish internal reform and sectoral imbalance feeds international scepticism.

- India is often compared with **China**, which grew from **\$735 billion in 1995** to **\$22.5 trillion in 2025** (projected), marking a **30-fold increase**, and transformed itself into the world's manufacturing hub.
- Concerns around **freedom of trade, high tariff barriers**, and **protectionist instincts** also limit investor confidence.

## 5. Comparative Economic Performance: Key Takeaways

Country	GDP (1995) in USD bn	GDP (2025) in USD bn	Growth Factor
India	\$367	\$5,416	14.8x
China	\$735	\$22,496	30.6x
USA	\$7,640	\$30,507	4.0x
Japan	\$5,345	\$9,188	1.7x
UK	\$1,345	\$3,839	2.9x

While India's GDP has expanded significantly, its **per capita GDP** and **human capital indicators** remain much lower than peer economies, limiting the real economic empowerment of citizens.

## 6. The Way Forward: Consolidating Growth with Equity

To ensure resilient and inclusive growth, India must:

### 1) Invest in Human Capital:

- Prioritise health, primary education, and skilling aligned with the demands of AI, manufacturing, and climate-resilient sectors.

**2) Strengthen Manufacturing & Exports:**

- Diversify trade basket and deepen integration into global value chains.
- Promote MSME formalisation and technology adoption.

**3) Boost Rural Incomes:**

- Reform agricultural markets, expand storage and irrigation.
- Support climate-smart agriculture and sustainable productivity.

**4) Ensure Fiscal Prudence:**

- Tame inflation while maintaining high capital expenditure on infrastructure and welfare.

**5) Undertake Long-Pending Reforms:**

- Create consensus around land, labour, and judicial reforms to enhance the ease of doing business across all regions and sectors.

**Conclusion:**

- India's economic performance is far from "dead" — it represents a significant global growth story. Yet, to retain this momentum and rise as a truly developed economy by 2047, it must address sectoral imbalances, ensure equitable distribution of wealth, and remain reform-driven. Growth must not only be high but also **resilient, inclusive, and jobs-generating**. Only then will the "health" of the Indian economy match the magnitude of its size.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.4. ENSURING ENERGY SECURITY IN GREEN TRANSITION

**Descriptive Question:**

**"India's energy security in the age of transition demands not just diversification of supply sources, but a systemic overhaul of regulatory and governance architecture."**

**Examine the major bottlenecks in India's renewable energy sector and suggest structural reforms to strengthen India's long-term energy security and green transition.**

**Answer:****Introduction:**

- India's energy security, once defined predominantly by affordable access to fossil fuels, is now a multi-dimensional challenge. With India committing to net-zero emissions by 2070 and setting ambitious renewable energy targets, the discourse has expanded to include resilience, regulatory efficiency, technological adaptability, and long-term sustainability. Yet, the renewable energy transition, while impressive in capacity addition, is hindered by an opaque, outdated, and burdensome regulatory framework that threatens the pace and efficiency of India's energy transformation.

## 1. The Dual Track of India's Energy Trajectory

### 1) Conventional Energy Security Achievements:

- India has successfully diversified crude oil import sources and maintained energy security during geopolitical disruptions such as the Russia-Ukraine war and sanctions on Iran.
- Russian crude now makes up over 35.1% of India's import basket (up from 2.1% in 2021–22), reducing the average cost of crude by \$2/barrel.
- Demand-side efficiency has helped reduce fossil fuel intensity per unit of GDP.

### 2) The Green Transition Push:

- Installed renewable energy capacity has reached 234 GW, now contributing to 49% of total electricity generation capacity.
- Yet, this transition is not matched by sufficient structural reforms in grid integration, regulatory coordination, or administrative rationalisation.

## 2. The Core Challenge: Regulatory Miasma

Despite capacity growth, renewable energy faces systemic bottlenecks that restrict scalability, investment efficiency, and timely deployment:

### 1) Bureaucratic Complexity:

- A renewable energy project of just 1 MW capacity may require over 100 approvals, licences, inspections, and renewals across state and central departments before commissioning.
- For example, Shell took 12 months to obtain permissions for an existing petrol outlet conversion—signifying inefficiency that also plagues RE ventures.

### 2) Fragmented Regulatory Oversight:

- Over 2,735 compliance obligations were identified across 35 state and 30 central agencies.
- 60% of these relate to land acquisition, environment, and safety—most of which require physical, manual compliance.

### 3) Lack of Executive Accountability:

- No single nodal agency or empowered executive authority is held responsible for grid expansion, transmission synchronisation, or renewable project facilitation.
- This results in poor investor confidence, project delays, and frequent underutilisation of installed capacity.

### 4) Slow Grid and Infrastructure Readiness:

- Transmission and distribution infrastructure has not kept pace with generation, particularly in states with high renewable potential like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.

## ENSURING ENERGY SECURITY IN GREEN TRANSITION

India must redefine energy security beyond supply diversification to a resilient regulatory and governance framework

### CHALLENGES IN INDIA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR



**BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEXITY**  
Over 100 approvals may be needed for 1 MW renewable energy project



**FRAGMENTED REGULATORY OVERSIGHT**  
Over 2 735 compliance obligations from various agencies



**LACK OF EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**  
No single agency facilitates grid expansion and project development



**SLOW GRID AND INFRASTRUCTURE READINESS**  
Transmission networks lag behind generation in high-potential areas

### STRUCTURAL AND POLICY REFORMS



**SINGLE WINDOW DIGITAL CLEARANCE PORTAL**  
Digitize and consolidate licensing and inspection processes



**GRID EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION**  
Invest in green energy corridors and smart grid technologies



**EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**  
Empower a renewable energy commissioner for accountability



**CODIFICATION OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL NORMS**  
Standardize regulations across renewable projects

### TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED VISION OF ENERGY ATMANIRBHARTA

- Resilience against geopolitical shocks
- Efficiency in resource use and emissions
- Inclusivity in energy access
- Sovereignty through indigenous innovation

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### 3. Implications for Energy Security and Economic Development

#### 1) Strategic Vulnerability:

- Without integrating clean energy into a robust regulatory and infrastructure framework, India risks prolonged dependence on imported hydrocarbons and fails to mitigate energy price shocks.

#### 2) Loss of Economic Opportunity:

- The global green energy economy is projected to be worth over \$10 trillion by 2050. Without a conducive ecosystem, India risks missing its share in this clean-tech revolution.

**3) Grid Instability and Curtailment:**

- Poorly coordinated transmission has led to curtailments of up to 30% in wind-rich regions during off-peak demand, undercutting investor returns and project viability.

**4) Energy Justice and Access:**

- Renewable projects face delays particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions, undermining inclusive growth and energy access goals.

**4. Suggested Structural and Policy Reforms****1) Root-and-Branch Regulatory Overhaul:**

- Create a unified **National Renewable Energy Regulatory Authority** to harmonise norms, approvals, and timelines across states and central ministries.

**2) Single-Window Digital Clearance Portal:**

- Consolidate all licensing and inspection requirements into a time-bound, digital platform with inter-departmental integration and real-time status tracking.

**3) Grid Expansion and Modernisation:**

- Invest heavily in **Green Energy Corridors**, regional load dispatch centres, and smart grid technologies to synchronise generation with consumption patterns.
- Establish dedicated green energy transmission zones.

**4) Codification of Safety and Environmental Norms:**

- Standardise land use, waste disposal, and ecological safeguards across RE projects to reduce compliance ambiguity.

**5) Transparency and Dispute Redressal:**

- Develop a mechanism for resolving regulatory conflicts between agencies, and implement periodic third-party audits on project clearance timelines.

**6) Executive Responsibility:**

- Empower a designated renewable energy commissioner at central and state levels with final accountability over coordination and delivery.

**7) Learning from Global Best Practices:**

- Spain's recent reforms to centralise RE permits and streamline environmental clearance offer replicable models.
- Germany's sector-specific tariff guarantees for green hydrogen and solar integration demonstrate how to de-risk early stage RE investments.

**5. Towards an Integrated Vision of Energy Atmanirbharta**

- The true test of India's energy transition lies not just in generation capacity, but in its ability to convert that into reliable, affordable, and clean electricity for all. This requires:
  - **Resilience** against geopolitical shocks;
  - **Efficiency** in resource use and emissions;
  - **Inclusivity** in energy access;

- And **Sovereignty** through self-reliance and indigenous innovation.
- Structural regulatory reform, not just incremental policy tweaks, must drive this transformation. It is time for a system-wide redesign—where regulatory frameworks catalyse, not constrain, India’s green energy future.

**Conclusion:**

- India’s energy future hinges on its ability to shed its bureaucratic inertia and embrace a forward-looking, investor-friendly, and environmentally sustainable governance model. A resilient energy ecosystem must be built not only on megawatts, but on institutional reform, digital transparency, and regulatory courage. Only then can India truly lead in the global green transition.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.5. BUILDING BATTERY RECYCLING ECOSYSTEM

**Descriptive Question:**

**Discuss the challenges in implementing battery waste management in India in the context of its growing clean energy ambitions. Suggest a comprehensive policy roadmap to strengthen India’s battery recycling ecosystem.**

**Answer:****Introduction:**

- India’s journey toward decarbonisation and energy security is increasingly reliant on clean technologies like electric vehicles (EVs) and battery energy storage systems (BESS). With lithium-ion battery demand expected to skyrocket from 4 GWh in 2023 to 139 GWh by 2035, India faces a concurrent surge in battery waste generation. However, the country’s recycling infrastructure, regulatory mechanisms, and financial incentives are grossly underdeveloped. Without a robust framework for managing battery waste, the green transition risks turning into a toxic legacy.

**Background: Battery Waste and India’s Energy Shift**

- India’s energy transition includes large-scale EV adoption and renewable integration via battery storage. While this growth is essential to achieve net-zero targets by 2070, it generates significant amounts of e-waste.
  - Lithium-ion batteries alone accounted for around 700,000 metric tonnes of the 1.6 million tonnes of e-waste generated in India in 2022.
  - These batteries contain hazardous substances like lithium, cobalt, and nickel which can leach into the environment if improperly handled.
- Recognising these challenges, the Government of India notified the **Battery Waste Management Rules (BWMR), 2022**, anchored in the principles of circular economy and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

## The EPR Framework and Its Shortcomings

The EPR regime compels producers to finance and ensure the collection, recycling, and environmentally safe disposal of batteries. At its core is the concept of the **EPR floor price**—a minimum rate that recyclers should be paid to ensure economic viability of sustainable recycling.

**However, challenges persist:**

### 1. Underpriced EPR Floor Rate

- The EPR floor rate in India does not reflect actual recycling costs, which include advanced technologies, safe transportation, and skilled labour.
- In contrast, the UK mandates up to ₹600/kg for battery recycling, while India's rate is less than a fourth of this, even after adjusting for purchasing power.

This disparity makes legitimate recycling financially unviable, discouraging responsible recyclers while enabling fraudulent practices such as:

- Issuance of fake recycling certificates.
- Under-the-table dumping of hazardous waste.

**BUILDING A BATTERY RECYCLING ECOSYSTEM**

**CHALLENGES IN MANAGING USED BATTERIES**

- Underpriced EPR floor rate**  
does not reflect true cost of recycling
- Batteries contain hazardous substances like Lithium, Cobalt, and Nickel**
- Resistance from Industry**  
many producers evade EPR compliance
- Lack of auditable mechanisms**

**ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC RISKS**

- Widespread waste dumping contaminates soil and water
- Over \$1 billion of economic losses by 2030

**POLICY ROADMAP**

- Recalibrate the EPR floor price**  
reflect the full value chain costs of recycling
- Enforce rigorous compliance**  
real-time tracking and audits to curb fraud
- Formalise the informal sector**  
provide training and regulatory integration
- Promote R&D for new tech**  
invest in indigenous recycling innovations

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## 2. Resistance from Industry

- Many producers, especially multinationals, resist EPR compliance in developing countries while complying with stricter regulations in the Global North.
- As a result, market distortions emerge: non-compliant producers enjoy cost advantages, disincentivising responsible players.

## 3. Lack of Auditable Compliance Mechanisms

- Weak auditing and enforcement allow evasion of recycling responsibilities.
- Informal and unregulated recyclers flourish in the absence of robust checks.

## Environmental and Economic Consequences

Improper battery waste disposal leads to:

- **Environmental Risks:** Soil and groundwater contamination from metals like cobalt and nickel, long-term ecological damage, and public health threats.
- **Economic Losses:** India could lose over \$1 billion in foreign exchange by 2030 due to unrecovered rare earth metals and dependence on imports.
- **Strategic Risks:** India's circular economy vision is threatened. The inability to domestically recycle strategic minerals undermines self-reliance in clean energy tech.

## Towards a Resilient Battery Waste Ecosystem: Policy Roadmap

### 1. Recalibrate the EPR Floor Price

- A scientifically determined floor price that reflects the real cost of recycling across the value chain—collection, processing, and material recovery—must be mandated.
- Incentive alignment ensures recyclers do not cut corners and can scale operations.

### 2. Formalise the Informal Sector

- India's informal sector dominates the e-waste space. To ensure safe recycling, the government must:
  - Offer training and technical support.
  - Provide regulatory pathways for integration into the formal sector.
  - Digitise transactions, enable certificate tracking, and enforce penalties for non-compliance.

### 3. Enforce Rigorous Compliance and Auditing

- Introduce real-time tracking of battery movements.
- Random audits of recycling certificates and cross-verification with physical recycling volumes.
- Penalise fraudulent certificates and issue incentives for verified recyclers.

### 4. Facilitate International Best Practices and Dialogue

- Encourage cross-learning with countries that have mature recycling ecosystems (e.g., EU, UK, South Korea).
- Develop bilateral frameworks for end-of-life battery repatriation or shared recycling infrastructure for high-value strategic metals.

### 5. Promote R&D and Indigenous Tech Solutions

- Allocate funds for battery waste processing R&D through schemes like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) for advanced chemistry cells.
- Foster local innovation in low-cost, scalable recycling tech.

#### Conclusion:

- India's battery waste challenge is a critical missing link in its otherwise ambitious green transition. If not addressed urgently and systematically, it can derail environmental goals, economic gains, and energy security aspirations. The BWMR 2022 offers a foundational framework, but it must be implemented with calibrated financial incentives, institutional enforcement, and inclusive stakeholder participation.
- **The success of India's clean energy revolution depends not just on how we produce energy—but how responsibly we manage its technological residues.**

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.6. CHINESE TECHNOLOGICAL CONTAINMENT ON INDIA'S MANUFACTURING ASPIRATIONS

#### Descriptive Question:

**How does China's strategic geo-economic recalibration impact India's manufacturing aspirations and global supply chain positioning? Examine the implications and suggest how India can respond effectively in the evolving global industrial landscape.**

#### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- In a world where geopolitical strategy increasingly intertwines with economic policy, China's recalibration of its manufacturing outreach is being seen not just as an internal restructuring but as a deliberate strategic response to global developments. The recent exodus of over 300 Chinese engineers from critical Foxconn-linked manufacturing units in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, for instance, is not merely administrative—it is emblematic of a deeper Chinese discomfort with India's rise as a manufacturing alternative. As India aspires to be a global manufacturing hub, these actions demand careful scrutiny of China's geo-economic intentions and India's vulnerabilities in supply chains, technology, and policy frameworks.

#### I. Background: China's Calculated Withdrawal

The decision to pull out specialised engineers involved in iPhone production in India is widely viewed as part of a calibrated Chinese strategy to curtail India's technological leap and industrial self-reliance. These engineers were instrumental in:

- Setting up sophisticated production lines,
- Ensuring quality control,

- Transferring domain expertise crucial for India's electronics ambitions.

This withdrawal may appear logistical, but it reflects a **strategic disruption mechanism** intended to slow India's progress in global high-value manufacturing sectors and to protect China's own supremacy in global supply chains.

## II. Geo-Economic Dimensions of the Move

### 1. Technological Containment

China's technological edge stems from:

- Its lead in rare earth elements,
- Command over upstream electronic manufacturing,
- Dominance in solar and battery technologies.

By restricting the export of engineers and equipment—like heavy-duty industrial machines and photovoltaic components—China seeks to delay the diffusion of its intellectual capital. This deliberate technology denial to India mirrors the **geo-economic tactic of 'chokepoint control'** often used to maintain hegemonic dominance.



## 2. Weaponised Trade Dependencies

China has long imposed:

- Export curbs on rare earth minerals (gallium, germanium),
- Informal barriers to outward capital and equipment flows,
- Tariffs and regulatory friction to discourage outbound industrial support.

These measures ensure **global industrial dependence** on China while denying competitors like India the means to build indigenous capacity in semiconductors, advanced electronics, and renewable energy hardware.

## III. China's Domestic Economic Pressures Fueling Aggression

Ironically, China's aggressive moves reflect its own internal vulnerabilities:

- **Slowing GDP growth** and a persistent **property crisis** have curtailed domestic consumption.
- Rising **social welfare obligations** amidst an ageing population are pushing the regime to maximise export revenues and fiscal buffers.
- **Overcapacity** in traditional sectors has made China reliant on maintaining global production contracts, which are now threatened by India and ASEAN nations.
- The U.S.'s recent 50% tariff hikes on Chinese goods and its **90-day tariff exemption for India** on select oil purchases amplify China's isolation.

In this context, India's rising profile as an alternate supply chain node is perceived not just as competition, but as a direct strategic challenge to China's economic resilience.

## IV. Implications for India

### 1. Strategic Vulnerability

India is still **critically dependent** on China for:

- Sophisticated machinery imports,
- Electronics components and semiconductors,
- Solar PV modules and batteries.

Any disruption in these imports has immediate and cascading effects across Indian manufacturing sectors—from smartphones to electric vehicles and clean energy.

### 2. Need for Indigenous Capability

India's Make in India, PLI (Production Linked Incentive) schemes, and Semiconductor Mission can only succeed if they are accompanied by:

- Talent development to replace foreign technical manpower,
- Domestic R&D support ecosystems,
- Rapid capacity building in upstream manufacturing.

### 3. Diplomatic and Trade Strategy Challenges

India's manufacturing growth is occurring in a complex geopolitical setting. China's actions, alongside U.S.-China trade tensions and "friend-shoring" efforts by Western countries, create both opportunities and risks for India.

- India must carefully navigate this **triangular dynamic**, building trusted partnerships with democratic economies while avoiding outright hostility with China.
- It also needs **robust trade protection**, anti-dumping policies, and supply chain insurance mechanisms to ensure resilience in times of geopolitical stress.

## V. Strategic Way Forward for India

### 1. Invest in Human Capital and Technical Skill Chains

- Establish national-level skill universities and engineering training centres modelled after Germany's Fraunhofer institutes or Taiwan's TSMC pipeline.
- Build indigenous design and R&D capabilities to reduce future reliance on foreign engineers.

### 2. Secure Supply Chains through Diversification

- India must actively participate in QUAD's Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI).
- Build long-term bilateral agreements with mineral-rich countries like Australia, Brazil, and South Africa to ensure critical resource security.

### 3. Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Regulatory Readiness

- Fast-track industrial clearances via PM Gati Shakti and National Single Window System.
- Offer predictable tax regimes, dispute resolution mechanisms, and ease of doing business for both domestic and foreign firms.

### 4. Broaden Export and Trade Infrastructure

- Revamp SEZ policies to match those of Vietnam and Malaysia.
- Build trade corridors like the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) to bypass chokepoints.

### Conclusion:

- China's engineered withdrawal of its technical workforce from India is neither incidental nor isolated—it is a signal of the intensifying strategic competition in the manufacturing domain. For India, the episode offers both a warning and an opportunity. As global supply chains reconfigure in a post-pandemic, post-globalisation world, India must act decisively to overcome technology bottlenecks, build domestic manufacturing depth, and insulate its growth path from external shocks. The future of India's industrial ascent will not be decided merely by tariff walls or capital inflows but by its **ability to retain and develop the human, technological, and strategic stamina to weather global recalibrations.**

**Source: The Hindu**

## 1.7. THE DIGITAL TURN IN GLOBAL FINANCE

### Descriptive Question:

"In an age of programmable money and digital currencies, trust in the underlying technological ecosystem is becoming a critical factor in global monetary dominance."

Discuss how the emergence of digital currencies is reshaping international finance and the geopolitical order. What challenges and safeguards are necessary to ensure currency stability in the digital age?

### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- For over eight decades, the US dollar has enjoyed unparalleled global dominance in trade, finance, and reserves—anchored not only in economic size and military might but in **institutional trust, regulatory stability, and network effects**. However, the 21st century has ushered in a **new phase of monetary evolution**. With the rise of programmable money—such as **central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), stablecoins, and tokenised assets**—trust is no longer rooted solely in macroeconomic strength but increasingly in **cyber resilience, digital infrastructure integrity, and technological governance**.

#### I. The Digital Turn in Global Finance:

##### 1. Shift from Sovereign to Programmable Currencies


- Traditional currencies, backed by central banks and legal systems, are facing competition from blockchain-based digital assets, including **CBDCs, Bitcoin, Ethereum, and private stablecoins** (e.g., USDT, USDC).
- These new instruments operate across **peer-to-peer platforms**, circumventing the need for legacy banking networks, and promise **faster, programmable, and more inclusive** financial services.

##### 2. Decentralisation and the Trust Paradox

- Unlike fiat currencies, digital money can be stored, transferred, and transacted through **decentralised ledgers**. But decentralisation introduces new challenges:
  - **Who governs the code?**
  - **Who ensures system security?**
  - **What happens during a cyber-attack or software failure?**
- Hence, **"trust"** is shifting from central banks to the robustness of the **cryptographic ecosystem, regulatory backing, and resilience to quantum threats**.

# THE DIGITAL TURN IN GLOBAL FINANCE

The rise of digital currencies is reshaping international finance, creating new geopolitical dynamics



## Digital Currency Types

- Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs)
- Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Ethereum
- Stablecoins pegged to fiat currencies

**Trust in Technology**

## Global Competition for Digital Dominance

- Cybersecurity and encryption
- Privacy and programmability
- Quantum resistance
- System integrity



## Risks and Safeguards

- Geopolitical fragmentation and tensions
- Lack of global regulation
- Cyber threats and financial instability

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## II. Why Trust Is the New Reserve Currency

### 1. From Exorbitant Privilege to Exorbitant Responsibility

- The US has long benefited from what economists call the “**exorbitant privilege**” of issuing the global reserve currency.
- The USD accounts for ~60% of global foreign exchange reserves and ~40% of global trade invoicing.
- However, future dominance will not rest on GDP size alone. The **technological trustworthiness** of a currency's digital infrastructure will be equally crucial.

## 2. Technological Factors Governing Trust

- **Encryption standards:** Stronger cryptographic protocols reduce vulnerability to cyber intrusions.
- **Programmability and privacy:** How programmable a currency is, and how it balances **user privacy** with **regulatory compliance**, affects user confidence.
- **Quantum security readiness:** Quantum computers may soon render current cryptographic systems obsolete; currencies unprepared for this shift may suffer “**cyber runs**”.
- **Attack surface and system integrity:** A lower “attack surface” and the presence of end-to-end **data verifiability** give one currency’s ecosystem an edge over another.

## III. Global Competition for Digital Currency Dominance:

### 1. United States and Digital Dollar (FedNow, Project Cedar)

- The US is exploring a **Digital Dollar**, but progress has been slow, partly due to privacy debates and the existing dominance of USD-backed stablecoins.
- The US remains globally dominant because of its **capital markets**, **financial legal frameworks**, and **deep liquidity**.

### 2. China’s Digital Yuan (e-CNY)

- China is at the forefront with its **digital renminbi pilot**, integrated with Alipay and WeChat Pay.
- The digital yuan is programmable and potentially exportable through **Belt and Road-linked payment infrastructure**.
- However, concerns over **state surveillance**, **lack of transparency**, and **capital controls** limit trust from global users.

### 3. European Union’s Digital Euro

- The EU is developing a **Digital Euro** focusing on **privacy-first design**, **interoperability**, and **offline capabilities**.
- Aims to reinforce monetary sovereignty within the Eurozone amid rising usage of non-EU payment systems.

## IV. The Risks of a Fragmented Digital Monetary Order

### 1. Multipolarity Without Governance

- If multiple countries issue competing CBDCs with **non-aligned standards**, it could lead to a **fragmented monetary system**, where interoperability and transparency are poor.
- This may result in “**monetary protectionism**”—where states weaponise access to payment systems as a tool of sanctions or surveillance.

## 2. Cybersecurity and Financial Stability

- **Quantum computing, malware, insider threats, and code manipulation** pose unprecedented risks.
- A cyber-run—analogue to a bank run—can occur if a digital currency platform is hacked or discredited.

## 3. Governance Vacuum in Digital Assets

- No global institution currently regulates **digital payment architecture**, token design, or cryptographic standards.
- The **IMF and BIS** have called for **global coordination**, but enforcement remains weak.

## V. The Way Forward: Preserving Currency Stability in the Digital Age

### 1. Building Technological Sovereignty

- Nations must develop **independent cryptographic standards**, invest in **quantum-proof encryption**, and build domestic expertise in **digital payment systems**.
- India's RBI has launched a **digital rupee pilot**, but mass adoption will require digital literacy, privacy protections, and financial inclusion safeguards.

### 2. Institutionalising Global Cooperation

- Establishing **interoperable standards** through G20, IMF, BIS, and Financial Stability Board (FSB) is critical.
- Cross-border transactions must follow **shared rules for anti-money laundering, cybercrime prevention, and user verification**.

### 3. Reimagining Central Bank Mandates

- Central banks must evolve from being solely issuers of currency to **guardians of monetary ecosystems**.
- This includes maintaining **ledger integrity**, auditing AI-based financial algorithms, and supervising digital intermediaries.

### Conclusion:

- In the emerging digital monetary order, **trust is no longer simply about sovereign credibility or GDP size**—it is about the ability to safeguard complex digital infrastructures, ensure privacy, and resist technological obsolescence. The most dominant currency of the future may not be the one issued by the most powerful economy but by the one whose **digital ecosystem is the most resilient, secure, and transparent**. For India and other emerging economies, this is a call to invest not just in economic growth but in **digital trust architecture**, which will define currency dominance in the coming decades.

**Source: Business Line**

## 1.8. INDIA SPECIFIC CHALLENGES IN GOLDBLOCKS ECONOMY.

### Descriptive Question:

“Despite strong macroeconomic indicators, the Indian economy faces deep-rooted challenges of inequality, wage stagnation, and fiscal rigidity.”

Critically examine whether India’s so-called ‘Goldilocks Economy’ represents an inclusive and sustainable growth trajectory.

### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- India’s Finance Ministry has recently described the Indian economy as being in a “Goldilocks” phase—characterised by **moderate inflation, steady GDP growth, and macroeconomic stability**. With real GDP growth estimated at over **7.6% for FY2024–25**, inflation under control, and manageable fiscal deficits, this macro-outlook paints a picture of resilience. However, beneath this headline stability lies a complex reality of **widening income inequality, stagnant real wages, and unequal access to growth dividends**, challenging the narrative of an economy in equilibrium.

#### I. Understanding the ‘Goldilocks’ Analogy in Macroeconomics:

The term **Goldilocks economy** denotes a condition where economic growth is strong enough to avoid recession but not so strong as to trigger inflationary pressures. It promises a “**just right**” balance that reassures investors, consumers, and policymakers. The Indian variant of this phenomenon is built on:

- **GDP growth** crossing 7.6% (2024–25 estimates).
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** inflation stabilising near **5.4%**.
- **Core inflation** (excluding food and fuel) declining.
- **Fiscal prudence**: Revenue deficit projected to drop to **2% of GDP** by FY2026.
- **Declining fiscal deficit**: From 6.4% in FY2023 to 5.1% in FY2025.

While these metrics suggest robustness, the inclusiveness and sustainability of this trajectory remain questionable.

#### II. Structural Imbalances Behind the Macroeconomic Glow:

##### 1. Real Wages and Cost of Living

Despite growth, **real wage growth** has been underwhelming:

- Data between 2019–2023 shows **salaries grew at just 4.4% CAGR**, while inflation, especially **core inflation**, consistently outpaced these gains.
- The **Consumer Food Price Index** remains elevated (~8.7% in May 2025), burdening the lower-income population more severely.

The result is an erosion of **household purchasing power**, especially for rural and informal sector workers. Even formal sector wage growth (especially in MSMEs) has been uneven.

## 2. Income and Wealth Inequality

- The **Gini Coefficient** for consumption inequality has risen to **0.468** (2023–24), the highest in a decade.
- Reports from ILO and other global observers point to **low-quality job creation**, underemployment, and labour force exits.
- The rise in **billionaire wealth** stands in contrast to the stagnation in household real incomes, revealing a **disproportionate concentration of economic gains**.

This divergence undermines the social contract of equitable growth and dims the promise of the “Goldilocks” phase for vast sections of the population.



### III. The Challenge of Fiscal Consolidation Amid Public Aspirations:

India's macroeconomic credibility is also rooted in its commitment to **fiscal consolidation**. However:

- Budget constraints limit the government's capacity to spend on **social protection, education, health, and infrastructure**.
- Austerity in such essential sectors could **exacerbate inequality**, deepen **intergenerational poverty**, and undercut **human capital formation**.

The paradox is stark: **low deficits come at the cost of higher taxes and lower public investment**, which ultimately reduce the very demand needed to sustain growth.

### IV. Demand Fragility and Consumption-Led Growth:

India's growth trajectory has increasingly become **K-shaped**—where affluent segments thrive while a majority face consumption stagnation:

- The **top deciles** continue to drive high-end consumption and services demand.
- **Rural demand** and **wage-sensitive sectors** like garments, construction, and transport remain weak.

This weakens the foundations of a **broad-based consumption-driven recovery**. Government subsidies, food security programmes, and tax reliefs have helped cushion the bottom tiers, but their **long-term fiscal sustainability** is uncertain.

### V. Employment and Informality in the Indian Economy:

- The **unemployment rate** remains elevated, particularly among **youth and women**.
- Most new jobs are in the **informal sector**, lacking social security, wage protections, and legal rights.
- **Labour force participation** remains low (~46% overall; much lower for women).

The decoupling of GDP growth from **productive employment generation** is a major concern. Jobless growth erodes both social equity and long-term productivity.

### VI. Rethinking the Goldilocks Paradigm: A Policy Perspective:

To truly achieve a “just right” economy, India must address the **structural weaknesses** behind the headlines:

#### 1. Wage and Social Security Reforms

- Indexing minimum wages to inflation.
- Expanding social security for informal workers via universal registration and contributory schemes.

#### 2. Investment in Human Capital

- Doubling public investment in **education and health** to improve long-term productivity and equality.

### 3. Fiscal Balance with Social Spending

- Revisiting the **FRBM Act** to allow counter-cyclical fiscal spending in key social sectors.
- Broader tax base through **progressive taxation** and better **GST rationalisation**.

### 4. Employment-Centric Industrial Policy

- Support for MSMEs, green energy sectors, and rural industries to absorb labour.
- Promote **public works programmes** during periods of distress.

#### Conclusion:

- The narrative of a Goldilocks Indian economy is compelling in macroeconomic optics but collapses when examined from the perspective of the average household. Unless **wage growth, inequality, fiscal rigidity, and jobless growth** are addressed holistically, the equilibrium touted by policymakers will remain an illusion—accessible to a few, aspirational for many, and exclusionary for most. A truly **balanced economy** must pair **macroeconomic resilience** with **microeconomic inclusivity**. That alone will make the promise of prosperity a shared one.

Source: The Hindu

## 1.9. IS GLOBAL FREE MARKET A MYTH?

#### Descriptive Question:

“Recent tariff actions by the United States expose how power, not pure economics, shapes global trade.”

Do you agree that the ‘global free market’ is a myth? In your answer, analyse the implications for India’s trade and energy security and set out a calibrated policy response that asserts economic sovereignty while building long-term competitiveness.

#### Answer:

##### 1. Background & context

- The US has announced across-the-board **tariffs of up to 50% on imports from India**, linking the move to New Delhi’s oil purchases from Russia.
- The US is India’s single largest merchandise market (roughly **one-fifth of India’s goods exports; ~US\$80 bn+** in recent years) and a critical partner for services exports, technology and investment.
- The episode illustrates a wider shift from rules-based liberalisation to **geo-economic statecraft**—where great powers regularly weaponise tariffs, subsidies, sanctions and export controls.

## 2. Why the “global free market” is a myth

### a) Major economies routinely shape markets with state power

- **Tariffs & unilateral trade actions:** US Section 232/301 tariffs; new 50% line on India; EU’s anti-dumping duties.
- **Industrial policy subsidies:** US **CHIPS & Science Act** and **Inflation Reduction Act**; EU’s Net-Zero Industry Act; China’s long-running state support to strategic sectors.
- **Export controls & sanctions:** US controls on advanced semiconductors to China; restrictions on Russian energy and finance; China’s controls on **gallium/graphite**; frequent **secondary sanctions** with extraterritorial reach.
- **Climate-linked border measures:** EU **CBAM** alters competitive conditions independent of MFN tariffs.
- **Strategic commodities cartels & state trading:** OPEC+ output coordination; rare-earth processing dominance; grain export bans during shocks.

Result: the “level playing field” is the exception, not the rule. Market access is **contingent on power, politics and bargaining**, not just price and efficiency.

## 3. India’s exposure: near-term risks

### 1) Trade shock

- Sectors vulnerable to steep, blanket tariffs: **textiles & apparel, gems & jewellery, leather, engineering goods, some chemicals and generic pharma formulations.**
- Tariffs can force supply-chain re-routing, raise landed costs and **erode MSME margins**; the macro hit may be modest, but **sectoral pain can be acute.**

### 2) Energy security

- Since 2022 India has prudently diversified into **discounted Russian crude**, cushioning inflation and the current account. Coercive linkage of trade to energy choices could **raise import bills**, complicate payments/insurance and **tighten supply options.**

### 3) Systemic uncertainty

- Firms face a world of **volatile, discretionary trade barriers**; contracts and investments are deferred when the “rules” shift overnight.

## 4. Principles for India’s response

**Assert sovereignty, avoid performative escalation, and invest in competitiveness.** A calibrated approach should combine **near-term risk management** with **long-term capability building.**

## 5. A calibrated policy toolkit

### A) Immediate & near-term measures

#### 1) Hard-headed negotiation

- Seek **product/sectoral exclusions, tariff-rate quotas** or national-security waivers; leverage complementarities (defence co-production, clean-tech supply chains, healthcare).

- Build a **coalition of affected partners** to increase bargaining weight; pursue **WTO consultations** while keeping channels political and technical—not rhetorical.
- 2) **Targeted reciprocity—last, not first**
- If compelled, deploy **narrow, proportionate counter-tariffs** on politically salient lines that **minimise consumer harm** and **protect MSME jobs**; mount a clear legal rationale to avoid self-inflicted costs.
- 3) **Buffer vulnerable exporters**
- Enhance **export credit** and insurance limits; fast-track **duty remission (RoDTEP/ROSL)** refunds; temporary **interest subvention** for at-risk sectors; time-bound **marketing support** to shift orders to alternative markets.
- 4) **Macro & logistics support**
- Keep **rupee volatility orderly**; cut **port/rail logistics frictions** (dwell times, paperwork); green channels for perishable/seasonal exporters.

## Is Global Free Market a Myth?

### Background & context

- US has announced across-the-board tariffs of up to 50% on imports from India
- Linking the move to \$80 bn+ trade



### WHY THE 'GLOBAL FREE MARKET' IS A MYTH

- Major economies routinely shape markets with state power
- Tariffs & unilateral trade actions; US Section 232 /301 tariffs; new 50% on India
- Industrial policy subsidies US CHIPS and IRA; EU Net-Zero Act; China's state support
- Export controls & sanctions U S limits to China
- Climate-linked border measures EU CBAM

*Level playing field is exception, not the rule*

### INDIA'S EXPOSURE: NEAR-TERM RISKS

- Trade shock
  - Textiles, gems & jewellery, chemicals
- Energy security
  - Risk to discounted Russian crude
- Systemic uncertainty
  - Firms face volatile trade barriers
- Climate-linked border measures EU CBAM
- Strategic commodities cartels (OPEC+ Rare earths)

### Principles for India's response

- Assert sovereignty avoid escalation
- Invest in competitiveness

### A CALIBRATED POLICY TOOLKIT

- Immediate measures
- Negotiation
- Targeted reciprocity
- Buffer exporters
- Building durable competitiveness
- Efficiency
- Skills & innovation
- Diversification



**B) Safeguarding energy security**

- 1) **Portfolio diversification**: sustain Russian purchases where lawful; **rebalance with Middle-East suppliers** (Iraq, Saudi, UAE), African and US crude; expand **term LNG**.
- 2) **Payments resilience**: strengthen **non-sanctionable settlement channels**; widen currency options; keep **insurance/shipping cover** redundant.
- 3) **Stocks & supply-side**: add to **Strategic Petroleum Reserve**, accelerate **domestic E&P**, and front-load **refinery upgrades** for crude flexibility; double down on **renewables + storage** to reduce oil intensity.

**C) Building durable competitiveness (the real answer)****1) Productivity first**

- Raise firm-level productivity via **power quality, logistics, compliance simplification, and contract enforcement**; deepen **cluster-level common facilities** (testing, tooling, design, standards).

**2) Move up value chains**

- Re-target **PLI** towards **scale + R&D + export performance**, not just assembly; insist on **standards and local tooling ecosystems**; cultivate **supplier depth** for auto, electronics, chemicals, textiles (man-made fibres), and **pharma APIs**.

**3) Innovation & skills**

- Lift **GERD** toward **1.5% of GDP** over the decade; mission-mode programmes for **process engineering, design, materials, biomanufacturing**; reform skilling to **shop-floor competencies, language-appropriate safety and quality**.

**4) Market diversification & trade diplomacy**

- Execute a **barbell strategy**:
  - Lock in **high-quality FTAs** with **EU/EFTA/UK** (rules of origin discipline, services mobility, data adequacy), and
  - Scale **Global South** markets (Africa, Latin America, ASEAN) using credit lines, standards cooperation and **project exports**.
- Prepare exporters for **CBAM**, digital trade standards, and **sustainability certifications**—compete on compliance, not plead for exemptions.

**5) Institutional capacity & data**

- Stand up a **Trade & Technology Council—India** to pre-empt shocks (early-warning on foreign trade measures, export controls); publish **firm-level advisory** and **contingency playbooks**.

**6. Counter-arguments & caveats**

- **Full-blown retaliation** risks a tit-for-tat spiral that could hurt Indian consumers and dilute investor confidence.

- Over-reliance on any single energy source or market invites **concentration risk**; diversification is prudence, not fence-sitting.
- Abandoning the **rules-based order** because others breach it would be self-defeating; India should **use** the system where it helps (WTO litigation, standards bodies) while **hedging** through bilateral instruments.

### 7. Conclusion: Strategic autonomy through competitiveness

- The latest tariff shock confirms that the **“global free market” is largely a myth**; power and policy sculpt trade every day. India’s best defence is not loud diplomacy or permanent protectionism, but **quiet strength—multiple energy options, diversified markets, and globally competitive firms**. A response that is **firm but calibrated**—defending sovereignty without theatrics and investing relentlessly in productivity, innovation and standards—will turn episodic coercion into a **catalyst for Indian competitiveness**.

Source: The Indian Express

## 1.10. THE NEW INCOME-TAX BILL 2025

### Descriptive Question:

Critically examine how the newly passed Income-Tax Bill seeks ‘simplification with certainty’—its structural changes, new concepts (like “tax year”), treatment of refunds, TDS/withholding, AMT for LLPs, remittances, donations, and digital-information powers—while correcting anomalies.

### Answer:

#### 1. Background & Rationale

- India’s direct-tax law (I-T Act, 1961) had accreted layers of sections, circulars and court rulings over 60+ years. Compliance costs, ambiguity and litigation remained high.
- The **Income-tax Bill, 2025 (I-T Bill)**, passed by both Houses, is intended to **repeal and re-enact** the law with fewer sections/chapters, clearer drafting, and alignment with today’s economy (digital footprints, pass-through structures, global mobility). It is slated to commence **1 April 2026** (AY 2026-27 onward).

#### 2. Architecture & Key Structural Changes

- **Lean law, fewer moving parts:** Sections reduced ~**589 → 536** and chapters **47 → 23**; 39 new tables & 40 formulae replace scattered explanations—meant to be **readable, compute-friendly**.
- **Plain-language redraft:** Many archaic definitions consolidated; cross-references rationalised; drafting errors in the February version corrected by Select Committee & August redraft.

### 3. Substantive Policy Moves

#### A) “Tax year” introduced

- A statutory **12-month “tax year”** (beginning 1 April) is defined to tidy up timing rules across the Act (residence tests, TDS cut-off, due dates), reducing disputes over “previous year/assessment year” mismatches.

#### B) Refunds & procedural certainty

- Earlier draft’s clause tying **refund eligibility to filing by the due date** (or before) is **dropped**. Taxpayers who file belated/updated returns can still secure due refunds—removes a harsh procedural cliff.

#### C) Withholding/TDS relief for low-tax cases

- **Nil/low TDS certificates** allowed to **assesseees with no income-tax liability**, improving cash-flows and avoiding refund cycles.
- Transfer-pricing/withholding provisions are re-cast for clarity; self-offset/loss-set-off rules aligned with Section 79-type continuity tests to prevent unintended forfeiture after reorganisations.

#### D) Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) for LLPs

- **AMT for LLPs** is **aligned** with the main Act and concessional corporate-tax regimes—so LLPs using specified incentives won’t face conflicting AMT computations; **LLPs not using concessional regimes** aren’t pulled into an expanded AMT net.

#### E) Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) & source deductions

- Clarifies that **tax collected at source (TCS)** on LRS remittances is **for information purposes**; removes overlap/ambiguity with advance-tax/withholding, aiding compliance without double collection.

#### F) Donations & non-profit sector

- Corrects anomaly for **donations routed to/through non-profit organisations**: exemption rationalised by allowing relief for **up to 50% of total donations** to eligible NPOs instead of the prior narrow focus on “5% of anonymous donations” caps—aligns with Select Committee’s recommendation and existing charitable-purpose tests.
- Tightens **linkage & reporting**: donations must be supported by specified filings; bogus cycling of funds curtailed.

#### G) Digital-information powers retained

- The Bill **retains the expanded “virtual digital space”** definition, enabling authorities—under statutory safeguards—to obtain information from **email, social-media, online investment/trading platforms, remote/cloud servers and digital application providers** during searches/surveys and regular analytics. This codifies present practice of using digital trails for risk-based assessment.

# The New Income-Tax Bill 2025



## Background & Rationale





- India's direct-tax law (I-T Act; 1961) accreted layers of sections, circulars and court rulings over 60+ years.
- The Income tax Bill, 2025, passed by both Houses, is intended to repeal and re enact the law with fewer sections/chapters, clearer drafting, and alignment with today's economy (A.Y. 2026-07 onwards)



## Architecture & Key Structural Changes

- A statutory 12-month "tax year" (beginning 1 April) is tid'y up timing rules across Act
- Plain-language redraft; Many archaic definitions rationalized cross-references; re correcting drafting errors in February version

## Substantive Policy Moves

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  <p><b>A statutory proceduced "tax year" introduced</b><br/>Beginning 1 April, tidy up timing rules across the Act</p>    |  <p><b>Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) for LLPs</b><br/>Aligns AMT for LLPs using specified incentives to concessional corporate-tax regimes</p>         |
|  <p><b>Refunds &amp; procedural certainty</b><br/>Taxpavers s who file belated/updated returns can secure due refunds</p> |  <p><b>Liberalised Remittance Scheme &amp; donations</b><br/>Clarifies tax collected at source (TCS) on LRS, removes anomaly in routed donations</p> |

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## H) International & sovereign-investor issues (via companion amendment)

- The contemporaneous **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025** adjusts Finance Act, 2025 provisions—e.g., **exemptions for dividend, interest, LTCG** on qualifying investments by specified foreign sovereign funds (e.g., **Saudi PIF** & wholly-owned subsidiaries) consistent with earlier policy extended to other SWFs/PE funds to crowd in long-term infrastructure capital.
- Clarificatory tweaks for **IFSC/financial-market** instruments and **postal/courier** duty-free thresholds were aligned to operational realities (as per the companion bill).

#### 4. What improves—and for whom?

##### Taxpayers & firms

- **Compliance clarity** through fewer sections and tables; **refunds** no longer hostage to strict timeliness; **nil-TDS** eases cash strain; **AMT alignment** gives LLPs predictability; **LRS TCS** clarified.

##### Charities & donors

- **Donations rule** becomes usable for genuine NPOs while tightening audit trails; less litigation over “anonymous” categorisation.

##### Administration

- Codified access to **digital trails** supports **data-led, faceless**, risk-based scrutiny; the simplified structure should reduce interpretational disputes and free capacity for high-risk cases.

##### Capital & investment

- **Sovereign-investor reliefs**, when transparently structured, can lower cost of capital for long-gestation sectors while preserving tax base via anti-abuse conditions (beneficial ownership, commercial substance, investment horizon).

#### 5. Caveats & Risks

- 1) **Due-process guardrails:** Broader “virtual digital space” access must be **proportionate & auditable**—clear SOPs, approval layers, and post-action disclosure to avoid fishing expeditions.
- 2) **Donation misuse:** A higher 50% envelope needs **tight registration, e-filing of donation statements, PAN/Aadhaar verification, and third-party confirmation** to prevent round-tripping.
- 3) **AMT/LLP interplay:** Transitional rules should ring-fence legacy MAT/AMT credits and prevent double incidence where state-level incentives exist.
- 4) **System readiness:** CPC/ITD utilities, schema and **API updates** (TDS, AIS, Form 26AS successor) must reflect the new law; otherwise simplification on paper won’t translate on ground.
- 5) **Litigation backlog:** A new Act does not erase old disputes; **grandfathering/continuity provisions** and a **fast-track dispute resolution** window are essential.
- 6) **Sovereign-fund exemptions:** Must be **targeted, sunset-bound and conditional** (sector focus, minimum hold, anti-abuse) to avoid base erosion and perceptions of unequal treatment.

## 6. Transition Roadmap

- **Rules & Notifications:** Release draft rules early (computational tables, TDS, depreciation, GAAR/SAAR linkages) for public comments.
- **Grandfathering:** Clear schedules for ongoing assessments, carry-forward losses, credits, and incentives availed under 1961 law.
- **Tech build-out:** Upgrade **compliance utilities** (ITR forms, TDS/TCS returns), pre-filled data, and **AIS 2.0** to mirror new constructs (tax year, donation schedules, LLP AMT).
- **Capacity building:** Training for tax officers, taxpayers and intermediaries; sector-specific FAQs; helplines.
- **Accountability:** Publish **service-level standards** (refund timelines, rectification) and an **annual simplification scorecard** (time to file, disputes per 1,000 returns, refund cycle time).
- **NPO Registry 2.0:** Single national registry with dynamic risk flags, e-scrutiny trails and public dashboards on compliance.

## 7. Conclusion:

- The Income-tax Bill, 2025 is a serious attempt to **modernise India's direct-tax code**—fewer sections, cleaner drafting, pragmatic fixes on refunds/TDS/AMT/LRS, a usable donations framework, and digital-age information rules. If implemented with **due-process safeguards, technology readiness and transparent transition**, it can reduce compliance friction, improve certainty and widen the base—delivering the promised triad of **simplicity, stability and trust**.

*Source: The Indian Express*

### 1.11. 'ATMANIRBHARTA' AND 'VOCAL FOR LOCAL'

#### Descriptive Question:

'Atmanirbhar' is not autarky; it is capability. In the context of the Viksit Bharat 2047 ambition, critically analyse India's self-reliance drive—its rationale, progress (energy, manufacturing, defence, digital), and pitfalls. Propose a time-bound, evidence-based roadmap that makes 'Vocal for Local' globally competitive while staying integrated with open trade.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Why self-reliance now? Capability, not isolation

- India's pursuit of **Atmanirbhar** is a resilience strategy—reducing single-point vulnerabilities in energy, technology and defence—while remaining plugged into global value chains. The official Viksit Bharat vision frames 2047 goals around high productivity

manufacturing, innovation, quality jobs and sustained 8–9% growth; it explicitly ties self-reliance to competitiveness, not protectionism.

- **Strategic triggers:** supply-chain shocks (pandemic, geopolitics), technology chokepoints (semiconductors, critical minerals), and energy import risks (India still imports ~85% of crude).

## 2. Scorecard: where India stands

### a) Manufacturing & trade

- **PLI (Production-Linked Incentive)** in 14 sectors has catalysed electronics, particularly smartphones; independent analyses point to gains in scale, exports and ecosystem deepening, though with uneven spillovers across sectors.
- The **semiconductor** push combines a \$10-billion incentive with design, packaging and fab projects—India aims to move from assembly to core silicon over the decade.

### b) Defence industrial base

- Defence exports have risen **>5× in five years**, touching **₹21,083 crore (\$2.56 bn)** in **2023-24**, demonstrating early traction in indigenisation (ships, avionics, spares).

### c) Energy security & the green transition

- Installed **renewable energy** has crossed **~209 GW**; India targets **500 GW of non-fossil power by 2030**—a twin objective of affordability and import substitution.
- The **National Green Hydrogen Mission** (5 MMT by 2030) is designed to localise electrolyser manufacturing and cut fossil imports in hard-to-abate sectors.

### d) Digital public infrastructure (DPI) as a competitiveness lever

- **Aadhaar-UPI-Account Aggregator-ONDC** are lowering transaction and discovery costs for firms and consumers—India now executes **10–13 billion UPI transactions/month**, with NPCI recording **~1,380 crore** transactions in Oct-2024 alone.
- **ONDC** has scaled beyond **7 lakh** sellers/service providers, opening market access to small firms.
- Government procurement via **GeM** has transformed demand for MSMEs; platform GMV has crossed **₹5.4 lakh crore**.

**Bottom line:** The capability stack is emerging—electronics, defence, clean energy, and DPI-enabled market access—but depth, diffusion and quality remain uneven.

# ATMANIRBHARTA & 'VOCAL FOR LOCAL'

## WHY SELF-RELIANCE?

Atmanirbharta is focusing on resilience strategy – reducing import dependence while remaining plugged into global value chains

### Strategic triggers

- Supply shocks: reducing global competitiveness → on tariffs
- Higher tariffs on inputs. subsidies
- Bureaucratic hurdles on firms

### Strategic triggers:

- Supply shocks in semiconductor chips
- Energy - 85% crude oil still imported)

## SCORECARD TO DATE

### Manufacturing

- Installed renewable capacity 209 GW
- Target of 500 GW by 2030



### Energy

- Installed renewable capacity aiding firms



### Digital

- Digital public infrastructure aiding firms



## PITFALLS THAT MUST BE AVOIDED

- Autarky risks India's global competitiveness
- Higher tariffs on inputs
- Subsidies for inefficiency
- Bureaucratic hurdles on firms and quality standards

## ROADMAP TO 'LOCAL FOR GLOBAL'

- Sunset reviews of schemes
- Accountability focused reforms

## ROADMAP TO 'LOCAL FOR GLOBAL'

### Strategy

- Manufacturing focus and benchmark cost, quality, & stand

### Standards

- Performance-based PLI & to support exports

### Energy

- Renewable resources like green hydrogen critical minerals

### Governance

- Sunset reviews of schemes
- Accountability focused reforms

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### 3. Key gaps & risks

- Tariff-led import substitution** can raise input costs, hurting export competitiveness if not time-bound and calibrated.
- R&D intensity** (~0.65% of GDP) and patenting by firms are still low; supply-side incentives without demand for quality risk “scale without sophistication.”
- Skills & design capacity**: shortages in mid-level technicians, tool-makers, and chip talent constrain value-addition.
- State-level execution**: logistics bottlenecks, land titling, environmental clearances and contract enforcement vary widely.
- Energy & minerals dependence**: despite renewables, crude remains ~85% import-dependent; critical minerals (lithium, nickel, cobalt, rare earths) are largely overseas.
- PLI fiscal efficiency**: spillovers and domestic content vary; some sectors risk assembly dependence without deeper supplier development.

#### 4. A practicable, time-bound blueprint (2025–2035)

##### A. Strategy: “Local to Global”

- Treat self-reliance as **capability building**: quality, cost, delivery, innovation—benchmarked to export markets; avoid autarky.
- Publish a **Viksit Bharat Competitiveness Dashboard** tracking: manufacturing share (→ 25% by 2030), unit-labour cost, logistics cost (→ 7–8% of GDP), patenting, FTAs utilisation, export sophistication.

##### B. Laws & institutions

- **Standards & quality**: Fast-track BIS/sectoral standards harmonised with ISO/IEC; link public procurement to “**Zero Defect, Zero Effect**” audits; establish a **National Conformity Assessment Grid** for MSMEs.
- **Smart trade policy**: Rationalise tariffs on intermediates; lock in market access through phased FTAs where rules-of-origin curb mere relabelling; embed mutual recognition of standards/testing.
- **IP & competition**: A sovereign **Patent/Standards Development Fund** for MSME consortia; update competition enforcement to curb anti-competitive platform practices while promoting open protocols (ONDC, OCEN).
- **State capacity**: Tie part of central capex transfers to reform milestones—time-bound single-window, contract enforcement dashboards, e-courts, and green clearances.

##### C. Finance & industrial policy

- **PLI 2.0** → “**Performance-for-Productivity**”: convert a slice of incentives into **tapering, outcome-based** credits (exports, value-addition, energy efficiency, domestic tooling).
- **Development Finance** for manufacturing & climate (via NaBFID & green windows): patient capital for storage, electrolysers, power electronics, precision machining, and semicon back-end.
- **Deep supplier development**: cluster-level vendor upgrade programmes (toolrooms, metrology labs, design centres) co-funded by OEMs and states; link to GeM and ONDC catalogues.

##### D. Technology & skills

- Raise **public R&D** toward **1% of GDP by 2030** with mission clusters (power electronics, materials, med-tech, agri-biotech).
- **Apprenticeship tax credit** + outcome payments to firms for certified skilling; national network of **Applied Engineering Colleges** aligned to local clusters.

- Semiconductors: focus first on **packaging/compound semis** and **design IP**, with one leading-edge fab only when ecosystem risks are reduced.

#### E. Energy & resources

- **Scale firm-dispatchable renewables**: BESS and pumped hydro alongside the 500 GW path; expand **strategic petroleum reserves** and forward hedging to cushion crude shocks.
- Operationalise **Green Hydrogen** hubs aligned to steel, fertiliser and shipping corridors; target domestic electrolyser cost curves via scale and local components.
- **Critical minerals strategy**: overseas offtake agreements + domestic exploration/processing with strict ESG guardrails.

#### F. Logistics & urban manufacturing

- Bring **logistics cost** down with **Gati Shakti** corridors, DFCs, coastal shipping incentives, warehouse standards, and city-level freight plans; universal **plug-and-play** industrial parks with reliable power/water.

#### G. Markets & demand

- Use **GeM** and large public procurement as a **quality-demand** anchor for MSMEs; expand **ONDC** adoption in B2B for tooling and industrial inputs; build **Brand India Quality** campaigns tied to standards and after-sales service.

#### H. Governance & accountability

- Sunset reviews for every scheme (PLI, import duties) every **3 years**; independent evaluations published.
- District-level **ODOP/cluster PMUs** to solve last-mile problems (testing, packaging, export paperwork) and to connect producers to finance and e-commerce rails.

#### 5. Conclusion:

- India's self-reliance project will succeed only if it **raises capabilities faster than it raises barriers**. The pathway to **Viksit Bharat** is an open, competitive self-reliance: world-class standards, deep supplier ecosystems, clean and secure energy, and digital rails that democratise market access. Done right, **'Vocal for Local' becomes 'Local for Global'**—resilient at home and respected abroad.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.12. SHOULD INDIA MOVE TOWARDS REGULATED TOKENISATION?

### Descriptive Question:

India views crypto mainly as a risk to monetary stability, while global practice is moving toward regulated tokenisation and fiat-backed stablecoins. Critically assess India's stance in light of digital payments and remittance needs, and propose a calibrated blueprint for piloting rupee-backed stablecoins alongside the e-₹ (CBDC).

### Answer:

#### 1. Context & why this matters now

- India already runs one of the world's most advanced retail payment stacks (UPI, AEPS, FASTag). But **cross-border** remains costly/slow. India is the world's largest remittance corridor ( $\approx$  \$120–125 bn/yr in recent years). Cheaper programmable rails for small-value, 24×7 transfers can materially raise household welfare.
- **Crypto** has evolved beyond speculative coins. The fastest-growing pieces are **tokenised real-world assets** and **fiat-backed stablecoins** used as settlement chips in digital markets. Examples include BlackRock's tokenised U.S. Treasury fund (BUIDL) and major banks' tokenisation pilots.
- India's stance: the **RBI** warns that privately issued crypto could threaten monetary sovereignty and financial stability; the **Finance Act, 2022** imposed **30% tax** on gains and **1% TDS** on crypto transfers; the **FIU-IND** now requires exchanges to register and comply with AML norms and has penalised non-compliant offshore platforms. The **Supreme Court (2020)** struck down RBI's earlier bank-access ban as disproportionate.
- Parallely, India is piloting **e-₹ (CBDC)** in wholesale and retail segments, while UPI has begun **cross-border linkages** (e.g., Singapore's PayNow). But CBDC scale-up and ubiquitous CB linkages will take time.

**Bottom line:** The choice is **not** "crypto or stability," but whether India shapes compliant digital-asset rails that **strengthen** the rupee and its payment reach.

#### 2. What leading jurisdictions are doing

- **EU – MiCA** (in force 2024–25): creates licensing and conduct rules for crypto-asset service providers; sets **reserve, redemption-at-par, and disclosure** norms for **e-money tokens (EMTs)/asset-referenced tokens (ARTs)**; bans interest on EMTs to limit bank-like risk.
- **Singapore – MAS Stablecoin Framework (2023)**: recognition of **SCS** (single-currency stablecoins) pegged to SGD/G10, with **100% high-quality reserves, daily reconciliation, T+5 redemption at par**, capital and audit requirements, and clear misrepresentation penalties.

- **UK (2024–25):** legislative pathway to bring **fiat-backed stablecoins** into payments under the **Payment Services/EMoney** perimeter, with FCA/BoE oversight and insolvency-remote safeguarding.
- **FATF:** applies the **Travel Rule** to Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs) for originator/beneficiary data sharing across borders—now a baseline AML expectation.

**Lesson:** mature regulators are **not endorsing “crypto” wholesale**; they are **licensing specific instruments** (fiat-backed stablecoins, tokenised funds) within existing money/markets law plus robust AML.

### 3. India’s current approach—gains and gaps

#### Gains

- Clear **AML perimeter:** FIU-IND registration and enforcement against non-compliant offshore exchanges.
- **CBDC pilots** under RBI and **UPI international** tie-ups keep India at the frontier of sovereign payments.

#### Gaps / unintended costs

- **Tax design** (30% flat, 1% TDS on every transfer) disincentivises compliant activity in India and **pushes liquidity offshore**, hurting visibility and AML effectiveness.
- **Regulatory vacuum** for **rupee-stablecoins/tokenised assets:** neither permitted nor explicitly prohibited—so innovation migrates.
- **Remittances:** UPI linkages are promising but **coverage is thin**; many corridors still face high fees/slow settlement.

### 4. Should India pilot rupee-backed stablecoins (₹-SCS)? — The case for and against

#### Potential benefits

- 1) **Cheaper cross-border retail:** Programmable, 24×7 settlement can compress fees for small-ticket remittances and MSME trade, while preserving **rupee unit-of-account**. (MiCA/MAS designs show it can be done safely.)
- 2) **Capital-market modernisation:** On-chain **tokenised G-secs/municipal bonds** and **RBI-regulated ₹-stablecoins** together can shorten settlement cycles and broaden retail access (global tokenisation pilots already show traction).
- 3) **Monetary sovereignty vs. dollar-stablecoins:** A credible **₹-SCS** gives domestic platforms a rupee alternative to USDT/USDC, **reducing dollarisation risk** within India-facing digital markets (a key RBI concern).

#### Risks / counter-arguments

- **Run risk** and maturity mismatch if reserves are risky/illiquid;
- **Substitution risk** (private money displacing bank deposits/CBDC);

- **AML/cyber/consumer protection** challenges;
- **Regulatory fragmentation** (RBI/SEBI/FIU/FEMA overlaps).

**Mitigation:** Design like MAS/EU: **100% segregated, high-quality reserves; par redemption; audits; recovery & wind-down plans; Travel-Rule-compliant on-/off-ramps;** and explicit “payments-only” use (no yield).

## 5. A calibrated blueprint for India

### A. Legal & regulatory perimeter

- 1) **Create an RBI-authorized class: “INR Electronic Money Token (INR-EMT)”**—a payments instrument under the **PSS Act & RBI Act**, linked to **FEMA** for cross-border.
- 2) **Issuer eligibility:** banks and regulated NBFCs/PIs; or a narrow-banking license for non-banks with ring-fenced balance sheet.
- 3) **Prudential guardrails (MAS-style):** 100% **HQLA** reserves (T-bills, overnight repos, cash with RBI), asset-liability matching, daily reconciliation, **T+0/T+1 redemption at par**, independent trusteeship/custody, monthly attestation & annual audits; clear **insolvency-remote** safeguarding.
- 4) **Use-case ring-fencing:** payments & settlement only (no interest, leverage, or algorithmic pegs), akin to **MiCA EMT**.
- 5) **CBDC interoperability:** mandate **e-₹ ↔ INR-EMT** conversion via APIs; both must be ledger-agnostic and UPI-addressable (VPA mapping).

### B. AML/KYC & market integrity

- 1) **Full FIU-IND compliance** and **FATF Travel Rule** for VASPs; address screening, sanctions, and on-chain analytics; require **geofencing & wallet-whitelisting** for cross-border corridors.
- 2) **Licensing of service providers** (exchanges, custodians) with capital, cyber, incident-reporting and dispute-resolution norms, modelled on **MiCA**.

### C. Tax & accounting

- 1) **Rationalise crypto VDA taxes for regulated INR-EMT:**
  - Exempt **par-redemption** and **payment transfers** from capital-gains;
  - Replace **1% TDS** with **0.01%** reporting TDS (or invoice-level reporting) for regulated venues;
  - Permit **loss set-off within VDA** for non-payments tokens to discourage offshore leakage.

#### D. Data, consumer & operational safeguards

- 1) **Data minimisation & portability**, explicit consent, and grievance redress akin to RBI's **DIGITA** norms; mandatory **RBI Ombudsman** access; public **transparency dashboards** for reserves and mint/burn flows.
- 2) **Cyber resilience**: multi-sig/ MPC custody, hardware security modules, circuit-breakers for de-pegs, and tested **wind-down plans** supervised by RBI/BoE-style resolution playbooks.

#### E. Phased implementation (24 months)

- **Phase-1 (sandbox, 6–9 months)**: INR-EMT pilots in **GIFT-IFSC** and two domestic corridors: (i) **corridor remittances** (e.g., Singapore/PayNow and UAE), settling into beneficiary UPI accounts; (ii) **tokenised G-sec/SDL primary auctions** for qualified investors.
- **Phase-2**: selective retail roll-out via UPI VPAs; municipal-bond tokenisation (SEBI + states); MSME export invoicing  $\leq \$10k$  using FEMA-compliant accounts.
- **Phase-3**: broaden corridors; enable programmable escrow for cross-border services and **government disbursement pilots** where programmability helps (with strict opt-in and privacy).

#### 6. How this complements, not competes with, the e-₹

- **CBDC is state money** with monetary-policy levers and settlement finality; **INR-EMT is private e-money** under RBI tolerance that expands distribution and innovation. Interoperability + UPI addressing makes them **mutually reinforcing**: CBDC for **wholesale/government & high-trust retail**, INR-EMT for **market-led retail** and cross-border niches.

#### 7. Safeguarding sovereignty

- India's principal concern is **dollarisation** via offshore stablecoins. The answer is **not** blanket prohibition (which drives usage underground) but a **credible rupee instrument** with clear prudential rules, strong AML, and domestic liquidity venues—exactly how **EU, UK, Singapore** are proceeding.

#### Conclusion:

- India should **shift from ambiguity to calibrated permissioning**: keep speculative tokens at arm's length, but **license INR-backed stablecoins** and **tokenised assets** under RBI/SEBI perimeters, integrate them with **UPI & e-₹**, and fix tax/AML frictions. Done this way, "crypto" becomes **public-purpose plumbing**—reducing remittance costs, modernising capital markets, and **strengthening the rupee's digital relevance**—while the state retains the last word on prudential, AML and monetary stability.

**Source: Business Line**

### 1.13. FROM FOOD SECURITY TO PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

#### Descriptive Question:

**'India has achieved food security, yet its farm economy remains subsidy-heavy, investment-light and ecologically stressed.'**

**Taking cues from recent debates, critically examine why India's 'next leap' must shift resources from input subsidies to agri-R&D and efficient value chains, with environmental sustainability at the core.**

#### Answer:

##### 1) The context: from food security to prosperity and sustainability

- In seven decades India moved from chronic shortages to a **food-secure nation** (record foodgrain harvests, world's largest milk producer, rapidly rising fisheries and horticulture).
- Yet the farm economy now faces a **triple challenge**:
  - 1) **Subsidy dominance** (food, fertiliser, power, irrigation, credit interest subventions) crowds out capital formation and R&D.
  - 2) **Low value realisation** due to thin processing, fragmented supply chains, high post-harvest losses, and weak quality/traceability systems.
  - 3) **Environmental stress**—groundwater depletion in the Indo-Gangetic belt, soil nutrient imbalance, crop-residue burning, methane from flooded paddy/livestock, and frequent climate shocks that disproportionately hit smallholders.

##### 2. Diagnostic: what holds back the "next leap"

###### a) Subsidy–investment imbalance

- Large input and consumer subsidies deliver short-term relief but yield **diminishing returns** and leakages; studies repeatedly estimate **20–25% outreach/efficiency losses**.
- Public **agri-R&D intensity remains below 1% of Agri-GVA**, far lower than successful peers; extension systems are thin, and private innovation faces regulatory unpredictability.

###### b) Price and procurement distortions

- **MSP-linked open-ended procurement** concentrated in rice/wheat and in a few states locks water-guzzling patterns, strains soils and budgets, depresses diversification into pulses, oilseeds, maize for feed, and nutri-cereals.
- Weak adoption of the **Model APLM/APMC reforms**, incomplete assaying/ warehousing, and restricted derivatives blunt price discovery and risk management.

### c) Value-chain and logistics gaps

- Only a small share of produce is **scientifically stored, graded, processed or exported with full SPS/traceability**; cold-chain, reefer logistics, pack-houses and testing labs are inadequate; FPOs struggle with capital and managerial depth.

### d) Inclusion and nutrition deficits

- Despite food security, **stunting/anaemia** persist; diets remain cereal-heavy; women and tenant farmers often lack secure land titles and formal credit; shock protection for smallholders is patchy.

### 3. Principle for reform: Repurpose subsidies into productivity, resilience and incomes

A fiscally neutral, multi-year shift that protects vulnerable farmers while moving public money from **consuming** to **creating** capital.



#### 4. The reform blueprint

##### A. Pricing, procurement and subsidy rationalisation (Years 1–3)

- 1) **Fertiliser:** Move to **nutrient-based, product-agnostic DBT** including urea; align relative prices with soil-test based recommendations; scale nano-/coated fertilisers with agronomic proof; link to **Soil Health Card 2.0** digital advisories.
- 2) **Power & water:** Meter agriculture feeders; **DBT for electricity** to farmers (not to DISCOMs) and time-of-day tariffs; accelerate **micro-irrigation** with performance grants; promote **PM-KUSUM** solar pumps with **buy-back to grid** to avoid wasteful pumping.
- 3) **Food subsidy / PDS:** Preserve ONORC portability but pilot **cash-choice** in urban districts; diversify procurement geographically and **product-wise** (pulses, oilseeds, millets), guided by basin water stress and nutrition goals.
- 4) **Income support:** Maintain/retarget **PM-KISAN** as a transition cushion where input subsidies are pared back.

##### B. Agri-R&D, innovation and extension (Years 1–5)

- 1) Raise public **agri-R&D** to **1% of Agri-GVA by 2030**, crowding-in private research via stable rules for **gene-editing (SDN-1/2)**, biofortified crops, climate-resilient varieties and animal health.
- 2) **Extension 2.0:** Digitally enabled, outcome-paid advisory combining KVKs, startups and FPOs; open data layers (weather, soil, market) with **consent-based data governance**.
- 3) **Risk management:** PMFBY 2.0 using remote sensing and area-yield hybrids; granular, affordable cover for extreme events; warehouse-receipt finance with guarantee funds.

##### C. Building efficient, remunerative value chains (Years 1–6)

- 1) **Post-harvest infrastructure:** Pack-houses, ripening rooms, reefer fleets, irradiation and testing labs through blended finance; enlarge negotiable warehouse receipts and e-NWRs.
- 2) **FPO 2.0:** Professional CEOs, patient equity, credit guarantee, and market development grants; enable **cluster-based processing** (dairy, meat, fish, fruits & vegetables, spices).
- 3) **Market architecture:** e-NAM 2.0 with universal e-assaying, real-time logistics, and settlement; enable inter-state competition among mandis; legal comfort for **contract farming** with model templates and quick dispute resolution.
- 4) **Exports:** Align FSSAI and plant/animal-health protocols with major markets; invest in **traceability & SPS management**; targeted PLIs for value-added agri-foods, not raw shipments.

**D. Green transitions and climate resilience (Years 1–10)**

- 1) **Crop shift incentives** in over-exploited aquifers—from paddy/sugarcane to millets, pulses, oilseeds and feed maize—through **price-deficiency payments** and time-bound procurement commitments.
- 2) **Rice methane**: Alternate wetting & drying (AWD), direct-seeded rice (DSR), short-duration varieties; paddy straw **ex-situ** solutions (compressed biogas/board) plus **in-situ** machinery with service models.
- 3) **Landscape programmes**: Aquifer recharge, agro-forestry, silvo-pastoral systems; climate-smart livestock nutrition and manure management.
- 4) **Carbon/eco-credit pilots** for smallholders with robust MRV and farmer-first revenue sharing.

**E. Nutrition and human capital**

- Re-orient **PM-Poshan/ICDS** towards diverse, protein-rich menus (pulses, eggs, milk, millets); converge with **Jal Jeevan** and **ODF-Plus** for infection control; women's land/asset rights to lift productivity and nutrition outcomes.

**5. Financing and governance**

- Create a **Green & Inclusive Agriculture Compact**: reallocate **0.5–1% of GDP** over five years from low-impact subsidies to R&D, extension and post-harvest infrastructure; leverage NABARD/NIIF, climate funds and state compacts.
- **Mission mode** with sunset clauses: measurable KPIs (R&D intensity, micro-irrigation hectares, processing share, cold-chain tonnage, groundwater levels, farm realisations, child nutrition). Independent evaluation and social audits.

**6. Expected outcomes**

- **Higher factor productivity**, resilient yields and **better farm terms of trade**;
- **Cleaner water and soils**, reduced agri-GHGs;
- **Value-added jobs** in rural processing/logistics;
- **Improved nutrition** and consumer welfare;
- A credible pathway to **Viksit Bharat 2047** where agriculture is competitive, climate-smart and income-secure.

**In sum**, India's next leap demands **repurposing subsidies into science, skills and supply chains**, with ecological limits as hard constraints. That pivot—executed with protection for the vulnerable and clear timelines—can transform Indian agriculture from a guarantor of calories to a generator of **prosperity, nutrition and green growth**.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 1.14. INDIA'S POWERFUL LEVER OF GROWTH – SERVICES TRADE!

#### Descriptive Question:

**Global goods protectionism is surging, yet services already dominate world output and trade. Why does services trade remain India's most powerful lever for growth and external resilience?**

#### Answer:

##### 1. Context & significance

- Services account for **~70% of global GDP** and their share in global trade has risen steadily (WTO's commercial services including Mode-3 establishment).
- India is structurally services-led. In **2023-24, services exports ≈ \$340 bn**, forming **~44%** of India's total exports. IT/ITeS remains a little over half, but **engineering, financial, legal, consulting, design, medical, and education services** are fast-growing.
- The **US is India's largest market** for services; the UK, EU, UAE, Singapore, Australia and Japan are other anchors. Services receipts underpin **current-account stability**, rupee resilience, urban employment and high-skill wages.

##### 2. Why services trade is India's "queen" on the board

- **Tariffs don't bite:** Unlike goods, services aren't directly hit by tariff wars; competitiveness hinges on capabilities, standards and access.
- **Scales with digital rails:** DPI (UPI, Aadhaar e-KYC, DigiLocker, OCEN) and deep cloud adoption let Indian firms export **remote services (Mode-1)** at scale.
- **Talent arbitrage → knowledge arbitrage:** India's STEM pool, English fluency, and time-zone advantage support **24×7 global delivery** and higher-value knowledge work (product engineering, cybersecurity, AI Ops, design).
- **Demand tailwinds:** Ageing West, green transition, re-shoring of manufacturing, and healthcare backlogs create **chronic shortages** in many services—from software to clinical, education and skilled trades—opening room for Mode-4 mobility and Mode-3 subsidiaries.

##### 3. Risk map—what can go wrong

- **People-movement frictions (Mode-4):** visa quotas (e.g., H-1B tightening), wage floors, social-security taxes without portability, and political cycles in the US/EU/Australia.
- **Non-tariff barriers:** licensing, **non-recognition of professional qualifications**, data localisation/adequacy rules, cross-border tax on digital supplies, procurement preferences.
- **Technology shocks:** **AI/automation** compressing low-complexity tasks; **client insourcing via GCCs**, and "sovereign-cloud" requirements.

- **Concentration risk:** Heavy reliance on the US market and on IT/ITeS; sudden downturns (macro, geopolitics) can hit employment.
- **Compliance/Trust:** Cyber incidents, weak data governance, and AML/KYC lapses could trigger broad restrictions.

## India's Powerful Lever of Growth—Services Trade



Context and Significance

- Services account for ~70% of global GDP
- India's services exports: ≈\$340 bn in 2023-24, forming ~44% of total exports
- The US is India's largest market, followed by UK, EU, UAE, Singapore, Australia and Japan

Why Services Trade Remains India's 'Queen' on the Board

- Tariffs don't apply: Competitiveness is driven by capabilities and access
- Scales with digital rails: DPI and cloud adoption enable remote delivery
- Talent arbitrage → knowledge arbitrage: STEM talent, English skills, and time-zone advantage
- Demand tailwinds: Ageing West, green transition, healthcare backlogs

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#### 4. Opportunity map—where India can surge

- **Mode-1 remote exports:** product & platform engineering, AI/ML services, cybersecurity, cloud FinOps, testing/DevSecOps, animation/VFX, design, legal process, accounting, remote education and **tele-health**.
- **Mode-2 travel for services:** health tourism, higher education, conferences, medical value travel.
- **Mode-3 (commercial presence):** Indian firms setting up on-shore entities to meet “on-soil” rules and capture consulting/value-added segments.
- **Mode-4 mobility corridors for nurses, teachers, allied health, technicians, green-skills** alongside traditional IT talent.
- **DPI as export:** Payments, identity and public-stack consulting for governments and banks; **GIFT City** for global financial/intermediated services.

#### 5. Policy blueprint—ten big moves

##### A) Market access & diplomacy

- 1) **Service-first FTAs:** Put services chapters at the core—commitments in Modes 1–4, **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)** for qualifications, **Data-flows/e-commerce chapters**, and **Social-Security Totalisation** (US, UK, EU, Australia, GCC).

- 2) **Mobility corridors** for priority occupations (healthcare, education, green construction, maritime, aviation technicians) with standardized skills passports and fast-track visas.
- 3) **Services Facilitation Agreement** (coalition at WTO/plurilaterals) on transparency of licensing, time-bound approvals and recognition of conformity assessments.

#### B) Competitiveness & skills

- 1) **National Services Competitiveness Mission**: map global demand; outcome-funded skilling in AI, cybersecurity, cloud, design, med-tech, compliance; **apprenticeship tax credits** for export-oriented firms; large-scale **English + digital + soft-skills** programmes for Tier-2/3 cities and women returners.
- 2) **Professional MRAs & domestic reform**: liberalise and modernise **legal, accounting, education and medical-services** regulation; national credit/credential framework aligned with international standards.
- 3) **AI-transition plan**: incentives for firms to **move up the value chain** (IP creation, products, platforms); shared **GPU & secure cloud commons**; public datasets for privacy-preserving AI.

#### C) Trust, data & compliance

- 1) Implement **GDPR-class privacy** and security standards; sectoral **data-adequacy bridges**; national **cyber liability insurance** and a CERT-Services desk; expand KYC/KYB utilities to cut onboarding friction for global clients.
- 2) **Tele-health/EdTech cross-border rules**: clinical governance, e-prescription, malpractice cover, and billing standards to unlock health and education exports.

#### D) Finance & institutions

- 1) **Export finance for services**: scale **SEIS-like** incentives towards outcomes (new markets, higher-value services), ECGC-style risk covers for contracts, and **GIFT City** reform for global captive centres (simpler staffing, IP protection, dollar billing).
- 2) **City-level hubs**: Services Export Promotion Councils tied to **skills universities**, incubators and testbeds; diaspora-led business development; a **Services Trade Analytics Platform** for real-time market intelligence.

### 6. Firm-level strategy (complementary)

- **Barbell model**: protect volumes in managed services while investing in **consulting, product engineering, and vertical platforms**.
- **Mix Modes 1–3**: Remote delivery from India plus selective on-shore presence to satisfy localisation.
- **Quality & IP**: ISO/IEC security, SOC2, clinical/education accreditations; build patents and reusable IP blocks.

- **Workforce transition:** continuous reskilling; internal talent marketplaces; redeployment paths from automatable roles to AI-assisted high-touch services.

### 7. Safeguarding jobs & equity

- **Just transition** funds for reskilling displaced workers; portable benefits (health, pension) for gig/contract professionals; support for **women's participation** (flex work, safety, care services).
- Expand **Mode-2** (inbound patients/students/tourists) to distribute gains across states.

### 8. What success looks like (measurables)

- **\$450–500 bn services exports by 2027–28**, with non-IT services  $\geq$  40% share.
- 10–12 priority MRAs and 4–5 mobility corridors operational.
- At least **25%** of large firms earning revenues from products/IP/platforms.
- Doubling of female share in export-oriented professional services.
- Net positive current-account contribution, even with goods-trade volatility.

#### Conclusion:

- In a world roiled by tariff wars, services remain the most resilient and scalable channel for India's prosperity. By hard-wiring **market access, skills, trust and finance**—and by moving purposefully up the value chain—India can keep services as the **"queen" of its trade chessboard**, protecting jobs today while building higher-value exports for tomorrow.

Source: Business Line

## 1.15. AFFECTION ECONOMY - NETWORKS OF CARE

#### Descriptive Question:

'The 21st century global order is witnessing the emergence of an 'affection economy' where networks of care, belonging, and community-building are becoming the new determinants of prosperity, influence, and global power.'

Critically examine this idea in the context of changing forms of capital, international relations, and domestic governance. Illustrate with examples.

#### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- Every epoch in world history has been defined by a dominant "currency" of power. In the past, this was **land** (agrarian societies), **minerals and resources** (industrial revolutions and colonialism), **demographics and innovation** (20th century geopolitics), and more recently, the **attention economy** powered by big data and digital platforms. In the 21st century, however, scholars argue that a new paradigm is emerging — the **affection economy**, where trust, belonging, care, and networks of solidarity shape success, both nationally and

globally. This form of “affection capital” is not sentimental but deeply political and economic, influencing everything from corporate strategies to international diplomacy.

**The Evolution of Capital**

- 1) **Agrarian and Resource Capital:** Ancient empires expanded by acquiring fertile land and mineral wealth, which ensured economic sustenance.
- 2) **Industrial and Financial Capital:** Colonial powers and later industrial giants thrived on extracting resources and controlling capital markets.
- 3) **Information and Attention Capital:** The digital age shifted power towards platforms like Google, Amazon, and Facebook, where human attention became the most prized resource.
- 4) **Affection Capital:** Today, in an atomised and polarised world, the ability to generate **community, care, and solidarity** is emerging as the differentiator of national and institutional success.

**The Affection Economy**  
 The future belongs to those who best understand that currency for prosperity, influence and well-being at this time is care and belonging.

<p><b>AGRARIAN &amp; RESOURCE</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>INDUSTRIAL &amp; FINANCIAL</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>AFFECTION</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Corporates &amp; Nations</b></p>	<p><b>Corporates &amp; Nations</b></p> <p>RELIANCE and APPLE’s brand loyalty</p> <p>UAE and NZ as communities of trust</p> <p>COVID-19 lesson in networks of care</p> <hr/> <p><b>Why Affection Matters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOCIAL COHESION</li> <li>• SOFT POWER &amp; DIPLOMACY</li> <li>• CORPORATE SUCCESS</li> <li>• RESILIENCE IN CRISES</li> </ul> <hr/> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Concerns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUPERFICIAL BELONGING</li> <li>• EXCLUSIONARY COMMUNITIES</li> <li>• INDIVIDUALISATION VS COMMUNITY</li> <li>• GEOPOLITICAL RISKS</li> </ul> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>India’s Potential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RELIGIOUS &amp; CULTURAL CAPITAL</li> <li>DIASPORA DIPLOMACY</li> <li>CORPORATE NARRATIVES</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Concerns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUPERFICIAL BELONGING</li> <li>• EXCLUSIONARY COMMUNITIES</li> <li>• INDIVIDUALISATION VS COMMUNITY</li> <li>• GEOPOLITICAL RISKS</li> </ul>	<p><b>India’s Potential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RELIGIOUS &amp; CULTURAL CAPITAL</li> <li>DIASPORA DIPLOMACY</li> <li>CORPORATE NARRATIVES</li> </ul>
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## The Affection Economy in Practice:

### 1. Corporates and Community Building

- *India's Reliance Industries*: Dhirubhai Ambani created not only an enterprise but also a mass community of investors and consumers, binding loyalty beyond mere economics.
- *Apple and Brand Loyalty*: Apple's success goes beyond technological superiority; it creates an emotional bond and lifestyle ecosystem around its products.
- *Dubai's National Branding*: Slogans like "Fly Dubai, Live Dubai, Love Dubai" transform economic policies into emotional affiliations, making Dubai a hub of belonging for global citizens.

### 2. Nations as Communities of Trust

- *UAE*: Showcases curated communities of expatriates bound by visa and growth policies.
- *Germany, Singapore, New Zealand*: Have invested in social capital and community cohesion as soft power tools.
- *United States*: Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* warned about declining social capital leading to weakened trust in institutions, contributing to political extremism.

### 3. The Covid-19 Lesson

- The pandemic underscored the importance of care networks. Nations with strong community trust (e.g., New Zealand) fared better in compliance and recovery compared to fragmented societies.
- Global solidarity during the vaccine drive and migrant assistance reflected the indispensability of affection as a binding force.

## Why Affection Matters in the 21st Century

- **Social Cohesion and Stability**: Societies high in trust capital experience lower levels of extremism and political volatility.
- **Soft Power and Diplomacy**: Countries that build communities of interest gain influence without coercion (e.g., UAE's expatriate model, Singapore's multicultural policies).
- **Corporate Success**: In saturated markets, emotional loyalty often outweighs mere product utility.
- **Resilience in Crises**: Whether in pandemics, climate shocks, or financial collapses, networks of care act as buffers.

## Counter-Arguments and Concerns

- 1) **Superficial Belonging**: Critics argue that corporate or national "community-building" may reduce to marketing gimmicks, offering only transactional affection.
- 2) **Exclusionary Communities**: The very act of constructing belonging can exclude outsiders, deepening inequality and xenophobia.

- 3) **Individualisation vs Community:** Modern societies, especially in the West, face rising loneliness, where artificial digital groups fail to substitute genuine solidarity.
- 4) **Geopolitical Risks:** Overemphasis on emotional narratives can mask structural inequalities, leading to disillusionment and backlash.

### India and the Affection Economy

- **Religious and Cultural Capital:** India's civilisational ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("world is one family") is a natural foundation.
- **Diaspora Diplomacy:** India leverages its 30+ million-strong diaspora as a community of belonging and influence.
- **Corporate Narratives:** Reliance, Tata, and Infosys are examples where trust capital has become central to long-term legitimacy.
- **Digital India Initiatives:** Digital inclusion programs attempt to create networks of trust by integrating marginalized groups into financial and governance systems.

### Conclusion:

- The affection economy signals a shift from materialist and transactional forms of power to relational and trust-based forms. While it offers opportunities for building resilient, inclusive, and prosperous societies, it also poses risks of artificiality, exclusion, and manipulation. The challenge for states and corporations lies in institutionalising genuine communities of belonging while avoiding tokenism. In the long run, as the 21st century unfolds, **the future may belong not to those who dominate resources or data, but to those who can command trust, inspire belonging, and nurture networks of care.**

Source: The Indian Express

## 1.16. ARE RECIPROCAL US TARIFFS SELF INFLICTING?

### Descriptive Question:

**Within months of the latest round of 'reciprocal' US tariffs, how are the costs showing up in the American economy? Using the price, currency and equity signals now available, analyse the channels through which tariffs work—consumer inflation, monetary policy, growth, distribution, corporate profitability and global spillovers.**

### Answer:

#### 1. Background & what has changed

- Tariffs are a **tax on imports**. Incidence ultimately falls on US firms/consumers through higher input and final-goods prices, with some offset from foreign price cuts and exchange-rate moves.
- The current episode features **stop-start announcements**, product lists revised by executive orders, exemptions and pauses—creating uncertainty and complicating measurement.

## 2. What the high-frequency data are saying

### Prices (PCE, PPI)

- The US **PCE inflation** line that had been gliding towards 2% **stalled in the mid-2s** over June 2024–June 2025, and **core PCE** showed a similar stickiness.
- In July 2025 the **Producer Price Index rose 3.3% y/y (a 1-year high)**, pointing to upstream cost pressure likely to feed into consumer prices as contracts roll over.
- Mechanism: importers first **absorb** or **re-source**, but as inventories run down, pass-through rises.

### Equities

- Year-to-date performance is **uneven: Nasdaq-100 +10.6%, S&P 500 +8.7%, Dow +5.6%, Russell-2000 +1.8%, DJ Transportation +1.9%**.
  - Message: large tech/platform firms with global margins are more insulated; **small caps and transports**—more exposed to domestic input costs and goods flows—have lagged.

### Currencies

- The **US dollar strengthened** against several majors (YTD changes versus EUR, CAD, JPY, GBP, CHF): a stronger dollar **partly offsets tariff costs** on imports priced in foreign currency, but **hurts exporters' competitiveness and foreign earnings translation**.

## 3. Channels through which tariffs alter the macro picture

### 1) Consumer inflation

- Tariffs raise landed costs; the **pass-through** to retail depends on import share, competition, and re-sourcing options. Repricing tends to be **gradual but persistent**. Core inflation stickiness keeps the **Fed** from cutting quickly.

### 2) Monetary policy

- With inflation not re-anchoring at 2%, the Fed's policy rate stays high for longer, tightening **financial conditions** and dampening capex and housing—indirect costs of tariffs.

### 3) Growth & productivity

- Higher input costs reduce **TFP** and shift demand towards **non-tariffed, often costlier domestic substitutes**. Supply-chain churn (rules-of-origin, re-routing) creates transitional inefficiency.

### 4) Distributional effects

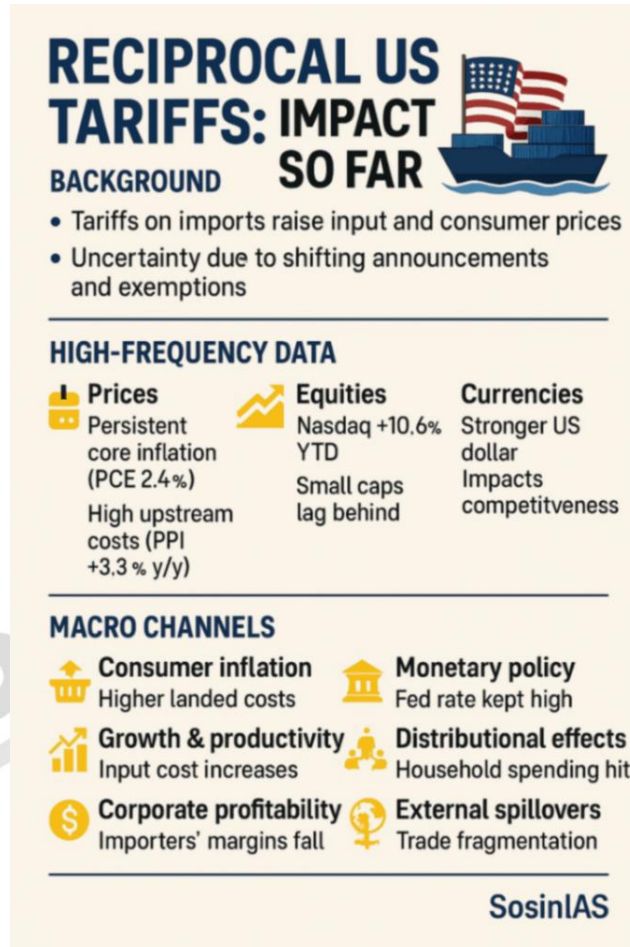
- Tariffs are **regressive**: low- and middle-income households spend more on tradables (apparel, household goods). Farmers and manufacturers facing retaliation or dearer inputs are hit; a few protected niches gain.

### 5) Corporate profitability

- Margin squeeze for import-intensive sectors; **earnings volatility** reflects whether firms can pass on costs or hedge FX. Equity dispersion (small caps vs megacaps) mirrors this.

### 6) External & strategic spillovers

- Partners **retaliate or delay purchases**, fragmenting markets and depressing global trade volumes; global disinflation slows and uncertainty rises.



### 4. Why measuring the near-term impact is hard

- **Policy cadence** (announce—pause—exempt) changes the effective tariff rate week to week.
- **FX moves** blur price signals; firms can **eat margins** temporarily; contracts renew with lags.
- **Transshipment/re-sourcing** alters customs data; partial exemptions and duty-drawbacks muddy incidence.
- Stock indices reflect **expected** rather than realised macro outcomes.

## 5. What the medium-term arithmetic still implies

Even after offsets, tariffs operate like a **broad consumption tax on traded goods**:

- They **lift the price level**; if persistent, they **raise the neutral interest rate** and compress real incomes.
- They **misallocate resources**, lowering dynamic efficiency; the **cost per job “saved”** in protected sectors is typically high.
- They **invite retaliation**, which reduces export opportunities, especially for agriculture and transport.

## 6. Policy recommendations for the US (and lessons for India)

### For the US

- **Targeted relief** for low-income households if tariffs persist (EITC/top-ups), not blanket product subsidies.
- **Time-bound tariff exclusions** for critical intermediates and capital goods; tie any protection to **clear performance metrics**.
- Build **predictable supply-chain resilience** through plurilateral rules (friend-shoring with standards) instead of ad-hoc levies.
- Create a **transitional adjustment package** (skills, relocation, credit) rather than permanent tariff walls.
- Coordinate tariff policy with **FX and competition policy** (raise domestic contestability so pass-through is limited by rivalry, not administered prices).

### Lessons for India

- Avoid being collateral damage: maintain **tariff predictability**, keep **intermediate inputs** low-duty to protect competitiveness of exports, and leverage **services trade** where tariffs bite less.
- Use turbulence to **win market share** in goods where India is the alternative supplier, but do so with **contractual certainty**, not copy-cat protection.
- Strengthen **domestic inflation anchors** (food, logistics, power) so imported cost shocks don't unmoor expectations.

## 7. Bottom line

- Early market and price signals show **sticky disinflation, stronger dollar, equity dispersion and rising producer costs**—all consistent with tariffs **raising the US price level** and **prolonging tight financial conditions**. Measurement is noisy in real time, but the underlying economics holds: tariffs are a costly way to pursue leverage; they tax your own consumers, depress productivity and invite retaliation. A rules-based, predictable strategy dominates ad-hoc protection—for the US and for its partners, including India.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.17. IS AI ENABLER FOR MSMES?

### Descriptive Question:

Headlines about AI-triggered layoffs obscure a bigger policy question: How can India steer AI to augment (not replace) workers and to lift MSMES' productivity?

### Answer:

#### 1. Why the policy stance matters now

- AI is a **general-purpose technology**. Deployed well, it becomes a *saarhi* (co-pilot): raises productivity, quality, safety and incomes; deployed poorly, it becomes a *vinashak* (displacer): concentrates market power, pushes job losses to the most vulnerable, and widens inequality. India—where value added is dominated by **MSMEs, services and informal employment**—cannot import a “big-firm, automation-first” playbook without harming jobs and the demand side of growth.

**Early Indian examples of augmentation** show the viable path:

- **Tata Steel** uses AI co-pilots to support shop-floor engineers (predictive maintenance, safety alerts) rather than thin the workforce.
- **Infosys** couples generative-AI deployment with **large-scale skilling** and re-tasking.
- **Siemens** applies AI to improve worker productivity and well-being. These demonstrate that **task redesign + training + worker voice** can convert AI into a complement, not a substitute.

#### 2. India's starting point—readiness and gaps

##### Strengths

- A mature **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** stack (Aadhaar/e-KYC, UPI, Account Aggregators, ONDC, DigiLocker) that can be extended to *AI public goods*.
- Large base of **tech talent**, thriving start-up ecosystem, and public R&D labs.
- Rapidly improving **data governance** (DPDP Act) and sectoral sandboxes.

##### Gaps / Risks

- **Slow skill deepening** and low adoption among small firms; many workers lack even baseline digital proficiency.
- **Compute and data access** are expensive for MSMEs; risk of a **two-speed economy** where only a few firms deploy frontier AI.
- Proprietary standards, closed models, and self-preferencing cloud/data terms could **lock out innovators**.
- Weak **worker protections** for algorithmic management; limited pathways for reskilling mid-career workers and women returning to work.
- Fragmented support schemes and **lack of outcome-based metrics**.

### 3. Risks of an “automation-first” trajectory in India

- **Job displacement at the bottom of the pyramid** (clerical, customer support, data entry, basic coding/content), while gains accrue to capital-rich firms.
- **Market concentration** as foundational model providers bundle compute, storage, APIs and platform rules, raising entry barriers for MSMEs.
- **Biased or unsafe AI** deployed into credit, hiring or policing without audits, entrenching discrimination.
- **Language and domain mismatch:** models not tuned to Indian languages, MSME workflows and public-sector use cases.

### 4. Policy objective

Make AI an **enabler of employment-rich productivity growth** by:

- 1) lowering MSMEs’ cost of adoption,
- 2) protecting workers and spreading capability, and
- 3) preventing market capture through **open, interoperable public infrastructure** and competition rules.

**Is AI an Enabler for MSMEs?**

**Policy Rationale: Augment, not displace**  
AI can be a co-pilot – to improve productivity and earnings or a displacer – to lack losses and inequality  
Make AI employment-rich, **not** an „automation-first”

**India’s Strengths—and Gaps**

- ◆ Mature Digital Public Infrastructure (e.g. UPI, DigiLocker)
- ◆ Abundant tech talent and start-ups
- ◆ Improving data governance

**Gaps**

- ◆ Low MSME adoption of AI
- ◆ Expensive compute and data access
- ◆ Biased/unsafe AI deployment
- ◆ Weak worker protections

**Policy Framing: How to Enable AI for MSMEs**

**1 Build AI public infrastructure**  
Build AI public infrastructure  
Equip and protect workers

**2 Equip and protect workers**  
Make adoption MSME-friendly

**3 Governance & Measures**  
National AI Enablement Mission to drive AI adoption in MSMEs  
Track adoption rates, productivity gains  
Ombud for algorithmic harms

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## 5. A practicable blueprint

### A) Build an AI Public Infrastructure (API) on top of DPI

- **Open, interoperable standards and APIs** for model access, safety reporting, audit logs and consented data sharing (FRAND-style terms).
- **Model & Dataset Registries** (MeitY/BIS) with provenance, licensing, bias/safety cards, and red-teaming results—mandatory for public procurement.
- **Compute Commons**: pooled public-cloud credits and *compute vouchers* for MSMEs/start-ups via SIDBI/NSDC; edge-compute at district tech hubs.
- **Indian-language & domain LLMs** (health, law, agri, manufacturing) released under permissive/open licences with guardrails, so local innovators can fine-tune cheaply.

### B) Skills first, not pink slips

- **Lifelong learning spine**: embed digital-and-AI competencies across school/college curricula; create **modular micro-credentials** stackable to diplomas.
- **Employer-linked training accounts**: portable “**Individual Learning Accounts**” co-funded by employer, worker and state; tax credits for firms that redeploy instead of lay off.
- **Sectoral Skilling Alliances** (industry + ITIs/polytechnics + unions) to redesign jobs and apprenticeships around AI co-pilots and safety.
- Targeted programmes for **women, platform workers and the NE/aspirational districts**; provide stipends, creches and safe transport to raise participation.

### C) Make adoption MSME-friendly

- “**AI for MSMEs**” **Mission**: diagnostic toolkits, low/no-code co-pilots, shared data pipes, and plug-and-play SaaS on ONDC/OCEN rails.
- **Results-linked finance**: SIDBI credit guarantees and interest subventions for AI projects that verifiably raise revenue, quality or safety (with third-party audits).
- **Public procurement as catalyst**: reserve a slice of government AI contracts for MSME consortia; require *interoperability* and *data portability* in all tenders.

### D) Competition & safety by design

- **Ex-ante rules** against self-preferencing by foundational model/compute providers; mandatory **data portability** and **switching-cost disclosures**.
- **Algorithmic Accountability Act**: risk-tiered impact assessments for high-stakes uses (credit, hiring, health, policing), independent audits, and right to explanation.
- **Secure data access** via Account Aggregators and sectoral data exchanges with granular, revocable consent.

**E) Worker protections & fair transition**

- **No-fault upskilling insurance:** temporary wage/top-up support tied to certified retraining when tasks are automated.
- **Platform & gig social security:** portable benefits, accident insurance, and minimum standards for algorithmic scheduling/ratings.
- **Workplace participation:** require employee consultation for large AI deployments; grievance redress for algorithmic harms.

**F) Research, localisation & public-sector adoption**

- Scale **AIM, Startup India, FutureSkills PRIME** and vocational institutes to run **AI Clinics** for districts.
- Fund **safety, bias, and low-resource NLP** research; open benchmark suites for Indian languages and MSME workflows.
- Prioritise **public-interest AI:** agriculture extension, tuberculosis tracing, learning remediation, road-safety analytics—deploy with rigorous A/B tests and open results.

**6. Governance & measurement**

- **National AI Enablement Mission** chaired by the Cabinet-level Digital Economy Council; state-level cells for last-mile MSME outreach.
- Publish a quarterly **AI Opportunity & Risk Dashboard:** MSME AI-adoption rate, share of *augmented* (not eliminated) tasks, training completions, women's participation, productivity and safety outcomes, concentration indices in AI markets.
- Independent **Ombud** for algorithmic harms with fast, low-cost redress.

**7. Conclusion:**

- India's choice is not "AI or jobs," but **AI for more and better jobs**. If we couple **open public infrastructure** with **lifelong skilling, fair competition, and worker-centric safeguards**, AI can raise productivity across the long tail of small firms, widen opportunity for women and youth, and become a **broad-based growth enabler**—not a disruptor. The policy test is whether we spread capability and confidence faster than we spread code.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 1.18. IS COMPETITIVE PRICE OF INDIAN MILK SUSTAINABLE?

#### Descriptive Question:

“India is being pressed to open its dairy market even as international price comparisons suggest that Indian milk is relatively low-cost.”

Critically examine the sources of India’s price ‘competitiveness’ vis-à-vis the US/EU/NZ, why this advantage may be unsustainable.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Why the debate matters

- **Scale & livelihoods:** India is the world’s largest milk producer (over 220–240 MT/yr), but it is a **micro-producer economy**: ~75 million rural households, most with 2–4 animals, for whom milk is a daily cashflow and a women-managed enterprise.
- **Current pressure:** The US seeks deeper access for its dairy under broader trade talks. The question is whether Indian milk can face global competition **on price and quality** without destabilising smallholders.

#### 2. What do prices actually say? (*what markets are rewarding today*)

- **Farmgate comparisons:**
  - **India (cooperative belts):** Cow milk ~₹44–45/litre for 3.5% fat & 8.5% SNF; buffalo milk ~₹65–66/litre for ~6.5% fat & ~9% SNF (private dairies often ₹34–35 and ₹58–59).
  - **EU:** Raw milk farmgate commonly in the **€0.50–0.55/litre** band (country/month varies).
  - **New Zealand:** Payouts benchmarked to **milk solids** often translate near Indian cow-milk levels per litre in low-price years, higher in tight years.
  - **US:** The Federal Milk Marketing Orders set minimums by **class** (fluid/cheese/butter-SMP); when converted, Class III/IV values frequently map to per-litre equivalents **around Indian cooperative cow-milk payouts** (subject to fat/SNF and currency).
- **Consumer vs farmer share:** In Gujarat’s cooperative system, farmers receive ~**55–57%** of the retail price—unusually high by global standards—thanks to procurement, chilling and marketing efficiency; private chains often pass a smaller share.
- **Price spread:** India looks competitive at farmgate, and **price spreads** to consumer are not excessive in strong cooperative regions.

**Reading:** On sticker prices alone, Indian milk is **not obviously overpriced** internationally. But the **reasons** it is cheap are crucial.

### 3. Anatomy of India's low cost—and why it is fragile

#### A) What keeps cash costs low today

- 1) **Labour model:** unpaid family labour, women's time, and low rural wages keep recorded costs down.
- 2) **Feed basket:** heavy use of crop residues, common-property grazing, kitchen waste; cash concentrates are used sparingly.
- 3) **Short daily supply chains:** twice-a-day procurement that minimises warehousing.
- 4) **Cooperative procurement:** dense village collection networks reduce intermediation margins.

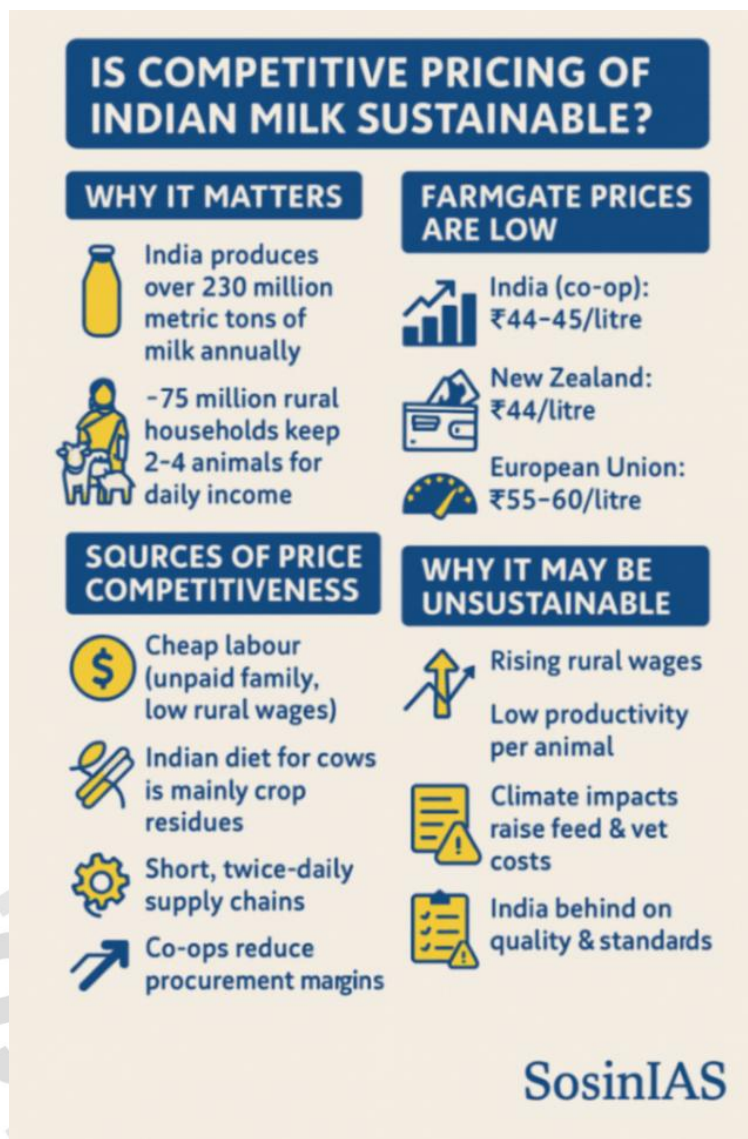
#### B) Why this may be unsustainable

- **Rising opportunity costs:** As rural wages and non-farm opportunities grow, unpaid labour is **no longer "free"**; the same litre will cost more to produce unless productivity rises.
- **Under-investment in productivity:** Average yield per animal is **low** versus the US/EU/NZ; fodder deficits, heat-stress, poor genetics, sub-clinical mastitis, and lumpy disease outbreaks add volatility.
- **Input inflation & climate:** Maize/soy price spikes, water scarcity, and heat waves raise feed and animal-care costs.
- **Compliance gap:** Global buyers demand traceability, antibiotic and aflatoxin controls, animal welfare and methane metrics—**costs India will increasingly have to bear.**
- **Automation gap:** The West's on-farm automation (milking parlours, feed mixers, cooling, sensors) spreads fixed costs over large herds; India's micro-herds cannot copy-paste that model without **aggregation.**

**Bottom line:** India's "cheapness" is more about **cheap labour and externalised costs** than high factor productivity. As wages rise and standards tighten, the advantage **erodes.**

### 4. Strategic risks from opening too fast

- **Import surges** of SMP/cheese/butteroil in glut years can **cap farmgate prices** and trigger cow/buffalo slaughter or distress sales of heifers.
- **Terms-of-trade asymmetry:** US/EU support systems (class pricing, insurance, disaster aid) buffer their farmers; Indian smallholders lack equivalent risk cushions.
- **Quality & SPS barriers:** If India concedes tariffs but cannot meet reciprocal SPS/welfare/carbon norms, **market access will be one-way.**



## 5. The policy playbook—protect while transforming

### A) Trade posture: paced, defensive-offensive

- 1) **Keep dairy “sensitive”** in trade talks; use **tariff-rate quotas (TRQs)** tightly calibrated to domestic gaps (e.g., SMP in drought/epidemic years).
- 2) **Reciprocity on standards:** Any tariff concession must ride on **mutual SPS recognition**, rBST-free assurances, and enforceable **antibiotic/aflatoxin** norms.
- 3) **Snap-back safeguards** for import surges; **public SMP buffer** to stabilise prices in glut/lean cycles.
- 4) **Services-for-goods swaps:** If partners seek dairy access, India should seek **services mobility, IT/healthcare access**, or food-safety tech transfer in return.
- 5) **Export niches:** Support **ghee, paneer, khoa, traditional sweets, lactose-free and high-protein** lines for diaspora and South-South markets.

**B) Productivity & resilience at home (time-bound, scalable)**

- 1) **Feed & fodder mission 2.0:** irrigated fodder corridors, multi-cut varieties, silage banks, by-product pellets; cut feed cost per kg FPCM.
- 2) **Genetics & health:** region-specific breeding plans (crossbred + improved indigenous), **AI/sex-sorted semen**, calf rearing standards; mastitis/LSD vaccination and vet extension at scale.
- 3) **Heat-stress & climate:** shade, water, sprinklers, climate-smart sheds; promote **methane-reducing** feed additives where viable and develop **carbon-credit pilots** that pay farmers for emissions intensity cuts.
- 4) **Herd aggregation without dispossession: Producer companies/co-ops/FPO clusters** with shared chilling, testing and bulk milk coolers; enable **micro-automation** (milking machines, cans, testing kits) on a pay-per-use model.
- 5) **Quality & traceability rails:** universal **fat+SNF instant testing**, adulterant screens, digital milk tickets, lot-level traceability, and graded incentives; align to Codex/ISO in phases.
- 6) **Women's enterprise:** channel credit/insurance to **women dairy groups**, since they are the operational owners; link to nutrition programmes (school milk, THR).
- 7) **Fair pricing formulae:** transparent **fat/SNF-based payouts**, seasonal and quality premiums; publish **farmer-share of consumer rupee** by district to stimulate competition on efficiency.
- 8) **Finance & risk:** KCC for dairy, livestock insurance with quick e-settlement; allow **GST credits** on key inputs (coolers, testing kits, silage film) to lower formalisation costs.
- 9) **Innovation & skills:** funded challenges for **low-cost sensors, chillers, silage machinery**, and Indian-language extension apps; upgrade ITIs to service dairy equipment.

**6. Sequencing: how to open the door without pulling the roof down**

- 1) **First 3 years:** Feed/fodder, vaccination, testing/traceability, cluster chilling—lift farm productivity by **15–20%** and cut rejections.
- 2) **Years 3–5:** Push value-added (cheese, whey derivatives, lactose-free), develop export protocols, pilot carbon/methane credits.
- 3) **After 5 years:** Consider modest **TRQs** tied to reciprocal SPS access and trigger-based snap-backs; continue moving domestic pricing to quality and solids-based metrics.

**7. Conclusion:**

- India's headline competitiveness in milk **exists**, but it rests too heavily on **low- or unpaid labour** and thin margins for women-managed micro-herds. That foundation will not carry the sector through rising rural wages, climate shocks and higher quality expectations. The smart path is **protect-while-transform**: defend space in trade talks

even as we **raise solids per animal, cut feed per litre, guarantee quality and traceability, and share more of the consumer rupee with producers.** Done in this order, India can keep milk **affordable at home, defend livelihoods, and compete selectively abroad** on products that reward quality—not cheap labour.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 1.19. ENSURING ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY AMID IMPORT DEPENDENCY

### Descriptive Question:

India's heavy reliance on imported crude oil and natural gas has raised questions of energy security and sovereignty. In the context of global disruptions, evaluate the significance of energy sovereignty as the 'new oil' for India. Discuss the challenges posed by import dependence, the geopolitical risks, and the pathways India must adopt for diversification, resilience, and sustainable transition.

### Answer:

#### Background and Context:

- Energy is not merely an economic input; it is a strategic asset that underpins national security and sovereignty. India imports over **85% of its crude oil and more than 50% of its natural gas**, placing immense pressure on its trade balance and foreign exchange reserves. Any disruption in global supply chains immediately translates into inflation, macroeconomic instability, and vulnerability to external shocks.
- The recent global crises—the **Russia-Ukraine war (2022)**, renewed tensions in the Middle East, and volatility in OPEC+ output—have underscored how energy flows are deeply tied to geopolitical stability. India's rising import bill, estimated at **\$170 billion in FY2023-24**, highlights the urgency of addressing energy sovereignty as a national priority.

#### The Geopolitical Risks of Dependence

- 1) **Russian Factor:** Since 2022, Russia has emerged as India's largest crude supplier, accounting for **35–40% of imports in 2024–25** (compared to less than 2% before the Ukraine war). While discounted barrels provided short-term relief, this concentration increases exposure to **secondary sanctions, volatility, and supply risks.**
- 2) **Middle East Instability:** With the Gulf continuing as a major energy hub, any flare-up—from tensions in Iran to conflicts in the Red Sea—immediately threatens India's energy security.
- 3) **Currency and Trade Deficit Pressure:** Fossil fuel imports inflate India's **current account deficit**, weaken the rupee, and compromise economic stability. Every \$10 rise in crude adds nearly **\$15 billion to the import bill.**

#### Flashpoints that Shaped Global Energy Security

- **1973 Arab Oil Embargo:** Showed how producer cartels can hold consumers hostage.

- **2011 Fukushima Disaster:** Brought nuclear safety into focus but also reduced nuclear adoption worldwide.
- **2022 Ukraine War:** Reinforced the risks of over-dependence on few suppliers.
- **2025 Lebanon–Israel Tensions:** Renewed threats to tanker flows through chokepoints like the Suez and Strait of Hormuz.

Each of these crises has underlined that **energy diversification, not substitution, is the true currency of sovereignty.**

**Pathways to Achieving Energy Sovereignty**

**1. Diversification of Sources and Fuels**

- Expand long-term partnerships beyond Russia and the Middle East to **Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia.**
- Broaden the basket of fuels—LNG from Qatar and the US, pipeline gas from Central Asia, and new partnerships in **green hydrogen.**

**NO ENTRY FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED?**

**WHY REFORM IS NEEDED**

- ~70 million students sit entrance exams each year
- Booring & intense starting at ages
- Rising mental health concerns
- Systemic inequality
- Rising mental inequality rural, female, & low-income students

**WHAT AILS THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

- COACHING PREMIUM:** Deep-pocketed urban elites
- OVER-RELIANCE ON EXAMS:** Life-deciding scores warped by leaks, errors, & time pressure
- STRESS & BURNOUT:** Early specializations, coaching-centers linked to distress
- FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE:** Fragile oversight & grievance redressal

**A DETOXED, STUDENT-CENTRIC MODEL**

- INTEGRITY-FIRST TESTING:** Independent audits & candidate rights
- MULTIPLE SIGNALS:** Move from single score to eligibility bands & weighted lottery
- FAIR OPPORTUNITY:** Expand capacity, Board moderation
- REGULATION OF COACHING:** Licensing, public option, safety standards

**1, 2, 3 A REASONABLE APPROACH**

- 1. Board scores To determine eligibility
- 2. Merit bands Seats merit bands
- 3. Lottery: Allocated at lottery within each band

Balancing equity and merit

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**2. Domestic Resource Utilisation**

- India holds over **50 billion tonnes of coal reserves** and vast potential for critical minerals like lithium.

- Scaling **coal gasification, methanol production, and biofuels** can reduce import bills while ensuring local employment.
- 3. **Renewables with Grid Stability**
  - India's solar capacity has grown rapidly, but intermittency issues must be tackled through **pumped hydro, battery storage, and nuclear power**.
  - Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) can provide **base load stability** without replicating large-scale nuclear risks.
- 4. **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)**
  - India currently maintains reserves for less than **10 days of consumption**, compared to **90 days mandated by the IEA**. Expansion is critical for buffering against global shocks.
- 5. **Energy Efficiency and Demand-Side Management**
  - A 'negawatt' approach—reducing consumption through efficiency—can be as effective as adding new capacity.
  - Policies such as **fuel economy standards, urban mobility electrification, and industrial efficiency drives** can save billions in import costs.
- 6. **Institutional and Diplomatic Initiatives**
  - Strengthen participation in **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** and the **Global Biofuels Alliance**.
  - Push for **rupee trade settlements** in energy to reduce dollar vulnerability.

### **The New Paradigm: Energy Sovereignty as Survival Strategy**

Energy sovereignty is not about cutting imports altogether but about **controlling vulnerabilities and ensuring resilience**. For India, the goal must be:

- To **diversify suppliers and fuels**,
- To **embed renewables into baseload frameworks**,
- To **localise technological solutions** such as green hydrogen and SMRs,
- To **buffer currency risks** through SPRs and bilateral trade in local currencies,
- To **treat energy security as equal to defence preparedness**.

### **Conclusion:**

- In the 21st century, **energy sovereignty is the new oil**—a measure of strategic autonomy, not just resource possession. For India, achieving sovereignty in energy requires **foresight, diversification, and resilience-building** anchored in domestic capacity and sustainable transitions.
- If ignored, India's demographic dividend risks being neutralised by an **energy dependency trap**. But if pursued strategically, energy sovereignty can transform India into a global economic power less vulnerable to external blackmail and volatility.

**Source: The Hindu**

## 2. ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 2.1. NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE GREEN ENERGY INNOVATIONS

#### Descriptive Question:

In light of rising energy demands and climate commitments, critically evaluate the limitations of existing green technologies such as silicon photovoltaics and examine the need for investing in more efficient, diverse, and sustainable green energy innovations. Illustrate with global trends and India's energy imperatives.

#### Answer:

##### Introduction:

- The global energy transition is at a pivotal juncture. With rising commitments under the Paris Agreement and escalating climate risks, nations are pushing towards decarbonisation and energy self-sufficiency. Solar photovoltaics (PV), wind, and other renewables have become widespread, yet questions remain about the **sustainability, diversity, and efficiency** of these solutions.
- As land conflicts, resource scarcity, and geopolitical tensions increase, particularly over rare earths and grid integration, it is evident that the world cannot rely solely on existing green technologies. The imperative now is to **innovate smarter, more efficient, and environmentally benign alternatives**, while optimising current tools.

#### 1. Solar Photovoltaics: The Frontline Technology With Systemic Challenges

##### a) Evolution and Dominance of Silicon PVs:

- Invented in 1954 by Bell Labs, silicon solar panels slowly moved from space applications to commercial use.
- By 2025, over 50% of the global solar panels come from China, with global installed solar PV capacity reaching 1.4 TW (terawatts).
- Silicon PVs currently have **18–22% efficiency**, with advanced versions reaching around 26% under lab conditions.

##### b) Key Limitations:

- **Material Intensity:** Silicon extraction, purification, and cell manufacturing are energy-intensive and carbon-emitting, especially in coal-dependent countries.
- **Land Use Pressure:** As solar demand rises, land for ground-mounted solar farms competes with agriculture and biodiversity, particularly in densely populated nations like India.
- **End-of-Life Disposal:** Solar panel recycling remains underdeveloped, risking electronic and chemical waste accumulation in the next decade.
- **Supply Chain Vulnerability:** Concentration of manufacturing in China poses strategic dependency risks for many countries.

**Need for Sustainable Green Energy Innovations**

Global energy demand is rising, and despite growing investment, existing green technologies have significant limitations

**Limitations of Current Technologies**

- Silicon Photovoltaics**: Dominates capacity, but 18–22% efficiency
- H<sub>2</sub> Green Hydrogen**: Production cost remains high
- CO<sub>2</sub> Recycling**: Artificial photosynthesis and algal biofuels

**Towards More Efficient Innovations**

- Tandem Solar-Cells**: Silicon-perovskite cells could exceed 30% efficiency
- Renewable Fuels**: E-fuels like methanol from renewable energy
- CO<sub>2</sub> Recycling**: Artificial photosynthesis and algal biofuels

**India's Energy Challenges**

- Dependence on fossil fuel imports
- Net zero target by 2070
- Energy access for still millions

**Government Initiatives**

- National Green Hydrogen Mission
- PLI for solar manufacturing
- PM-KUSUM scheme

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## 2. Green Hydrogen: The Promise and Paradox

### a) Theoretical Value:

- Green hydrogen, produced via electrolysis of water using renewable electricity, is promoted as a fuel for sectors hard to decarbonise—steel, cement, aviation.
- Hydrogen also powers fuel cells for mobility and acts as a feedstock in refining and fertiliser production.

### b) Real-World Bottlenecks:

- **Low Energy Efficiency:** Electrolysis and subsequent fuel conversion incur high energy losses.
- **Storage and Transport Issues:** Hydrogen is difficult to compress and highly flammable, requiring specialised infrastructure.
- **'Greenness' Dilemma:** If solar or wind energy used in hydrogen production is inefficient or carbon-intensive (e.g., due to high-emission PVs), the hydrogen ceases to be truly green.

- **Economic Viability:** The cost of green hydrogen remains 2–3x higher than grey (natural gas-based) hydrogen.

### 3. The Emerging Horizon: Alternative and Smarter Green Technologies

Recognising the ecological and technological ceilings of current renewables, several next-generation innovations are being pursued:

#### a) Non-Biological Renewable Fuels (RNBFOs):

- Europe and India are exploring **Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBO)**, which involve producing fuels like methanol or ammonia from CO<sub>2</sub> and renewable energy, bypassing biomass.
- These fuels aim to meet **EU's Green Fuel Mandates** for aviation, shipping, and heavy transport.

#### b) CO<sub>2</sub> Recycling via Algal and Artificial Photosynthesis:

- Some research explores **CO<sub>2</sub>-to-fuel** conversion using algae, mimicking natural photosynthesis.
- Artificial photosynthesis (APS) attempts to replicate plant-like chemical conversion using engineered materials.
- These are currently at lab or pilot scale but promise circular economy benefits.

#### c) Tandem Solar Cells and Perovskites:

- Newer **multi-junction cells** (e.g., silicon-perovskite tandem) can push efficiency beyond 30%.
- However, perovskite stability and toxicity remain technological hurdles.

### 4. India's Energy Landscape: The Case for Innovation

India faces a unique trilemma:

- 1) **Energy security**, with 85% fossil fuel import dependency.
- 2) **Sustainability**, given its climate goals to reach Net Zero by 2070.
- 3) **Affordability**, as millions still lack access to reliable energy.

Government initiatives such as:

- **National Green Hydrogen Mission**
- **Production-Linked Incentives (PLI) for solar manufacturing**
- **PM-KUSUM for decentralised solar** aim to address these challenges.

Yet, unless India **moves beyond mainstream renewables** and invests in **advanced storage, circular economy, and synthetic fuels**, it risks energy fragility and import lock-ins.

### 5. Way Forward: A Systems Approach to Green Energy Transition

- **Research and Development:** Commit at least 1% of GDP to green R&D, focusing on next-gen battery chemistries, solar recycling, and fuel synthesis.

- **Life Cycle Assessments:** Evaluate green tech on full environmental and social costs—not just operational carbon savings.
- **Circular Innovation:** Integrate waste reuse, modular infrastructure, and energy-efficiency design in all deployments.
- **Diversification of Green Portfolios:** No single solution suffices. Solar, wind, hydrogen, storage, nuclear, and bioenergy must coexist in hybridised, smart grids.
- **Global Cooperation:** Pool research, intellectual property, and rare resources to avoid green protectionism and trade wars.

**Conclusion:**

- While existing green technologies have been pivotal in initiating the global energy transition, their material limits, inefficiencies, and unintended consequences necessitate **urgent diversification and smarter innovations**. Energy transitions must not only be renewable but also **resilient, inclusive, and future-ready**.
- The world, and particularly nations like India, must pivot from green deployment to **green innovation**—investing in technologies that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and geopolitically secure.

**Source:** *The Hindu*

## 2.2. RISE IN THE USE OF HERBICIDES IN INDIA.

**Descriptive Question:**

The sharp rise in the use of herbicides in India marks a significant shift in the country's crop protection paradigm. Analyse the reasons behind this trend and discuss its implications for agriculture, labour, environment, and rural economy.

**Answer:****Introduction:**

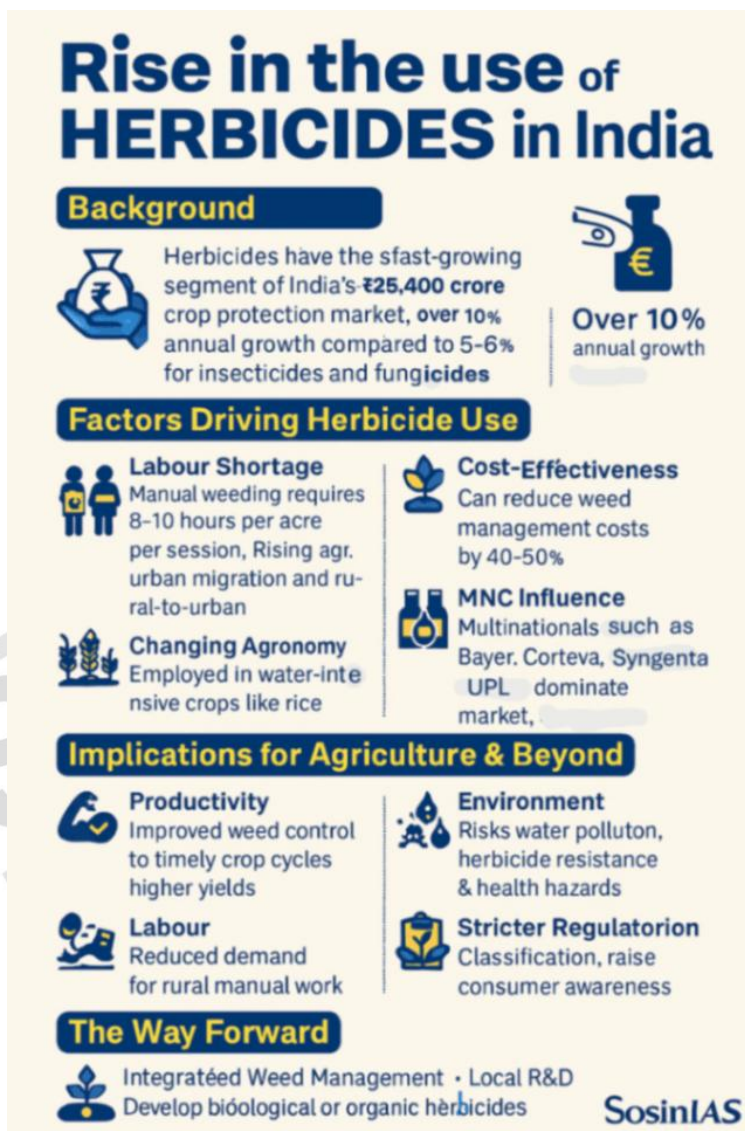
- India's crop protection chemicals market is undergoing a major structural transformation. Traditionally dominated by insecticides and fungicides, the sector has now seen herbicides emerge as the fastest-growing segment. Herbicides—chemicals used to kill or inhibit weed growth—are witnessing a double-digit annual growth rate of over 10%, compared to 5–6% for insecticides and fungicides. This shift is symptomatic of deeper transformations in agricultural labour dynamics, cropping patterns, and the industrialization of farming inputs. A critical examination is necessary to understand the economic, ecological, and social ramifications of this change.

**I. Background: The Rise of the Herbicide Market**

India's crop protection market is valued at around ₹25,400 crore:

- Insecticides: ₹10,706 crore (largest segment),
- Herbicides: ₹8,209 crore (second-largest, fastest growing),
- Fungicides: ₹5,571 crore.

The herbicide segment is growing at 10–11% per annum and is likely to surpass fungicides in market share. This structural change is driven by both supply and demand-side dynamics.



## II. Factors Driving the Herbicide Boom

### 1. Acute Agricultural Labour Shortage

- Manual weeding is highly labour-intensive, requiring 8–10 hours per acre per session, repeated multiple times during the crop cycle.
- As per the Labour Bureau data, the average daily agricultural wage for men in India has risen by 18% in 2023–24.

- Migration, shrinking family labour, and a growing preference for urban employment have contributed to rural labour scarcity.
- The shortage is particularly acute during peak weeding periods, pushing farmers toward chemical alternatives.

## 2. Shift in Cropping Patterns and Agronomy

- Herbicides are especially preferred in rice, wheat, and maize—crops where mechanised or large-area farming is practiced.
- The “pre-emergent” and “post-emergent” application of herbicides allows flexibility and efficiency during the sowing phase and early crop establishment.
- Precision agriculture and short-duration varieties further enhance the compatibility of herbicides.

## 3. Cost-Effectiveness and Convenience

- Weed control through labour costs ~₹5,500 per acre; herbicide-based weed management can reduce this by 40–50%.
- Herbicide usage is scalable and does not require skilled workers.
- In marginal farming areas, it reduces dependency on seasonal migrant labour.

## 4. Role of Multinational Corporations

- The Indian herbicide market is heavily dominated by global players like Bayer AG, Syngenta, Corteva Agriscience, ADAMA, UPL, Crystal Crop Protection, and others.
- These companies are pushing aggressive marketing and sales campaigns, backed by field demonstrations and farmer outreach programs.
- Innovations such as crop-specific herbicides (e.g., for soyabean or pulses) and ready-to-use formulations are improving product penetration.

## III. Implications of Rising Herbicide Use

### A. Economic and Agricultural Productivity

- **Positive Impacts:**
  - Reduces cost of cultivation,
  - Ensures timely crop cycles,
  - Enhances yield by suppressing weed competition for nutrients and water.
- **Risks:**
  - Over-reliance on chemicals can lead to **herbicide resistance** in weeds,
  - May affect soil biodiversity and microbial health over time.

## B. Labour Market and Rural Employment

- **Displacement effect:** Rising herbicide use is reducing demand for manual weeders, especially among women labourers traditionally involved in weeding.
- **Wage pressure:** Labour shortages may push wages higher, but declining employment in farm operations risks deepening **rural underemployment**.
- Need for **reskilling** and deployment of rural workforce into allied agricultural activities such as agro-processing, logistics, and service provision.

## C. Environmental and Health Concerns

- Indiscriminate use of herbicides (especially in small farms) may lead to water pollution and chemical runoff.
- In the absence of training and protective equipment, farmers are at risk of **chemical exposure**, respiratory issues, and skin conditions.
- Certain herbicides (e.g., glyphosate) have been under scrutiny globally due to **alleged carcinogenic effects**, prompting calls for tighter regulation in India.

## D. Monopoly and Market Concentration

- The consolidation of the agri-input industry has resulted in few players controlling pricing and distribution.
- Proprietary herbicide formulations lock farmers into brand ecosystems, reducing bargaining power and inflating input costs.
- Price volatility and supply disruptions can disproportionately impact smallholders.

## IV. Government Policy and Regulatory Landscape

- As of now, India does not have an integrated **Pesticide Use Monitoring Authority** akin to global best practices.
- The **Insecticides Act, 1968** governs the regulation of herbicides, but concerns remain about:
  - Inadequate training at grassroots,
  - Poor label compliance and safety instructions,
  - Lack of awareness on selective vs. non-selective herbicides.
- The government's **Sub-Mission on Plant Protection and Quarantine (SMPPQ)** under the National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET) needs expansion to train farmers in safe use and integrated weed management (IWM).

## V. Way Forward: A Balanced Approach

### 1. Promote Integrated Weed Management (IWM)

- Combine mechanical weeding, crop rotation, cover crops, and judicious chemical use.

- Promote awareness through Krishi Vigyan Kendras and mobile agri-advisory platforms.

## 2. Local Herbicide R&D and Alternatives

- Encourage development of **biological herbicides** and organic weed control agents.
- Fund research in indigenous alternatives using neem-based or plant-derived solutions.

## 3. Skill-building for Farm Labour

- Labour being displaced from manual weeding must be re-skilled in other agrarian roles—such as drone spraying, soil health monitoring, or solar pump maintenance.

## 4. Regulation and Consumer Awareness

- Introduce clear herbicide classification (selective vs. non-selective, pre- vs. post-emergent),
- Ban harmful formulations and restrict blanket aerial spraying near human habitations and water bodies.

### Conclusion:

- The rise of herbicides in India's agricultural input market reflects the intersection of economic compulsion, labour migration, and agro-industrial transformation. While herbicides offer a promising solution to modern weed management, unregulated growth may create new risks—economic, environmental, and social. A nuanced, evidence-based, and participatory strategy is essential to ensure that herbicide adoption enhances productivity without undermining long-term sustainability. The success of India's agricultural future lies in balancing **efficiency with equity**, and **technology with ecology**.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 2.3. INDIA'S CLIMATE FINANCE TAXONOMY

### Descriptive Question:

**Critically examine how the proposed review architecture, substantive legal checks, and institutional accountability mechanisms can make India's Climate Finance taxonomy a credible governance tool.**

### Answer:

#### Introduction: The Context of Climate Finance Taxonomy

- Climate finance has emerged as a crucial pillar in the global response to climate change, linking investments to mitigation, adaptation, and transition pathways. In May 2025, India's Ministry of Finance released a draft **Climate Finance Taxonomy**—a framework to categorise economic activities and investments as climate-aligned or otherwise. Its objectives are threefold:

1. Mobilise sustainable finance,

2. Prevent *greenwashing* (misleading claims of environmental benefits), and
  3. Provide clarity for regulators, investors, and industries.
- This initiative assumes significance as it coincides with India's commitments under the Paris Agreement, its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, and the broader push for net-zero by 2070. However, its credibility as a governance tool depends on how review mechanisms, substantive checks, and institutional frameworks are operationalised.

### **The Review Architecture: Ensuring Dynamic Adaptability**

A credible taxonomy must evolve with shifting global standards and domestic obligations. The proposed review system rests on two complementary levels:

#### **1. Periodic Review for Course Correction**

- Mandatory recurring reviews every five years, aligned with India's NDC update cycle and the global stocktake under the UNFCCC.
- Reviews triggered by regulatory or market changes (e.g., new SEBI norms, carbon trading mechanisms, or fiscal measures).
- Predictable processes with fixed timelines, stakeholder feedback, and public consultations.

#### **2. Legal and Editorial Oversight**

- Inspired by Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement, which institutionalises supervisory bodies for climate markets.
- Editorial reviews to ensure clarity, coherence, and technical precision, making taxonomy usable by both experts and non-experts.

This architecture ensures that taxonomy remains **responsive in the short term and resilient in the long term**, while avoiding regulatory stagnation.

### **Substantive Aspects of the Review: Legal Coherence and Content Clarity**

For the taxonomy to be effective, two dimensions are essential:

#### **1. Legal Alignment and Enforceability**

- Must harmonise with India's existing laws: *Energy Conservation Act*, SEBI disclosure norms, the upcoming *Carbon Credit Trading Scheme*, and green bond regulations.
- Prevent redundancies, legal overlaps, or contradictions with fiscal measures like blended finance schemes or risk disclosures.
- Ensure enforceability to inspire investor confidence and avoid policy paralysis.

#### **2. Substantive Editorial Rigor**

- Definitions must remain precise and readable.

- Quantitative thresholds (e.g., emission reduction benchmarks, renewable energy efficiency standards) should be updated with empirical data and market evidence.
- Interdependencies between finance mandates and economic policies (e.g., agriculture subsidies vs climate sustainability goals) must be clarified.

This ensures that revisions maintain coherence while avoiding inconsistencies that could deter investment.

### **Institutional Accountability: Transparency and Inclusivity**

To operationalise the taxonomy effectively, institutional structures are critical:

- **Expert Standing Committee** under the Department of Economic Affairs, with representation from regulators (RBI, SEBI), climate scientists, legal experts, and civil society.
- **Public Dashboards** to enable transparent tracking, investor access, and stakeholder feedback.
- **Annual Summaries and Five-Year Reports** made public to document revision cycles and improve accessibility.

Such mechanisms not only ensure transparency but also align India's taxonomy with global best practices like the **EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy**, which emphasises accountability and investor trust.

### **Opportunities and Significance**

#### **1. Mobilising Green Finance**

- A robust taxonomy will boost investor confidence, helping India tap into the estimated **\$10 trillion global green finance market by 2030**.
- Supports issuance of green bonds, climate-linked securities, and blended finance instruments.

#### **2. Supporting Climate Commitments**

- Aligns financial flows with India's net-zero 2070 pathway, renewable energy targets (500 GW by 2030), and sectoral transitions (e-mobility, green hydrogen).

#### **3. International Credibility**

- Strengthens India's position in global climate negotiations by demonstrating regulatory seriousness.
- Provides coherence with instruments like the *Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)* and G20 sustainable finance frameworks.

# India's Climate Finance Taxonomy



## What it Aims

- Mobilise sustainable finance
- Prevent greenwashing
- Provide clarity for investors and regulators



## Review Architecture

### Periodic Review

- Mandatory every 5 years
- Adapt to NDCs, global standards
- Public consultations

### Legal Oversight

- Inspired by Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement
- Ensure clarity and technical precision

## Substantive Oversight

### LEGAL ALIGNMENT

- Harmonise with existing laws
- Prevent overlaps
- Inspire investor confidence

### CONTENT CLARITY

- Clear definitions
- Data-driven thresholds
- Address economic interdependencies

## Institutional Accountability

- Expert Standing Committee
- Public dashboards to track progress
- Transparent annual reports



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## Challenges in Implementation

Despite its promise, multiple hurdles remain:

- **Risk of Weak Enforcement:** If definitions remain vague, greenwashing may persist.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Smaller firms, informal sector, and MSMEs may struggle with compliance, requiring staggered timelines and simplified entry points.
- **Balancing Growth and Sustainability:** Tensions may arise between industrial expansion and strict climate finance rules.

- **Institutional Bottlenecks:** Coordination challenges among regulators, ministries, and financial institutions may delay review cycles.
- **Investor Skepticism:** If taxonomy is perceived as rigid or inconsistent, it may discourage rather than attract green finance.

#### Counter-Arguments and Cautions

- Some argue that a *'living framework'* risks being unstable if review processes lack predictability.
- Critics highlight that multiple definitions of "sustainable" activities could confuse investors instead of clarifying.
- Unlike developed economies with mature financial markets, India's informal sector dominance could dilute compliance, unless carefully adapted.

#### Conclusion:

- India's Climate Finance Taxonomy is a timely step that transforms the narrative from food and energy security to **climate-compatible prosperity**. Its credibility will depend on institutionalising predictable review mechanisms, ensuring legal and editorial coherence, and building transparent, inclusive accountability systems.
- If implemented rigorously, it could become a cornerstone of India's climate finance ecosystem, enabling transition finance, mobilising long-term capital, and ensuring ecological sustainability. However, weak enforcement or policy incoherence could reduce it to a symbolic exercise. Thus, its success lies in balancing **legal enforceability, investor confidence, and inclusive transitions** in the journey towards a low-carbon economy.

Source: The Hindu

### 3. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

#### 3.1. NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL SPACE LAW

##### Descriptive Question:

**'India's private space ecosystem is taking off, but the legal architecture still rests on policies and executive orders.'**

**In light of the Outer Space Treaty's obligations (non-appropriation; authorization & continuing supervision; liability & registration), critically examine why India now needs a comprehensive national space law.**

##### Answer:

##### 1. Why this matters now

- India is moving from a state-led programme (ISRO) to a mixed ecosystem: human spaceflight (Gaganyaan), space station plans, moon missions, and a surge of startups (launch, EO, smallsats, on-orbit services).
- The policy toolkit expanded—**Indian Space Policy 2023**, liberalised geospatial/remote-sensing norms, satcom reforms, FDI liberalisation in components—but **laws remain thin**. Approvals are scattered; **IN-SPACE** functions by Government resolution, not statute.
- Result: uncertainty on who authorises, who supervises, who is liable, and how disputes are resolved—precisely the gaps investors and insurers flag.

##### 2. What international law already requires (and why policies aren't enough)

Key UN space treaties and instruments bind the **State**—and apply equally when activities are by private actors:

- **Outer Space Treaty (1967)**
  - Space is the “province of all mankind”; **no national appropriation** of celestial bodies.
  - States bear **international responsibility** for *national* activities in space, **whether governmental or private** (Art. VI): they must **authorise** and exercise **continuing supervision**.
  - Due regard to others; avoid harmful contamination; cooperate (Arts. IX, X).
- **Liability Convention (1972)**: **absolute liability** for damage on Earth/aircraft; **fault-based** in outer space.
- **Registration Convention (1976)**: maintain a national register and furnish data to the UN.
- **Rescue Agreement (1968)**; plus ITU Radio Regulations, UN guidelines on the **long-term sustainability** of space activities, IADC debris-mitigation norms.

These are **not self-executing** domestically. Without a statute, ministries and courts lack clear hooks to license, supervise, allocate liability, and enforce safety/debris rules.

### 3. India's present approach—strengths and gaps

- **Strengths:** incrementalism has avoided legal shocks, created room for startups, and separated roles (DoS–policy; ISRO–R&D/service; IN-SPACe–promotion/regulation in practice).
- **Gaps that now bite:**
  - **IN-SPACe lacks a statutory charter**—decisions can be second-guessed; timelines are unclear; multiple clearances persist even after IN-SPACe “approval”.
  - **Liability and insurance:** who pays what, and how much insurance is “enough”, is not codified; cross-waivers and government indemnification are undefined.
  - **Safety & debris:** no enforceable national standard with penalties, post-mission disposal rules, or accident-investigation procedures.
  - **Spectrum/orbital filings:** process opacity deters small firms.
  - **Data/IP/security:** ambiguity over IP created in space, export controls (dual-use tech), high-resolution data release, cyber-security of satellites.
  - **Dispute resolution:** no dedicated appellate body; startups face administrative delays/costs.
  - **Finance:** absence of a domestic space-insurance pool keeps premiums high for first-time Indian missions.

## Need for a Comprehensive National Space Law

### Shift to Mixed Ecosystem

India's space sector is expanding with private startups entering launch, satellite, and services

#### Current Gaps

- Absence of statutory regulator
- Unclear liability for damage
- Uncodified debris rules

### International Obligations

- Authorization & Supervision
- Liability & Registration
- Outer Space Treaty (1967)

### Comparative Global Practices

- US, CSL Acts
- UK, France
- Luxembourg, Japan

### Statutory Single-Window Regulator

IN-SPACe constituted by statute with supervisory authority  
Roles should demarcate between IN-SPACe, ISRO, NSIL  
Transparent licensing criteria and timelines

### Debris Mitigation & Safety

- Codify debris control and passivation rules
- Establish Space Situational Awareness and Traffic Mgmt
- Form accident investigation board

### Clear Liability & Insurance Rules

- Mandate third-party insurance pegged to probable loss
- Cross-waivers and indemnity by Gov't
- Create domestic space insurance pool

### Need for a National Space Law

- Operationalize treaty obligations
- Provide certainty to investors /insurers
- Safeguard citizens and the environment

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#### 4. Comparative cues from other jurisdictions

- **United States** (Commercial Space Launch Acts): single-window licensing, **mandatory third-party liability insurance** with **government indemnification** above a cap, cross-waivers among participants; **accident investigation** protocols.
- **United Kingdom** (Space Industry Act 2018) & **Australia**: risk-based licensing, capped operator liability, environmental assessments.
- **France** (Space Operations Act 2008): stringent technical oversight tied to insurance; strong debris and re-entry rules.
- **Luxembourg/UAE/Japan**: explicit **space-resources** utilisation permissions consistent with the OST, clear supervision of private actors. Lesson: countries translate OST duties into **domestic authorisation, supervision, safety and financial-responsibility regimes**; insurance is made affordable through caps, cross-waivers and state backstops.

#### 5. Core pillars for an Indian National Space Law

##### A. Statutory regulator & clear institutional roles

- Constitute **IN-SPACe by Act** as India's *single-window* authorising & supervisory authority with quasi-judicial powers, service-level timelines, and transparent criteria.
- Fix roles: **DoS** (policy & treaty interface), **IN-SPACe** (regulation), **ISRO/NSIL** (R&D/commercial service provider) to avoid conflicts.

##### B. Authorisation & continuing supervision

- Risk-tiered licensing (launch, satellite operations, on-orbit servicing, re-entry, ground segment, human spaceflight tests).
- Audit rights, change-control approvals, and safety reviews across mission life.

##### C. Liability & insurance framework

- Declare Government of India the "launching State" for treaty purposes, with **operator financial-responsibility** obligations.
- Mandate **third-party liability insurance** pegged to quantified maximum probable loss (MPL), **cross-waivers** among participants, and **Government indemnification** beyond the cap for treaty claims.
- Create a **domestic space-insurance pool** (public-private with GIC Re and insurers) to lower premiums; allow parametric covers for launch/weather windows.

##### D. Safety, debris & environmental protection

- Codify debris-mitigation, **post-mission disposal**, passivation, casualty-risk limits for re-entry; planetary-protection norms.
- Establish national **Space Accident Investigation Board** (independent).

- Build a legal basis for **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)** and **Space Traffic Management (STM)**: mandatory conjunction reporting, right-of-way rules, and operator data-sharing.

#### E. Spectrum & orbital resources

- Transparent process aligning ITU filings, coordination and national assignment; predictable fees; sandbox/fast-track for small constellations.
- Penalties for harmful interference; cyber-resilience baselines.

#### F. Data, privacy & remote-sensing

- Open-data default with calibrated security carve-outs; clarity on **high-resolution EO exports**, archival obligations, and **data protection** for personal data captured from orbit.

#### G. IP, procurement & innovation

- Ownership of IP created in space; government-use licence with fair compensation where national security requires.
- Standards for **on-orbit servicing**, in-space manufacturing, and technology testbeds; incentives for Indian components and testing infrastructure.

#### H. National security & export control

- Alignment with SCOMET/MTCR; facility/personnel security clearances; end-use monitoring.
- Screening of sensitive investments while keeping **100% FDI in non-strategic segments** workable through clear rules.

#### I. Space resources & international cooperation

- Position on **space-resource utilisation** (use without sovereignty claims) consistent with OST and India's international commitments; licence terms, notification and due-regard procedures.
- Enabling clause for participation in multilateral frameworks (Artemis Accords cooperation, planetary defence, SSA data-sharing).

#### J. Dispute resolution & accountability

- **Independent Appellate Tribunal** for regulatory orders; provision for domestic arbitration; periodic reporting to Parliament.

### 6. Making space affordable: the insurance piece

- Build a **national space-risk database** (launch/re-entry reliability, debris fields, casualty footprints) to support actuarial pricing.

- Government seed capital for a **Space Insurance Pool**; coinsurance with Indian and global reinsurers; premium rebates for meeting higher safety standards; **public indemnity** above an MPL cap.

## 7. Phased legislative roadmap

### Phase I – “Space Activities Act” (fast-track):

Create IN-SPACe by statute; codify authorisation & supervision, registry, liability/insurance, spectrum/orbital process, single-window timelines, appellate body.

### Phase II – “Space Safety & Traffic Management Act”:

SSA network, STM rules, debris-mitigation & accident investigation, human-spaceflight safety code, environmental assessments.

### Phase III – “Space Resources & Advanced Operations Act”:

On-orbit servicing, in-space manufacturing, resource utilisation, sample-return and planetary-protection norms, with international-law safeguards.

## 8. Benefits and safeguards

- **Investment clarity** (licensing timelines, liability caps) + **innovation incentives** (IP certainty, testing corridors) will crowd-in capital for launchers, EO, satcom and downstream apps.
- Treaty-compliant **state responsibility** is operationalised; India’s reputation as a responsible spacefaring nation is strengthened.
- **Public safety and sustainability** improve through enforceable debris/hazard controls and accident investigations.
- Startups gain access to **affordable insurance** and predictable spectrum/orbit pathways.

## 9. Conclusion:

- India’s next leap in space will be decided as much by **law** as by **launches**. A clear, statute-backed regime that **authorises, supervises and safeguards**—while lowering transaction costs for innovators—will translate India’s OST obligations into domestic certainty, unlock private investment, protect citizens and the environment, and anchor India as a reliable rule-maker in the emerging space economy.

**Source: The Hindu**

### 3.2. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CAUSING COGNITIVE PROSTHESES?

#### Descriptive Question:

“Transformative digital technologies—from GPS and social media to conversational AI—are rapidly becoming ‘cognitive prostheses’.”

Critically examine how persistent off-loading of memory, navigation, attention and judgement onto machines can re-shape individual brain function and social intelligence.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Why this matters: technology is now a public-health issue for the mind

- Human brains are **plastic**—they wire and re-wire based on what we repeatedly do. Experiments show sensory deprivation reshapes cortical maps; intensive practice (e.g., taxi drivers learning complex city layouts) enlarges navigation-related regions.
- Today’s digital systems **reallocate** core functions—remembering phone numbers, way-finding, recalling facts, sustaining attention, even forming relationships—to machines and platforms engineered for **maximum engagement**. If repeated daily, these habits can **re-tune neural circuitry**, shifting what people can do unaided.

**Thesis:** Left solely to market incentives, transformative tech can erode individual capacities (navigation, memory, deep focus, social reasoning) and the collective capacities of societies (deliberation, trust). The task is **not to roll tech back**, but to **design, regulate and practice** so that it augments—not replaces—human abilities.

#### 2. The mechanisms of “cognitive off-loading”

##### 1) Navigation → GPS dependence

- Reliance on turn-by-turn cues suppresses active route-planning and spatial updating; over time people struggle to map cities, estimate distance, or recover from detours without the device.

##### 2) Memory → externalised recall

- Cloud notes, search and autofill reduce retrieval practice; factual recall declines even as look-up skill rises (“the extended mind” becomes a crutch).

##### 3) Attention → the ‘attention economy’

- Infinite scroll, alerts and autoplay fragment focus; multitasking raises error rates and lowers deep-work output.

##### 4) Reasoning & judgement → algorithmic curation

- Feeds optimise for engagement, not truth; echo-chambers increase polarisation, reduce exposure to counter-evidence, and reward fast, emotional takes over slow, reflective reasoning.

### 5) Social cognition → parasocial substitution

- Chatbots and curated personas simulate reciprocity; for the young, they can displace messy but growth-producing real-world interactions that build empathy and conflict management.

### 6) Developmental exposure

- Early, heavy screen time displaces sleep, physical play and language-rich interaction—foundations for executive function and self-regulation.

**Net risk:** a slow drift from **tool-use** to **tool-dependence**, producing pockets of “cognitive atrophy” at the individual level and **lower collective intelligence** at the societal level.

### 3. The other side: augmentation is real

- Writing, printing, maps and calculators all externalised cognition and **expanded** human horizons.
- GPS saves time and fuel; digital reminders can include more people (elderly, disabled).
- Generative AI, used well, can raise productivity, translate languages, assist doctors and teachers, and free humans for higher-order tasks.

**Implication:** The question is **how** we use and govern technology. With the right guardrails and habits, tools **scaffold** learning instead of **short-circuiting** it.

### 4. What a humane blueprint requires (India focus)

#### A) Treat cognitive health as public health

- Issue **national guidance** on age-appropriate device use, sleep, and screen hygiene; integrate into **School Health & Wellness** and community health workers’ counselling.
- Make **digital well-being** (sleep, movement, attention hygiene) a part of routine check-ups, just as we do for blood pressure.

#### B) Rebuild “foundational cognition” in education

- A **Foundational Cognitive Curriculum** across schools/ITIs/HEIs:
  - **Navigation & spatial skills** (paper maps, orienteering).
  - **Memory & retrieval practice** (spaced repetition, handwriting, mental arithmetic/estimation).
  - **Argumentation & media literacy** (structured debates, source-checking).
  - **Project-based ‘slow cognition’** (fieldwork, labs, arts, sport) to grow executive function.
  - **AI literacy:** prompt design, verification, documenting what the human—not the tool—contributed.

**C) Platform and design regulation (MeitY/Consumer Affairs/Health)**

- **Children-first defaults:** no autoplay by default, limited notifications, ad-profiling off, bedtime quiet hours, age-appropriate feeds, granular parental tools.
- **Dark-pattern bans** and **time-use dashboards** visible by default.
- **Label AI chatbots;** require disclosures, guardrails against simulating intimacy with minors, and rate-limits to curb compulsive use.
- **Algorithmic accountability:** risk classification; impact assessments for high-risk deployments (education, health, employment); appeal channels.

**D) Information integrity**

- **Content provenance/watermarking** for synthetic media; rapid cross-platform incident response during elections and disasters; public repositories of major moderation decisions.

**E) Workplaces that protect deep work**

- **Right to disconnect** norms; meeting-light days; default 25/50-minute meeting blocks; documentation-first culture; asynchronous tools used responsibly.

**F) Research & measurement**

- A periodic **National Cognitive Fitness Survey** (memory, attention, navigation, social reasoning) with digital-usage cohorts; fund Indian labs for longitudinal neurocognitive studies.

**G) Urban & community design**

- Walkable neighbourhoods, way-finding signage, libraries/maker spaces; **device-free commons** (parks, dining areas in schools); community clubs to practice real-world collaboration.

**H) Align incentives**


- A voluntary **“Humane Tech Code”**: apps that meet attention-sparing standards receive procurement preference and store/app-store badges.
- Public broadcasters and libraries to produce **slow-media**: long-form explainers, debates, and local history/navigation content in Indian languages.

**5. Roles & implementation**

- **MoHFW:** national guidance; integrate digital well-being into school health; train counsellors in “digital minimalism” techniques.
- **MoE/NCERT/AICTE/NCVET:** embed the Foundational Cognitive Curriculum and AI literacy; upgrade teacher training.
- **MeitY:** children’s online safety code; dark-pattern rules; bot labelling; risk-based AI norms aligned with India’s DPDP Act and safe-by-design principles.

- **NITI Aayog & ICMR/DBT/MeitY:** fund brain–tech research, ethical digital phenotyping standards.
- **States/Urban Local Bodies:** device-free zones in public spaces; libraries, sports and arts programmes.
- **Civil society & industry:** credible third-party audits; open dashboards on attention-sparing design; campaigns akin to road-safety or anti-tobacco for “attention health”.

## ARE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CAUSING COGNITIVE PROSTHESES?




### WHY IT MATTERS

Cognitive off-loading from GPS and Social media to generative AI— are rapidly becoming “cognitive prostheses”, via **Smart phone** ‘infinite scroll for attention reducing ‘reasoning & social cognition

### RISKS OF PERSISTENT OFF-LOADING TECHNOLOGY

- GPS dependence weakens spatial skills
- Externalized memory undermines retrieval
- Attention fragmentation reduces focus
- Algorithmic curation diminishes reflective reasoning

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### AUGMENTATION IS REAL

Historical—externalized cognition streaming tools


- When designed well, tools like generative AI can raise human productivity

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### A HUMANE BLUEPRINT (INDIA FOCUS)

- Treat digital well-being as public health
- Rebuild cognitive foundations in education
- Mandate child-first defaults for platforms
- Ensure information integrity
- Protect “deep work” research
- Fund walkable, engaged communities
- Align incentives for humane tech



## 6. Likely objections & responses

- “Tools always free us; why worry?”

Off-loading is useful **until** it displaces practice below a threshold needed to maintain skill. The aim is **minimum viable practice** + better defaults.

- **“Regulation will stifle innovation.”**

Baseline safety (child-first defaults, dark-pattern bans, bot labelling) raises trust and market size—exactly what innovators need.

- **“Parents can handle this.”**

Individual willpower cannot defeat industrial-scale design. **Systemic, default-level** changes are necessary.

## 7. Conclusion:

- Human intelligence is **use-dependent**: we keep the capacities we **practice**. If our daily habits are built around machines that remember, navigate, filter and even “befriend” for us, those capacities will migrate out of us. A **human-centred tech settlement**—rooted in public health, education, design standards and civic spaces—can ensure that AI and digital tools **amplify** rather than **diminish** us. The goal is not a nostalgic return to a pre-digital age; it is a wiser future in which **we remain the pilots of our own minds**.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### 3.3. AI DRIVEN IDENTITY!

#### Descriptive Question:

Artificial intelligence is increasingly being used to replicate human consciousness, identity, and creativity, as seen in AI-powered projects like the Bhagavad Gita interactive book.

Critically examine the ethical, philosophical, and legal dilemmas posed by AI in questions of identity, authorship, and authenticity.

#### Answer:

#### Background: AI and the Question of Identity

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transcended its original purpose of problem-solving and computation to enter deeply human domains—creativity, authorship, identity, and consciousness. A striking example is the **AI-powered Bhagavad Gita project**, where a voice clone of the author engaged readers in interactive dialogue, raising unsettling questions about selfhood, authenticity, and the future of human distinctiveness. Unlike earlier debates around automation and jobs, the present dilemma is about whether machines can replicate or even replace essential human faculties such as emotions, values, and moral imagination.
- This raises fundamental philosophical and legal dilemmas: *If AI can convincingly “be” a person, who owns that identity? Can it claim authorship of literature or philosophy? Can it represent the spiritual voice of traditions?*

## Philosophical Dilemmas

### 1. Selfhood and Consciousness:

- AI generates outputs by pattern recognition across large data sets, but it lacks *qualia*—the subjective experience that makes humans unique. Neuroscience demonstrates that human thought is not merely information-processing but is rooted in emotion, embodiment, and lived experience. Yet, as AI voice clones replicate tone, rhythm, and memory, distinguishing machine from human becomes blurred.

### 2. Authenticity and Spirituality:

- Can an algorithm recite the Gita or Shakespeare and still be considered authentic? Religious and philosophical traditions emphasize the *lived wisdom* of teachers, not mere textual reproduction. Delegating such roles to AI risks hollowing spiritual texts into “performances” devoid of human struggle and transcendence.

### 3. The Ethics of Cloning Identity:

- Voice cloning and digital avatars could outlive their human originators, raising unsettling questions of digital immortality. Would descendants interact with a “digital ancestor”? Would society tolerate AI versions of Gandhi or Tagore speaking in modern contexts? This blurs the line between memory and manipulation.

## Legal and Policy Challenges

### 1. Authorship and Intellectual Property (IP):

- If an AI-trained on human interviews generates new text, who owns the copyright—the programmer, the AI’s operator, or the person whose voice and ideas were used? Current copyright law struggles to address this.

### 2. Consent and Privacy:

- Voice cloning without consent risks misuse. For instance, AI could “speak” words a person never said, leading to reputational, legal, and ethical crises.

### 3. Regulation of Deepfakes and Identity Theft:

- Without robust regulation, AI could weaponize identity by fabricating statements, videos, or writings, undermining public trust in institutions, journalism, and cultural heritage.

## Comparative Global Approaches

- **EU’s AI Act (2024):** Establishes obligations for transparency and prohibits high-risk applications like biometric mass surveillance, but stops short of regulating spiritual or identity cloning.
- **US:** Regulation remains fragmented, but lawsuits on voice cloning and deepfakes highlight rising concerns about misuse.
- **India:** While NITI Aayog’s AI strategy emphasizes “AI for All”, there is no clear legal framework for regulating identity-based AI or voice cloning.

**AI DRIVEN IDENTITY**

**BACKGROUND**

AI projects like an interactive Bhagavad Gita have demonstrated an ability to convincingly imitate human consciousness and authorship

**PHILOSOPHICAL DILEMMAS**

**Selfhood and consciousness:** Does AI truly understand or merely simulate human experience?

**Authenticity:** Can machine-generated content be considered genuine or spiritually valid?

**The ethics of cloning identity:** Voice clones and digital avatars blur the line between memory and manipulation

**LEGAL AND POLICY CHALLENGES**

**Who owns copyright of AI-generated works?**

**Voice cloning without consent raises privacy concerns**

**Deepfakes and identity theft can undermine public trust**

**Issues of IP Rights**

**COMPARATIVE GLOBAL APPROACHES**

**EU AI Act (2024)** establishes transparency obligations

- Transparency for users of AI-generated content
- Strengthened consent and authorship protocols

**BALANCING INNOVATION WITH SAFEGUARDS**

**Transparency for users of AI-generated content**

**Ethical frameworks for culture** SosinIAS

### Balancing Innovation with Safeguards

#### 1. Transparency Standards:

- AI-generated outputs must carry a “disclosure watermark” to alert users that the content is machine-generated.

#### 2. Consent Protocols:

- No AI system should replicate a human’s identity (voice, image, style) without explicit, revocable consent.

#### 3. Authorship and Moral Rights:

- India must evolve an *AI-IP framework* ensuring human authors retain primacy of credit, even when AI aids the process.

**4. Ethical AI in Spiritual and Cultural Domains:**

- Deploying AI in religion and philosophy should be overseen by ethical review boards, as these are not merely intellectual fields but matters of collective cultural identity.

**5. Digital Literacy and Awareness:**

- Citizens must be equipped to critically engage with AI-generated content to prevent manipulation and blind acceptance.

**Conclusion:**

- AI's power to mimic identity, as illustrated by the Bhagavad Gita project, reveals a double-edged sword: while it democratizes access to wisdom, it risks reducing humanity's deepest expressions into algorithmic replications. The challenge for India and the world is not merely technological but civilizational—how to preserve the authenticity of human consciousness, creativity, and spirituality in an era where machines can mimic but never truly *become* human.
- Thus, governance must craft an “AI ethics of identity”—anchored in dignity, authenticity, and consent—so that innovation empowers humanity without eroding what makes us uniquely human.

**Source: The Indian Express**

## 4. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

### 4.1. INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS – ACTS OF THE STATE?

#### Descriptive Question:

“Industrial accidents in India: Are they ‘acts of God’ or symptoms of a systemic safety deficit?”

Discuss the scale, causes and consequences of industrial accidents in India and propose a time-bound reform agenda that embeds safety as a core value rather than a compliance tick-box.

#### Answer:

##### Introduction: not fate, but choices

- Industrial explosions in Telangana’s Sigachi Industries, recurring firecracker disasters in Tamil Nadu, refinery and chemical-plant fires, and mining mishaps are not random tragedies. They are the visible tip of a chronic, nationwide safety failure. Over the last five years **at least 6,500 workers** have officially lost their lives at factories, construction sites and mines—nearly **five fatalities every day**—with many more in the informal and unregistered sector going uncounted. A 2022 review by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** recorded **130+ major chemical accidents in a 30-month period post-2020**, causing **218 deaths and 300+ injuries**, mostly in small and medium enterprises. **DG FASLI’s** returns indicate **a serious industrial accident roughly every two days** in registered factories; Gujarat alone reported **60+ industrial fires/gas leaks in 2021**. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu together saw **200+ fatalities** in major industrial incidents over the last decade. These are not “acts of God”. They reflect avoidable design, operational and governance failures.

#### *Why do accidents recur? The anatomy of a systemic deficit*

##### 1. Paper compliance, weak enforcement

- Plants operating **without Fire NOCs** or with **dysfunctional firefighting systems** (alarms, sensors, extinguishers).
- **No hazard identification/JSA**, perfunctory audits, **blocked or locked exits**, unsafe storage of hazardous materials.
- **Negligible penalties** and rare convictions make non-compliance a rational business choice.

##### 2. Safety as a cost, not a value

- In many firms, operational excellence and output targets trump safety.
- Contrast with **Germany and Japan**, where safety is embedded in industrial design and workplace culture; India still treats it as a statutory hurdle.

### 3. Precarious labour and inequity

- Heavy reliance on **migrant, contract and temporary workers** with language barriers and little training.
- Informal sector units—firecracker clusters, electroplating, small chemical plants—are **outside robust regulatory radar**.

### 4. Process safety gaps

- Weak **process safety management (PSM)**—poor HAZOP/LOPA, inadequate relief systems, ageing assets, and change management lapses.
- Inadequate **emergency planning and drills**, poor linkage with district crisis groups and hospitals.

### 5. Fragmented governance

- Overlapping but under-resourced regulators (Factories Inspectorates, PESO, pollution control boards, district administrations).
- Data is siloed; **near-misses are not captured**; lessons are not institutionalised.

#### *Human and economic costs*

- Every fatality is a breadwinner lost; families incur medical debt and long-term impoverishment.
- Firms suffer **downtime, asset loss, supply-chain disruption, insurance hikes** and reputational damage.
- Regions with repeated incidents deter investment and deepen environmental injustice around worker colonies and “fenceline” communities.

#### *“Act of God” vs accountability*

- Calling disasters “acts of God” obscures culpability. Several jurisdictions impose **corporate manslaughter** liability for gross safety failures. It is to be noted that **South Korea and Singapore** have enacted tough corporate homicide statutes. India’s current framework (Factories Act, 1948; Chemical Accidents Rules; PESO rules; Explosives Rules, etc.) seldom results in director-level accountability.

#### *Reform agenda: from tick-box to culture*

##### A) Legislative and institutional reset

1. **Enact an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Code with teeth:**
  - Harmonise sectoral laws; set **binding PSM standards** for hazardous processes (Seveso-style thresholds).
  - Introduce **corporate manslaughter** provisions and **officer due-diligence duties**; make board-level safety oversight mandatory.
  - **Right to refuse unsafe work** and whistle-blower protection for workers.

## 2. Independent National Safety Authority

- A lean “India-OSHA” to set standards, accredit auditors, publish investigation reports, and maintain a **public incident/near-miss database**.

## 3. Digitised risk governance

- Compulsory e-reporting of incidents, near-misses and corrective actions; QR-coded NOCs; integration with fire services, health and district disaster management.



## B) Plant-level essentials

1. **Process Safety Management:** mandatory **HAZOP, SIL/LOPA, MOC**, mechanical integrity, alarm management, permit-to-work, competency matrices.
2. **Independent safety audits** at least annually for MAH (Major Accident Hazard) sites, with **public summaries**.
3. **Emergency readiness:** on-site/off-site plans, multilingual signage, unblocked exits, muster drills, MoUs with hospitals, community siren systems.

**4. People and capability:**

- Minimum **EHS staffing ratios**; certified training in local languages; periodic medical surveillance.
- Formal inclusion of **contract workers** in training, PPE provisioning and accident compensation.

**5. Technology and design:** flare/vent systems, gas detection, interlocks, remote isolation, intrinsically safe electrics; **inherently safer design** in new projects.

**C) Economics that reward safety**

- 1) **Insurance and ESG:** link premiums and credit spreads to safety performance; mandatory disclosure of **TRIR/LTIFR/PSER** in annual reports; tie **board remuneration** to safety KPIs.
- 2) **Fiscal nudges:** accelerated depreciation for safety upgrades; pooled funds for MSME safety retrofits.

**D) Community and transparency**

- **Citizen right-to-know** for MAH sites (materials inventory, emergency instructions); siren testing calendars; school and neighbourhood drills.
- Third-party hotlines for anonymous reporting; civil-society monitoring of clusters (firecracker, chemical, stone-crushing).

***Prioritised 12-month action plan***

1. Notify **National Industrial Safety Vision 2030** with state-wise targets.
2. Launch a **100-cluster “Zero Harm” programme** (firecracker belts, chemical estates, foundries).
3. Create a **National Incident & Near-miss Repository** and mandate reporting within 24 hours.
4. **One-time safety audit** of all MAH units; shut repeated defaulters.
5. Annual **nationwide mock drill fortnight** linking plants, district authorities and hospitals.
6. **Board-signed Safety Accountability Statements** in every hazardous enterprise.

***Conclusion***

- Industrial accidents in India are **not inevitable**; they are the **human cost of indifference**—to law, to design, and to the dignity of workers. With thousands of lives lost in peacetime, the moral and economic imperative is unambiguous. If India can embed safety as a core value—backed by sharper laws, credible enforcement, empowered workers and transparent data—the narrative can shift from mourning to prevention. **Industrial safety is not a favour; it is a right.**

**Source: The Hindu**

## 5. SECURITY

### 5.1. LEFT-WING EXTREMISM – TOWARDS CONTRACTION?

#### Descriptive Question:

With Left-Wing Extremism visibly receding, trace its political-economic trajectory from ideological roots to present contraction. Critically evaluate the 2024–25 security push, the misuse of the ‘urban naxal’ label, and propose a rights-respecting last-mile roadmap in policing, justice, development, and forest governance under emerging tech threats.

#### Answer:

#### 1. Setting the frame: insurgency, politics and prediction

- Modern terrorism and insurgency resist linear prediction. Even after two decades since 9/11, **lone-actor violence, online radicalisation and franchise terror** remain persistent.
- **AI now multiplies uncertainty**—automated propaganda, deepfakes, low-cost autonomy, encrypted coordination—making triumphal pronouncements risky.
- India’s case of **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)/Naxalism** illustrates this: what began as a revolutionary, ideology-led mobilisation has thinned into fragmented violence, yet pockets remain resilient in forested belts.

#### 2. Political economy & evolution of Naxalism

- **Origins & ideology (late-1960s):** The Naxalbari upsurge articulated a coherent revolutionary ideology. Charismatic leaders and global currents (Mao, Che, Ho) gave it intellectual coherence and urban sympathies.
- **Fragmentation & shift to forests (1970s–2000s):** As urban fervour ebbed, groups splintered into regional formations. The centre of gravity moved to **resource-rich, governance-poor forest districts** of central & eastern India (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, parts of AP/MP), where:
  - **Land/forest alienation, mining conflicts and displacement** bred grievances.
  - **Thin state capacity**—roads, phones, schools, health, courts—created a vacuum.
  - The movement turned to **levy/extortion economies**, IED warfare, and coercive “jan adalats,” weakening its ideological appeal.

#### 3. Why the movement contracted

##### Security-side drivers

- **Intelligence-led operations** by specialised units (e.g., Greyhounds/CoBRA/Bastariya battalion), better inter-state coordination, and denial of jungle sanctuaries.
- **Targeted leadership attrition;** disruption of finance and weapons pipelines; increasing **surrenders/rehabilitation**.

- **Technology infusion**—SIGINT, UAVs, better comms, ballistic protection, mine-protected mobility.

#### **Governance-side drivers**

- **Connectivity & presence:** all-weather roads, mobile towers, banking/DBT, PDS reform—shrinking the physical and informational sanctuary.
- **Livelihood/social sector spending** (MGNREGA, health, schooling, hostels, skilling, FRA-linked NTFP markets).
- **Legal empowerment:** gradual, if uneven, implementation of **PESA** and **Forest Rights Act**, giving Gram Sabhas a voice over local resources.

#### **Ideological exhaustion**

- Loss of a unifying national narrative; coercion against local communities; infighting and splinters eroded legitimacy.

*Result:* Over the last decade, incidents, fatalities and the geographic “red corridor” have fallen sharply; many districts have **transitioned out of the ‘most-affected’ list**. The 2024–25 centrally coordinated push further compressed active areas, with multiple states conducting synchronised operations.

#### **4. The 2024–25 offensive—gains and cautions**

- **Gains:** Higher operational tempo; coordinated strikes on core zones; better logistics; more road-opening. Public signalling of intent boosted district-level morale and inter-agency unity of effort.
- **Cautions:**
  - **Numbers vs. end-state:** Reducing headcounts or weapon recoveries ≠ durable peace; insurgencies relapse where **justice, services and local consent** remain weak.
  - **Civilian protection:** Large ops must maintain **strict IHL/HR safeguards**—cordon-and-search, surrender protocols, proportional force, compensation and independent inquiry when harm occurs.
  - **Justice backlog:** Delays and low conviction quality undercut credibility; speedy, fair trials are essential to close cycles of violence.

#### **5. On the contested label “urban naxal”**

- Historically, “**urban Naxalism**” denoted ideologically aligned organisers/intellectual networks in the 1960s–70s.
- Today the label is often **loosely weaponised** against dissenters or critics. This **blurs intelligence priorities**, chills academic and civil society space, and **risks miscarriages of justice**.
- Democratic resilience requires **sharp distinctions:** advocacy ≠ insurgency; evidence-based prosecution under due process, not rhetorical categories.

## Left-Wing Extremism – Towards Contraction?

### Roots & Evolution

**Roots & Evolution**  
1967: Nexalbari uprising  
→ Revolutionary ideology inspired by Mao

**Shift to Forest Beits**  
(1970s–2000s)  
state absence

Movement turned coercive. extortion, IED warfare, 'jan adalats'

**Red Corridor shrank sharply; many districts exited 'most affected' list by 2025**

### Why It Contracted

**Security:** Geyehounds  
• Greyhounds; CoBRA  
• Bastariva Battallon  
• UAVs, Intel-led operations

**Governance:**  
• Roads, mobile towers  
• Pesa empowerment

**Ideological**  
• Fragmented factions, loss of narrative  
• Coercion against locals

Also, Be prepared for AI-era mutation of violence

### The 2024–25 Push

**Gains**   
Higher tempo  
Morale boost

**Cautions:** Headcount ≠  
Durable peace  
Justice backlog

**Advocacy ≠ Insurgency**

### Emerging Risks

AI propaganda, deep-fakes, encrypted coordination

Drone-enabled IEDs, crypto-financing

### Rights-respecting roadmap

**Security:**  
• Fast-track LWE courts  
• Forensic upgrades  
• Fair use of UAPA

**Development:**  
• FRA/PESA  
• Local livelihoods  
• State services in forests

"Durable peace is not the absence of squads—it is the presence of accountable institutions, justice, and respected tribal/forest rights"

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## 6. The next risks: insurgency in an AI era

- **AI-enabled propaganda & deepfakes**, micro-targeted recruitment, and **encrypted small-cell coordination**.
- **Commercial drones** for ISR/IED delivery; low-signature logistics; cross-platform anonymity (messengers, crypto).
- **Climate/resource stress** in forest regions could intensify grievances (displacement, water/NTFP shocks) if governance lags.

## 7. Roadmap for a rights-respecting “last mile” strategy

### A. Security & policing

- 1) **SAMADHAN-Next**: sustained, theatre-specific plans with measurable KPIs; saturation of security grid in residual pockets; **community policing** and women-focused outreach.

- 2) **CIVCAS doctrine**: codified civilian-harm mitigation; body-worn cams, after-action reviews, and public reporting to build trust.
- 3) **Tech stack**: anti-IED suites, counter-drone, terrain analytics, mission-mode comms for remote forests; integrated fusion centres for multi-agency intelligence.

#### B. Justice & accountability

- 1) **Fast-track LWE courts** with witness protection; forensic capacity for IED/financial cases; legal aid in local languages.
- 2) **Calibrated use of UAPA**; sunset reviews of prolonged detention; periodic audits by High Courts/NHRC-type oversight.
- 3) **Rehabilitation that works**: credible surrender policy, skill transitions, land/house support, and stigma-free reintegration; independent monitoring to prevent reprisals.

#### C. Development & rights

- 1) **FRA & PESA deepening**: genuine Gram Sabha control over minor forest produce, mapping/vesting of rights, consent protocols for projects, and shareable royalties.
- 2) **Livelihoods beyond cash**: value chains for NTFP, agro-forestry, eco-tourism guards, local procurement; fix teacher/doctor vacancies with incentives and tele-solutions.
- 3) **State presence every day**: reliable transport, banking correspondents, digital connectivity; grievance redress with **social audit-style community oversight**.

#### D. Political engagement

- 1) **Panchayat empowerment** and regular elections; tribal advisory councils that actually meet and decide.
- 2) **Narrative work**: celebrate local champions; counter false propaganda with **fact-based, local-language communication**.

#### E. Tech-era safeguards

- 1) **AI/OSINT cells** for early warning, but with **privacy and proportionality**.
- 2) **Counter-disinformation playbooks** and rapid public clarification to pre-empt rumours and deepfakes.

#### 8. Conclusion:

- India's LWE story shows how **politics and governance** ultimately shape insurgency. The movement's contraction reflects **intelligence-led security, restored state presence, and fraying ideology**. But **overreach and premature triumphalism** could squander gains. The durable end-state is not merely the absence of armed squads; it is the **presence of accountable institutions, accessible justice, and respected forest/tribal rights**—all while preparing for **AI-era mutation** of violence. That balanced path secures both **citizen dignity and national authority**.

**Source: The Hindu**

**6. PRELIMS WORK BOOK**

1. **Himgiri, recently handed over to the Indian Navy, is:**
  - a) A next-generation destroyer built under Project 15B
  - b) A nuclear-powered submarine developed under Project 75I
  - c) A stealth frigate developed under Project 17A
  - d) An aircraft carrier built at Cochin Shipyard under Project Vikrant
2. **Which of the following countries has recently launched 'MAX', a state-controlled messaging application to promote a sovereign internet?**
  - a) China
  - b) Russia
  - c) Iran
  - d) North Korea
3. **The recently completed Bairabi–Sairang railway line, which is vital for enhancing connectivity under the Act East Policy, is situated in which Indian state?**
  - a) Nagaland
  - b) Tripura
  - c) Mizoram
  - d) Manipur
4. **With reference to the PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh) scheme, which of the following best describes its primary objective?**
  - a) To provide free LPG cylinders to all BPL households under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
  - b) To subsidise the cost of LPG cylinders through oil marketing companies at the point of sale
  - c) To directly transfer LPG subsidies to consumers' bank accounts and eliminate fake and duplicate connections
  - d) To provide cooking fuel exclusively in rural and tribal areas using renewable energy sources
5. **The Indian celebration of World Elephant Day 2025 was organised at which of the following venues?**
  - a) Mysuru, Karnataka
  - b) Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
  - c) Kaziranga, Assam
  - d) Bhubaneswar, Odisha

6. In the GST reform proposal announced by the Prime Minister on 15th August 2025, what is the new GST rate proposed for sin goods such as tobacco and pan masala?
- 28% (with compensation cess)
  - 35% flat rate
  - 40% slab for 5–7 identified sin goods
  - 18% plus cess on demerit goods
7. “Anna-Chakra”, recently in the news, primarily refers to:
- A direct benefit transfer platform for LPG subsidies
  - A route-optimisation tool to streamline **PDS grain logistics** across States/UTs
  - A crop-insurance scheme for small and marginal farmers
  - A national portal to track mid-day meal nutrition outcomes
8. “Sustainable Power 1404”, recently in the news, best refers to:
- Iran’s long-term renewable-energy roadmap for 1404 (2025–26)
  - An Iranian naval exercise conducted in the Gulf of Oman and northern Indian Ocean
  - A joint Iran–Russia cyber operation against maritime targets
  - An OPEC+ framework to stabilize oil prices through 2026
9. Under Anemia Mukt Bharat, the fortified-rice component targets which set of micronutrients?
- Iron, Vitamin C and Zinc
  - Iron, Folic Acid and Vitamin B12
  - Iodine and Iron only
  - Vitamin A, Vitamin D and Zinc
10. The Union Cabinet recently extended the PM SVANidhi scheme till which year?
- 2026
  - 2028
  - 2030
  - 2032



**GS - IV**

## GS 4

### 1. PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERGENCE - TAGOR AND SANKARACHARYA

#### Descriptive Question:

How do the philosophical visions of Rabindranath Tagore and Adi Shankaracharya converge in addressing the human quest for meaning, unity, and spiritual awakening? Analyse their contributions to the idea of oneness and inner freedom in the modern context.

#### Answer:

#### Introduction:

- Across the expanse of Indian philosophical and spiritual thought, few figures command as universal a resonance as Rabindranath Tagore and Adi Shankaracharya. Though separated by more than a millennium, their messages share a profound unity — a vision of the self not as an isolated entity but as an integral expression of the universal spirit. Tagore, through poetic evocations of the heart, and Shankaracharya, through rigorous metaphysical enquiry, illuminate parallel paths to the same spiritual truth: the realisation of oneness with the cosmos. Their teachings are not merely abstract reflections but offer timely guidance in an age of fragmentation, anxiety, and spiritual dislocation.

#### Tagore's Vision: A Poetic Embrace of the Divine in the Everyday

- Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy is deeply embedded in the Upanishadic tradition but articulated through poetry, music, and prose in a way that touches the heart more than the intellect. He views life as an unfolding of divine bliss — a cosmic play shimmering in every blade of grass, every drop of rain, and every rising sun.
  - **Spiritual Humanism:** Tagore's worldview is rooted in **Brahmavāda** (oneness of existence), yet translated into a spiritual humanism where the divine is experienced not through renunciation but intimate communion with life. In works like *Gitanjali*, he writes, "Where the mind is without fear...into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake," blending nationalism with universal spiritual aspiration.
  - **Sanctity of Everyday Life:** Tagore urges us to find **sacredness in ordinary moments** — the rustle of leaves, the warmth of human affection — making spirituality accessible and embodied.

#### Shankaracharya's Vision: Realisation Through Knowledge and Detachment

- Adi Shankaracharya, a towering figure of Advaita Vedanta (non-dualism), offers a metaphysical system where **Atman (individual self) is identical to Brahman (universal consciousness)**.

- **Rational Illumination:** Through rigorous logic and scriptural interpretation, Shankaracharya dismantles illusions (Maya) and guides seekers to the recognition that distinctions — between self and other, joy and sorrow — are superimpositions on the one undivided reality.
- **Liberation through Inner Knowledge:** Liberation (Moksha), in Shankara's system, is not obtained through rituals but through **self-inquiry** (jnana yoga). The famous dictum "**Aham Brahmasmi**" ("I am Brahman") encapsulates the realisation of the non-separate self.
- **Wave-Ocean Analogy:** Like waves that rise and fall within the ocean, Shankara sees all individuals as momentary manifestations of the same undivided reality — never truly separate, always part of the infinite whole.

#### **Convergence: Unity of Vision, Divergence of Path**

- While Tagore and Shankaracharya differ in method — the former evoking the divine through aesthetic and emotional resonance, the latter through epistemic clarity and detachment — their teachings ultimately converge in affirming:
  - **The Inseparability of the Self from the Universe.**
  - **The futility of ego-based separation.**
  - **The importance of spiritual realisation as the highest human goal.**
- Tagore appeals to the heart; Shankaracharya appeals to the head. Yet both dissolve the illusion of separateness and guide individuals toward **spiritual wholeness**.

# PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERGENCE: TAGORE AND SHANKARACHARYA

How do Tagore's and Shankaracharya's philosophies converge in addressing humanity's quest for meaning, unity, and awakening

## TAGORE'S VISION: A POETIC EMBRACE OF THE DIVINE IN THE EVERYDAY



- **Spiritual Humanism:** Envisions life as an intimate communion with the divine present in all
- **Sanctity of Everyday Life:** Urges finding sacredness in ordinary moments

## SHANKARACHARYA'S VISION: REALIZATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND DETACHMENT



- **Rational illumination:** Guides seekers to see beyond illusions (Maya) to the one undivided reality
- **Liberation through Inner Knowledge:** Teaches self-inquiry (inana yoga) leading to the realization of "Aham Brahmasmi"
- **Wave-Ocean Analogy:** Sees individuals as momentary manifestations of the same undivided reality

## CONVERGENCE: UNITY OF VISION, DIVERGENCE OF PATH

- **Inseparability of the Self and the Universe**
- **Futility of ego-based separation**
- **Bridging Science and Spirituality:** integrates rational inquiry with intuitive understanding

## MODERN RELEVANCE: INNER FREEDOM IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

- **Mental Health and Inner Peace**  
Recognition of divinity within all fosters compassion and spiritual grounding
- **Bridging Science and Spirituality**  
Integrates rational inquiry with intuitive understanding

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### Modern Relevance: Inner Freedom in a Fragmented World

- In an age marked by identity conflicts, material anxiety, and ecological estrangement, the teachings of Tagore and Shankaracharya offer vital pathways to wholeness.
  - **Mental Health and Inner Peace:** Their call for recognising **divinity within all beings** fosters compassion, reduces alienation, and provides a grounding spiritual ethic.

- **Bridging Science and Spirituality:** Tagore's dialogues with Einstein reflected a nuanced synthesis of **rational inquiry and intuitive understanding**, a model crucial for integrating ethical dimensions into modern science and technology.
- **Inspiration for Ethical Leadership and Service:** Both thinkers speak to those in positions of responsibility — doctors, educators, policy makers — to lead with empathy, insight, and detachment from ego.
- **Counter to Consumerism:** Their teachings reject the reduction of happiness to material gain and invite a deeper connection to being and consciousness.

#### Counterarguments and Synthesis

- Critics may argue that Shankara's philosophy is too ascetic or abstract for modern engagement, while Tagore's poetic spirituality may lack systematic rigour. However, their enduring appeal lies in precisely their **complementarity** — one provides philosophical depth; the other, lived vitality.
- Moreover, both transcend religious exclusivism and offer **universal philosophies**. While Shankaracharya stayed within the Vedantic canon, his teachings on inner awareness and detachment are echoed in other spiritual traditions. Tagore, likewise, celebrated unity in diversity and envisioned a **cosmopolitan spiritual nationalism** far ahead of his time.

#### Conclusion:

- Tagore and Adi Shankaracharya, in their unique ways, guide us toward the **realisation of the Self as not isolated but part of an indivisible whole**. Their teachings remain vital not just for spiritual seekers but for a fractured humanity in search of meaning, resilience, and ethical clarity. At a time when hyper-individualism, polarisation, and spiritual void dominate the collective psyche, they remind us that the heart's true home lies in **recognising unity in all existence** — and that path, whether through silence or song, is open to all.
- **Their teachings are not about escape from the world, but about seeing the divine in every part of it — and in every part of ourselves.**

**Source: The Indian Express**

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**ANSWER KEY****GS 1****1. Answer: c****Explanation:**

The Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), is India's premier institute for leather research, located in Chennai. It has been instrumental in protecting India's leather heritage crafts like Kolhapuri chappal by technically assisting in GI registration, design preservation, and sustainable manufacturing practices. This helps artisans gain legal recognition and international marketing advantage.

**2. Answer: b****Explanation:**

The Karkota dynasty (circa 625–855 CE) ruled large parts of Kashmir during the 7th to 9th centuries CE. This period is often referred to as Kashmir's Golden Age due to the flourishing of Sanskrit scholarship, temple architecture, and cultural innovation. Lalitaditya Muktapida, a prominent ruler of the dynasty, expanded its influence beyond Kashmir.

**3. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Stewart Gordon is a historian known for his work on Maratha history, particularly the socio-political structure of the empire and its tribute system. Jadunath Sarkar is known for Mughal history, B.L. Bhadani for medieval Rajasthan, and Satish Chandra for medieval Indian history, but none authored *The Marathas 1600–1818*.

**4. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Awaza is a resort town on the Caspian Sea in Turkmenistan and served as the venue for LLDC3 in 2025. Previous LLDC conferences: LLDC1: Almaty, Kazakhstan (2003) LLDC2: Vienna, Austria (2014). Awaza hosted LLDC3 to launch the Awaza Programme of Action (2024–2034).

**5. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Dhirio (also called dhiri) is a traditional bullfight native to Goa, involving two bulls locking horns until one retreats. It is banned under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960* but continues illegally in some areas. Proponents argue for its legalisation as part of cultural preservation, while opponents cite animal welfare concerns. It differs from Spanish bullfighting in that the bulls are not killed.

**6. Answer: b****Explanation:**

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) introduced ISO 17088-compliant biodegradable packaging material developed by IIT Guwahati as part of a pilot initiative on trains. It is the first railway zone in India to take this step, starting on 15 August 2025, with distribution of 40,000 bio-plastic bags across 25 trains.

**7. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Delulu is derived from “delusional” and is widely used to describe people, particularly fans, who indulge in unrealistic expectations or fantasies, such as imagining personal relationships with celebrities.

**8. Answer: c****Explanation:**

*Ulchi Freedom Shield* is the ROK–U.S. joint military exercise featuring command-post simulations and field drills to strengthen combined readiness against North Korean threats.

**9. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Prithu, a ruler of Kamarupa (present-day Assam), is identified in Persian chronicles and later Assamese traditions as the king who defeated Bakhtiyar Khilji around 1206 CE. Rudra Singha (17th–18th century) and Naranarayan (16th century) were important Ahom and Koch rulers, but much later in history. Lachit Borphukan is celebrated for the 1671 Battle of Saraighat against the Mughals, not against Khilji.

**GS 2****1. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Karol Nawrocki was inaugurated as Poland’s new President on 6 August 2025. He is a conservative historian, backed by Donald Trump, and aims to take a more nationalist line. Donald Tusk is the current Prime Minister. Mateusz Morawiecki is a former PM from the Law and Justice party. Andrzej Duda was the previous President of Poland (2015–2025).

**2. Answer: b****Explanation:**

In *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar* (1962), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Section 124A IPC (sedition) but limited its scope to acts involving incitement to violence or intention to create public disorder. Mere criticism of the government or political dissent without such intent is not sedition. This case is a landmark precedent for balancing free speech with state security.

**3. Answer: c****Explanation:**

The Bill proposes a new clause in Article 75 (and corresponding changes for States/Delhi) requiring removal of a Minister detained for 30 consecutive days in a case punishable with  $\geq 5$  years, with automatic cessation if the mandated advice is not tendered by the deadline; it has been referred to a JPC.

**4. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Kerala's LSGD-led 'Digi Keralam' trained ~21.8 lakh identified learners after surveying ~1.5 crore people, with a 98.8% pass rate, leading to the 100% digital literacy declaration on 21 Aug 2025.

**5. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Daruma Doll – symbolises perseverance, determination, and good fortune; linked to Bodhidharma from India. Maneki Neko (Lucky Cat) – a Japanese figurine symbolising prosperity and good luck in businesses. The Daruma doll was the correct answer, reflecting Indo-Japanese cultural ties and shared historical linkages through Bodhidharma.

**GS 3****1. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Himgiri (Yard 3022), delivered to the Indian Navy in July 2025, is the third ship of Project 17A, a class of advanced stealth guided-missile frigates. Built at GRSE Kolkata, Himgiri signifies a major stride in self-reliant indigenous warship design. Project 17A is a successor to the Shivalik-class (Project 17), with significant improvements in modularity, stealth, automation, and weapons systems.

**2. Answer: b****Explanation:**

Russia has recently launched the MAX app as part of its long-standing effort to build a domestic, state-controlled internet ecosystem. It is intended to replace or restrict the use of foreign apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, and YouTube. This move is part of Russia's broader vision of digital sovereignty and tighter surveillance over internal communications and internet traffic.

**3. Answer: c****Explanation:**

The Bairabi–Sairang railway line is a 51.38 km-long broad gauge line in Mizoram, completed recently by Indian Railways. It connects the town of Sairang, situated around 20 km from Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. This is a major strategic and infrastructure milestone because Mizoram earlier had only a 1.5 km metre gauge line at Bairabi, connecting to Assam's Silchar.

**4. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Option A describes PMUY, not PAHAL. Option B describes the old indirect subsidy system, replaced by PAHAL. Option C correctly captures PAHAL's core goals — direct subsidy transfer, elimination of fake connections, and prevention of diversion. Option D refers to alternative energy initiatives, not PAHAL.

**5. Answer: b****Explanation:**

In 2025, MoEF&CC and Tamil Nadu Forest Department jointly organised the *World Elephant Day* event in Coimbatore. The event included a workshop on Human-Elephant Conflict and nationwide awareness programmes. Previous World Elephant Day events in India have been hosted in other elephant range states, but 2025 focused on Tamil Nadu's conservation role.

**6. Answer: c****Explanation:**

Under the present GST system, sin goods like tobacco, gutka, and pan masala attract 28% GST plus a compensation cess. The new proposal seeks to abolish the 28% slab and replace it with a 40% flat GST rate for sin goods, covering about 5–7 categories (mainly tobacco-related products). This move is intended to maintain revenue neutrality, discourage harmful consumption, and simplify the structure.

**7. Answer: b****Explanation:**

As per the Government's 19 Aug 2025 update, *Anna-Chakra* is a Supply Chain Optimisation Tool under PDS, implemented in 30 of 31 targeted States/UTs, with projected transport-cost savings of ~₹250 crore annually and lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is not a DBT, insurance, or nutrition-monitoring platform.

**8. Answer: b****Explanation:**

*Sustainable Power 1404* is a two-day Iranian Navy drill in the Gulf of Oman and northern Indian Ocean, involving missile launches and multi-domain naval assets.

**9. Answer: b****Explanation:**

India's fortification standard for rice kernels specifies iron + folic acid (B9) + vitamin B12. This aligns with AMB's anaemia-reduction strategy that combines IFA supplementation with fortified foods in public programmes.

**10. Answer: c****Explanation:**

The Cabinet extended the scheme's lending period from December 31, 2024 to March 31, 2030. This is expected to benefit 1.15 crore vendors, of which 50 lakh are new entrants. The enhanced loan tranches and incentives aim to strengthen financial resilience and formalisation of street vendors.

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## NEWS & EVENTS DIARY - AUGUST 2025

**FROM AUGUST 1<sup>st</sup> To 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

### ❖ **POLITY & GOVERNANCE:**

- **Prajwal Revanna Convicted (August 1):** Former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna was convicted of rape by a special Bengaluru court, receiving a sentence of rigorous life imprisonment the following day. The verdict underscores the judiciary's stance on political accountability and gender justice.
- **VinFast Factory Commences India Operations (August 4):** Vietnamese automaker VinFast inaugurated (its first Indian assembly facility) production at its \$500 million factory at SIPCOT Industrial Park in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, expected to generate over 3,000 direct jobs. This investment bolsters India's push toward Atmanirbhar Bharat and EV manufacturing. The plant will initially produce 50,000 EVs annually but is scalable to 150,000. It marks a significant step for India's EV aspirations and private investment in manufacturing

### ❖ **ECONOMY & INDUSTRY:**

- **Infrastructure Index Rebounds (June data):** India's infrastructure output—covering eight core sectors—rose to +1.7% in June, from 1.2% in May, signaling a modest industrial recovery.

### ❖ **ENVIRONMENT & DISASTERS:**

- **Uttarakhand Flash Flood (August 5):** Flash floods in Uttarkashi claimed at least five lives, with over 100 reported missing, prompting rescue and relief operations in mountainous terrain—highlighting the urgent need for disaster preparedness in sensitive zones.

### ❖ **CULTURE & SOCIETY:**

- **Ganesh Chaturthi Preparations Begin:** Upcoming Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, starting on August 27, saw cultural fervor build up—emphasizing its importance in social cohesion, ritual business, and community mobilization.

### ❖ **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:**

- **US–India Diplomatic & Trade Crisis Escalates:** From early August, the U.S. levied 25% tariffs on Indian goods, escalating to 50% owing to India's Russian oil imports. India condemned the move, calling it unjust and warned of impacted strategic cooperation, including defense deals.
- **New U.S. Visa Collection Rules for Indian Applicants (Effective August 1):** From August 1, all Indian passport and visa applicants must collect their documents in person from U.S. Embassy or Consulate premises—third-party pick-up is no longer permitted.

Exemptions apply only for minors, whose passports may be collected by a parent or legal guardian.

**FROM AUGUST 6<sup>th</sup> To 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

❖ **ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER MANAGEMENT:**

- **Uttarakhand Flash Flood Devastates Dharali (August 5–6):** A sudden cloudburst triggered a flash flood in the Himalayan village of Dharali, Uttarkashi, killing at least 4 people and leaving over 50 missing—including army personnel. Rescue teams from the Army, NDRF, SDRF were deployed, amid warnings of further landslides and monsoon-related threats.

❖ **ECONOMY & INDUSTRY:**

- **NITI Aayog Releases India Electric Mobility Index (August 6):** The India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2024 was launched to benchmark progress of states and UTs in adopting electric mobility. It's a first-of-its-kind tool to inform policies under national EV goals.

❖ **INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORT:**

- **Ajni–Pune Vande Bharat Express Flagged Off:** PM Modi inaugurated India's longest Mini Vande Bharat Express, spanning 882 km between Nagpur (Ajni) and Pune. Equipped with modern amenities like Kavach, Wi-Fi, and infotainment, it enhances high-speed regional connectivity.

❖ **CULTURE & SOCIETY:**

- **J&K Bans 25 Books; Raises Censorship Concerns (August 5–7):** The J&K Home Department banned 25 books, including works by Arundhati Roy and A.G. Noorani, citing threats to integrity. The Internet Freedom Foundation and others condemned the move, urging transparency and press freedom. Librarians expressed concern over forced compliance.

❖ **INTERNATIONAL TRADE & ECONOMY:**

- **US–India Trade Tensions Escalate (From August 7):** The U.S. implemented 50% tariffs on Indian imports—doubling earlier levy—as retaliation for India's continued purchase of Russian oil. Key sectors like textiles, gems, and seafood were targeted. India rejected the move, defending its energy policies. Economists warned of job losses and weakened export growth.

❖ **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:**

- **Putin to Visit India by Late August (August 7):** President Vladimir Putin is scheduled for a visit to India later in August, as disclosed by NSA Ajit Doval—reflecting ongoing strategic alignment between New Delhi and Moscow.

**FROM AUGUST 11<sup>th</sup> To 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025****❖ POLITY & GOVERNANCE:**

- **Supreme Court Orders Stray Dog Transfer (August 11):** The Supreme Court directed the Delhi government to relocate all stray dogs to shelters within eight weeks, citing public safety concerns such as dog bites and rabies. The decision triggered protests at India Gate, reflecting public sensitivity to animal welfare versus human safety.

**❖ INTERNAL SECURITY & PUBLIC ORDER:**

- **Rahul Gandhi's 'Vote Theft' Allegations Spark Protest and Notice (August 11):** Rahul Gandhi alleged voter-list manipulation by the Election Commission and drew attention to “vote theft.” The ECI served notices through state CEOs of Maharashtra and Haryana, demanding an affidavit within 10 days or an apology. Opposition protests erupted in Delhi and West Bengal accusing government complicity.

**❖ ECONOMY & MARKET DEVELOPMENTS:**

- **Indian Markets Under Pressure (Week to August 8):** The benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex declined by approximately 0.8–0.9%, while Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers, offloading about \$1.34 billion worth of equities—highlighting investor caution.

**❖ ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER RESPONSE:**

- **Vehicular Tragedies in Pune and Madhya Pradesh (August 11):** A pick-up van accident in Pune's hilly terrain killed ten women and injured 25 others. A separate collision in Madhya Pradesh's Anuppur district resulted in five fatalities involving a jeep and motorcycle.
- **Flash Floods in Jammu & Kashmir (August 15):** A cloudburst along the Machail Mata pilgrimage route in Kishtwar, J&K, caused flash floods, resulting in 60 deaths and over 100 injuries. Rescue operations were launched amid worsening rain forecasts.
- **Delhi Dargah Collapse (August 16):** Partial collapse of Pattawali Dargah Masjid wall/roof killed 7 and injured many.

**❖ CULTURE & EVENTS:**

- **Celebrating Independence Day with a Special Google Doodle (August 15):** In honour of India's Independence Day, Google unveiled a bespoke Doodle featuring icons of cricket, cinema, chess, and space, underscoring national pride in diverse fields.
- **Clarifying the Independence Day Count (August 11):** A debate surfaced on whether 2025 marks India's 78th or 79th Independence Day—78 years have passed since 1947, but this year is the 79th celebration, depending on counting method.

**FROM AUGUST 16<sup>th</sup> To 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025****❖ POLITY & GOVERNANCE:**

- **130th Constitutional Amendment Bill Introduced (August 20):** Home Minister Amit Shah introduced the notable 130th Amendment Bill, which proposes automatic removal of the Prime Minister, CMs, and Ministers held under serious criminal charges for more than 30 days—reinforcing accountability in governance. The Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for review.

**❖ DEFENSE & SECURITY:**

- **Mission Sudarshan Chakra Launched (August 15):** Announced by PM Modi on Independence Day, **Mission Sudarshan Chakra** aims to establish a “Made-in-India” aerial defense shield—akin to Israel’s Iron Dome. Designed for counterstrike and anti-cyber capabilities, it reflects India’s strategic deterrent modernization.

**❖ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & TRADE:**

- **US Cancels Trade Talks Amid Escalation (August 16):** The U.S. cancelled the sixth round of trade negotiations scheduled for late August in New Delhi, escalating tensions. This setback follows Washington’s steep tariffs of up to 50% on Indian imports, triggered by India’s oil imports from Russia.
- **Quad Alliance Enhances Critical Minerals Security (August 19):** India underlined the Quad’s role—alongside the U.S., Japan, and Australia—in securing critical minerals. PM Modi’s visits to Japan (August 29–30) and the SCO Summit in China signal strategic recalibration amid evolving geopolitical landscapes.

**❖ ENVIRONMENT & URBAN ISSUES:**

- **Floodgates Open at Sukhna Lake, Chandigarh (August 20):** Sudden rise in Sukhna Lake water levels led to activation of floodgates, submerging transport causeways for over 7 hours. Authorities mounted rapid response while residents demanded better flood risk planning.

**❖ SOCIETY, CULTURE & HEALTH:**

- **Mosquito-borne Disease Surge in Nagpur (August 16–20):** Nagpur saw a rise in dengue and chikungunya cases with nearly 44,833 mosquito breeding spots detected within 25 days. Continuous monsoon and poor infrastructure contributed to the crisis, prompting calls for heightened civic action.
- **Advance Salary Disbursement for Festivals (August):** To facilitate festival celebrations (Ganesh Chaturthi, Onam), the central government allowed early disbursal of salaries, wages, and pensions for employees in Maharashtra and Kerala.

- **Janmashtami 2025 Observed on August 16:** The festival commemorating Lord Krishna's 5,252nd birth anniversary fell on August 16, celebrated across traditions with fasting, rituals, midnight worship, and cultural reverence.
- **Generous Janmashtami Celebrations at ISKCON Temple:** Delhi's ISKCON Temple celebrated Janmashtami with lavish floral decor—using orchids from Thailand and roses from Bengaluru and Pune—to create a devotional festival ambiance.

**FROM AUGUST 21<sup>st</sup> To 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

❖ **POLITY & GOVERNANCE:**

- **USAID Misconception Clarified (August 21):** The U.S. Embassy in India officially denied claims that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided \$21 million toward voter turnout efforts between FY 2014–2024. This came in response to misinformation circulating on social media platforms.
- **Custodial Torture Case in Jammu & Kashmir (August 21):** Following a Supreme Court directive, the CBI arrested an Assistant Sub-Inspector and two additional police personnel over charges related to custodial torture of a constable. The allegations included wrongful confinement and physical harm.

❖ **ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE:**

- **Gaya–Delhi Amrit Bharat Express Launched (August 22):** The Gaya–Delhi Amrit Bharat Express commenced its inaugural run on August 22, with regular bi-weekly services starting August 28. The new service enhances connectivity across key stops such as Sasaram, Subedarganj, and Ghaziabad. Alongside, the Vaishali–Koderma MEMU began operations, running six days a week.

❖ **INTERNATIONAL & STRATEGIC AFFAIRS:**

- **Planned State Visit: Modi to Visit China:** Coverage indicated Prime Minister Modi's upcoming visit to China, emphasizing India's growing diplomatic autonomy amid global tensions—signaling attempts to balance strategic alliances.

❖ **SCIENCE & SPACE:**

- **National Space Day Observed (August 23):** India celebrated National Space Day, commemorating ISRO's expansive trajectory—from its entity status to becoming a global space player. The theme for India's National Space Day 2025 was "Aryabhata to Gaganyaan: Ancient Wisdom to Infinite Possibilities". The 2025 theme spotlighted ISRO's innovation, launch achievements, and impact on national development.

**❖ SOCIETY & CULTURE:**

- **Homecoming Parade for ISS Astronaut (August 25):** Lucknow is preparing to welcome Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla with a grand parade on August 25, celebrating his return from a historic mission aboard the International Space Station—highlighting civil-military honor and scientific pride.

**FROM AUGUST 26<sup>th</sup> To 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

**❖ ECONOMY & EXTERNAL SECTOR:**

- **Q1 Current Account Deficit Widened (August 26):** India posted a current account deficit of \$2.4 billion (about 0.3% of GDP) in April–June 2025, primarily driven by a widening merchandise trade gap with imports exceeding exports. This signals pressure on external balances.

**❖ EXTERNAL AFFAIRS & DIPLOMACY:**

- **Quad Alliance Deepens Strategic Focus (August 26):** The External Affairs Ministry stressed the Quad’s evolving role in addressing critical mineral security, particularly for India and Japan. PM Modi is scheduled for a bilateral visit to Japan (August 29–30), followed by attending the SCO Summit in Tianjin (August 31–September 1), his first visit to China in over seven years.
- **US–India Ties Strained by New 50% Tariffs (August 26–27):** The U.S. imposed an additional 25% penalty tariff—raising the total to 50%—on Indian imports, citing concerns over India’s continued Russian oil purchases. The move marks a significant downturn in bilateral relations. India’s Foreign Secretary confirmed ongoing diplomatic engagement with the U.S. to address tariff implications.
- **Tilt Towards China Amid US Pressures (August 27):** Reports indicate India is balancing escalating U.S. pressure by cautiously moving closer to China and Russia—enhancing ties and resuming dialogue—to safeguard strategic autonomy.
- **India–China Relations Noticeably Improving (August 29):** Ahead of the SCO Summit, thawing ties between India and China were highlighted. Both nations are easing border tensions, resuming flights, and enhancing diplomatic engagement.

**❖ DEFENSE & MARITIME SECURITY:**

- **New Stealth Frigates Commissioned (August 26):** INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri—both advanced Project 17A stealth frigates with ~75% indigenous content—were commissioned at Visakhapatnam. The event aligns with Aatmanirbhar Bharat and India’s naval modernization.

**❖ INDUSTRY & MANUFACTURING:**

- **First Tempered Glass Factory Inaugurated (August 30):** Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated India's first tempered glass factory in Noida by Optiemus Infracom in partnership with Corning (U.S.), boosting electronics component manufacturing capacity domestically.

**❖ SPORTS & INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS:**

- **Historic Gold at Commonwealth Weightlifting Champs (August 24–30):** In Ahmedabad, Mirabai Chanu clinched gold in the women's 48 kg category with a record total of 193 kg. Priteesmita Bhoi and Dharamjyoti Dewghariya also won gold in their respective categories.
- **Tianjin SCO Summit Preparations Underway:** India prepared for the 25th SCO Summit (August 31–September 1) in Tianjin, with venue upgrades, infrastructural planning, and volunteer mobilization reported.

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