

Editorial of the Day – 04.12.2025

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1. Taking the leap- on leprosy in India and discrimination (TH)

General Studies 2- Social Justice

TOPIC- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Eliminating Legal Barriers for Persons with Leprosy

Introduction

Despite medical advancements making leprosy a non-infectious and fully curable disease, persons affected by it in India continue to face systemic oppression. This burden is driven by deep-seated stigma, misinformation, and archaic laws. An analysis of the current legal landscape reveals that discriminatory provisions deny basic rights and dignity to these individuals, necessitating urgent legal and social reforms to build a just society.

Background and Current Burden of Disease

Causative Agent- Leprosy is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. It is one of the oldest known human infections, with evidence dating back to 2000 BCE.

Global Burden- India accounts for a staggering 57% of global leprosy cases.

Vulnerability Factors- High prevalence is attributed to factors such as genetic susceptibility and unsanitary living conditions.

Medical Reality- Modern medicine has rendered the disease fully curable and non-infectious, yet the social and legal treatment of patients remains stuck in the past.

The Nature of Stigma and Discrimination

Root Causes- Stigma stems from ancient beliefs, fear of contagion, and a lack of scientific temper regarding the disease.

Systemic Prejudice- The discrimination is not just social but institutional, requiring systematic efforts to uphold the dignity of affected individuals.

Judicial Intervention- The Supreme Court of India has intervened to address these injustices, pushing for immediate corrective actions to dismantle this prejudice.

Legal Discrimination- The Current Status

Extent of Discriminatory Laws- A report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) highlighted that 97 Central and State laws still contain discriminatory provisions against persons with leprosy.

Rights Denied- These laws systematically exclude affected persons from- Accessing public transport. Entering public spaces.

Civic Rights- Eligibility to contest elections.

Economic Rights- Employment opportunities and the right to run independent businesses.

Judicial Scrutiny- The Court is currently examining petitions that challenge this widespread statutory discrimination.

NHRC Recommendations for Reform

Since 2021, the NHRC has been advocating for comprehensive reforms-

Holistic Approach- Focus on early detection, timely treatment, and rehabilitation.

Terminological Changes- Urged the Centre to replace derogatory terms used in old statutes to restore dignity to patients.

Technological Inclusion (Aadhaar)– A critical recommendation involves using Iris scans for Aadhaar enrolment. *Reason*– Leprosy often damages fingertips, making biometric fingerprint identification difficult or impossible for affected individuals.

Call for Immediate Remedial Action

Moral Imperative– Retaining antediluvian (ancient/outdated) provisions in the face of modern medical progress is unjust and unacceptable.

State Accountability– The Supreme Court has directed all States and Union Territories to submit reports on the steps taken to address these discriminatory laws.

Legislative Action– Governments must urgently repeal these archaic laws and implement robust remedial measures based on NHRC evidence.

Modern Context– It is unfathomable for a modern democracy to trap citizens in stigma generated by previous generations that lacked scientific understanding.

Conclusion

To ensure true equality, India must move beyond medical treatment and address the socio-legal dimensions of leprosy. This requires dismantling archaic legal barriers, removing social prejudice, and guaranteeing dignified access to rights and services. Decisive action is needed to uphold human rights and end the historical discrimination against persons with leprosy permanently.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/taking-the-leap-on-leprosy-in-india-and-discrimination/article70353527.ece>

2. Rupee breaches the 90-mark-driving the slide against the dollar (IE)

General Studies 3– Economy

Topic– Indian Economy and Issues Relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Rupee Breaches 90-Mark– Drivers and Implications

Introduction

The Indian rupee has recently crossed the psychologically critical 90-per-dollar mark, signaling significant vulnerabilities in the country's external sector. This depreciation presents a paradox against a backdrop of strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals, including a GDP growth of 8.2% in Q2 FY26, inflation below 1%, and softening crude oil prices. The situation highlights the complex interplay between structural trade challenges, external market dynamics, and capital outflows.

Key Drivers of Depreciation

Widening Trade Deficit

The primary pressure on the rupee stems from a distinct imbalance in trade.

Export Contraction– Merchandise exports contracted by 1.8% year-on-year in October 2025. Non-oil exports suffered a sharper decline of 12%, hitting an 11-month low.

Key Sectors Hit– Engineering goods, gems and jewellery, chemicals, and ready-made garments.

Import Surge– Imports rose by 16.6%, creating high demand for dollars.

Gold Imports– Tripled to \$14.7 billion driven by festive demand and speculative buying.

Other Drivers– Silver, fertilizers, and industrial machinery.

Delayed US-India Trade Agreement

Uncertainty– Prolonged negotiations and lack of clarity on the India-US trade deal have dampened export sentiment and future planning.

Market Fear– Participants worry that continued delays will exacerbate the trade deficit, further weakening the local currency.

Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) Outflows

Capital Flight– FPIs have withdrawn a massive Rs 152 lakh crore from domestic equities since January 2025.

Reasoning– Investors are seeking higher returns in global markets. India's equity market underperformance relative to global peers has made it a convenient source for liquidity withdrawal.

RBI's Soft-Touch Intervention

Strategy– The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has opted for a strategy of gradual depreciation rather than aggressive defence.

Objective– To maintain the rupee at competitive levels to support export viability.

Risk– While this helps exporters, limited intervention increases risks for importers and exposes the economy to potential imported inflation.

Global Factors

External Drivers– The strength of the US Dollar Index, trends in global crude oil prices, and gold import volumes remain major external determinants of rupee volatility.

Implications for the Indian Economy

Area of Impact	Implications
Export Competitiveness	A weaker rupee theoretically makes Indian goods cheaper abroad, but it cannot fully offset structural weaknesses in key sectors like textiles and engineering.
Imported Inflation	Depreciation increases the landed cost of imports. Rising bills for gold and industrial machinery may push up domestic production costs and inflation.
Investor Confidence	High currency volatility combined with trade policy uncertainty can deter long-term Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
Macro Management	The RBI faces the difficult task of balancing export support (via weaker currency) with reserve preservation to prevent disorderly market movements.

Way Forward & Recommendations

Expedite Trade Agreements– The government must prioritize the immediate conclusion of the India-US trade deal to reduce uncertainty and boost export volumes.

Enhance FDI Inflows– To counter FPI outflows, India needs to attract stable long-term capital by- Improving the Ease of Doing Business. Upgrading infrastructure. Providing tax clarity. Strengthening local governance.

Diversify Export Basket– Reduce dependence on traditional markets (like the US) and sectors by promoting non-traditional and value-added exports.

Macroprudential Measures– The RBI may need to intervene cautiously—not to reverse the trend, but to prevent excessive volatility that harms business planning.

Conclusion

The rupee crossing the 90-mark is a reflection of both domestic structural issues (rising trade deficits, investment outflows) and global headwinds (strong dollar, gold demand). While moderate depreciation can offer a temporary competitive edge to exporters, ensuring long-term currency stability requires a coordinated policy approach focusing on finalizing trade deals, boosting FDI, and prudent macroeconomic management.

Source– <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/rupee-breaches-90-mark-whats-driving-slide10400171-10400171/>