

P L RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

UPSC



YEARLY COMPILATION

2025 – 2026

MAINS CONTENT (QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER)

AUGUST (PART – 1)

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2. Vice President of India (IE)

1. NISAR Mission (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

TOPIC: SPACE TECHNOLOGY

New phase: On the NISAR mission

1. Overview

1. NISAR = NASA-ISRO *Synthetic Aperture Radar* satellite.
2. Launched on July 30 by India's GSLV-F16 rocket from Sriharikota.
3. Marks 10 years of Indo-US collaboration in space technology.

2. Unique Features

1. First satellite to carry dual-frequency radars:
 1. L-band radar (NASA-built)
 2. S-band radar (ISRO-developed)
2. Can detect surface changes as small as a few cm, even through clouds and vegetation.
3. Weight: 2.8 tonnes.

3. Scientific Capabilities

1. Open-access data on:
 1. Glacier movements
 2. Ground deformation
 3. Biomass estimation
 4. Land-use change
 5. Sea ice variations
2. 12-day revisit cycle → captures in constant lighting conditions for high-resolution time series.
3. Applications include monitoring mangroves, urban subsidence, crop-soil interaction, polar ice shelf calving.

4. Global Impact

1. Supports Sendai Framework (Disaster Risk Reduction).
2. Helps improve climate models and IPCC forecasts.

5. ISRO's Milestone

1. First major international payload deployed using GSLV Mk II (once nicknamed "naughty boy" for reliability issues).
2. Built S-band radar → advanced ISRO's capability in precision electronics, thermal stability, and high data throughput.
3. Improved Indo-US technology cooperation and possible tech transfers.

6. Current Limitations

1. Key hardware (12 m antenna, Ka-band downlink, much software) imported from NASA.
2. India needs more domestic capacity in:
 1. Advanced materials
 2. Deep-space communication
 3. Systems engineering

4. Early-stage mission design participation.

7. Operational Challenges

1. Data transmission bottleneck: Ka-band downlink needs more ground stations.
2. Need for cloud-based processing and fast delivery of analysis-ready products (within hours).
3. Long-term success requires:
 1. Successor SAR missions before 2030.
 2. Clear data-sharing rules balancing innovation & security.

8. Strategic Significance

1. How India handles these gaps will decide if NISAR is just another satellite or a transformational tool for science, policy, and disaster resilience.

9. Conclusion

1. NISAR is the first radar satellite jointly built by NASA & ISRO.
2. Symbol of India's growing role in precision space missions and global space partnerships.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/new-phase-on-the-nisar-mission/article69878508.ece>

2. Vice President of India (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: POLITY & GOVERNANCE

TOPIC: Role of Constitutional Offices and Parliamentary Functioning

8 suggestions for the Vice President of India — whoever that may be

1. Context

1. Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned before completing his term → only the third Vice President to do so after V.V. Giri and R. Venkataraman.
2. A new Vice President will soon take office and become the Chairperson of Rajya Sabha.

2. Role of the Vice President

1. Second-highest constitutional position after the President.
2. Steps in as Acting President if the President cannot perform duties (death, resignation, removal).
3. Ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
4. Elected by an electoral college of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs.
5. Inspired by the U.S. Vice Presidency model.

3. Key Responsibilities & Reforms for the Rajya Sabha Chairperson

1. Take 'Notice' of Opposition

1. Notices for discussions dropped from 110 (2009–2016) to 36 (2017–2024).
2. Rule 267 allows suspension of scheduled business for urgent national issues.

2. Stop Mass Suspension of MPs

3. Dec 2023: 146 MPs suspended (100 from Lok Sabha) — highest ever.
4. In UPA's 10 years: only 50 MPs suspended.

3. Choosing Vice-Chairs Wisely

5. Chair nominates six members as Vice-Chairs in absence of Chair/Deputy Chair.
6. In last 2 years → 30 MPs rotated.
7. Should be experienced MPs and consult their parties before appointment.

4. Ensure Transparency in Proceedings

8. Sansad TV often avoids showing Opposition protests.
9. Need fair, balanced visual coverage for public trust.

5. Send More Bills to Committees

10. Bill scrutiny ensures quality lawmaking.
11. Referral rate has dropped:
 1. 14th LS: 6/10 bills
 2. 15th LS: 7/10 bills

3. 16th LS: 3/10 bills

4. 17th LS: 2/10 bills.

6. Let MPs Exercise Voting Rights

1. MPs can demand division (electronic voting) on bills.
2. This right has been denied in recent years (e.g., farm bills).

7. Accept Points of Order

3. MPs can raise these if rules are violated.
4. Chair must address, not ignore them.

4. Conclusion

Vice President, as Rajya Sabha Chairperson, must:

1. Be impartial and uphold parliamentary conventions.
2. Ensure fair proceedings and protect MPs' rights.
3. Promote transparency and constructive dialogue.
4. Strengthen institutional credibility through procedural integrity.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/derek-obrien-writes-8-suggestions-for-the-vice-president-of-india-whoever-that-may-be-10162485/>

Editorial of the Day – 02.08.2025

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1. The fact is mangroves drive business (TH)

2. Why Arya Samaj marriages are under the scanner of courts (IE)

1. The fact is mangroves drive business (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Conservation, Environmental Pollution, Biodiversity, Climate Change

Mangroves & Blue Carbon Ecosystems

1. Context

1. Mangroves & other blue carbon ecosystems are critical for climate resilience & coastal economies, but rarely included in official budgets or policies.
2. Their loss means degradation of natural infrastructure that protects coasts, sustains fisheries, and avoids billions in climate-related damages.

2. Importance

1. Provide ecosystem services worth billions (e.g., ₹3,535 million in Pichavaram; ₹664 billion in Sundarbans).
2. Carbon sequestration in Sundarbans alone worth ₹462 million/year.
3. Act as storm buffers, fish nurseries, biodiversity hubs, and alternative livelihood sources.

3. Mangrove Coalition's 3 Strategic Pillars

A. Mapping with Technology

1. Tools: Satellite imagery, drones, geospatial AI for accurate mapping & carbon quantification.
2. Enables better policy-making & restoration.
3. Ensure local communities with traditional knowledge are involved & benefit.

B. Involving Communities

1. Community-led conservation builds long-term stewardship.
2. Fisherfolk link mangroves to sustainable fisheries.
3. Urban mangroves (Mumbai, Chennai) face pollution & degradation, weakening resilience.
4. Benefits like more fish, cleaner air, storm protection motivate community protection.
5. Support alternative livelihoods – aquaculture, beekeeping, eco-tourism.
6. Use participatory models like Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) & Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) for inclusive ownership.

C. Mobilising Citizen Science

1. Train locals to monitor and document changes in mangrove ecosystems.
2. Links mangrove health to wetlands, rivers, freshwater flows, sediment, biodiversity.
3. Early detection of negative trends → timely interventions.
4. Builds shared responsibility & awareness.

4. Platforms for Engagement

Need a comprehensive mangrove health tool tracking:

1. Area & coverage changes
2. Freshwater flow quantity/quality/timing
3. Biodiversity metrics (birds, plants, molluscs, fish)
4. Community livelihood dependence
5. Public perception of benefits (storm protection, air quality, income)

Example: "Mangrove Mitras" platform to:

6. Involve citizens & urban residents
7. Provide hands-on restoration experiences
8. Reconnect people with nature
9. Promote awareness of ecological, economic & cultural value

5. Conclusion

1. Mangrove protection must be a collaborative partnership – science, industry, communities working together.
2. View mangroves as essential assets for climate resilience & economic stability, not just biodiversity reserves.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-fact-is-mangroves-drive-business/article69884190.ece>

2. Why Arya Samaj marriages are under the scanner of courts (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Polity & Governance

TOPIC: specifically, under *Indian Constitution, legal provisions, judicial pronouncements, and issues related to personal laws & marriage regulations.*

Arya Samaj Marriages

1. Context

Allahabad HC directed UP govt to investigate fake Arya Samaj Societies solemnising marriages without verifying age & violating anti-conversion laws.

2. About Arya Samaj

1. Founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati as a Hindu revivalist movement.
2. Promoted Shuddhi (purification) – reconverting people to Vedic Hinduism.
3. Supported inter-caste & interfaith marriages before the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954.
4. Arya Marriage Validation Act, 1937 recognised Arya Samaj marriages.
5. Weddings follow Hindu rituals, require only marriageable age & declaration as Arya Samajis.

3. Why Eloping Couples Prefer Arya Samaj Weddings

1. Recognised under Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs).
2. Non-Hindus can marry after quick conversion to Hinduism.
3. Faster & easier than SMA (no 30-day notice).
4. SMA requires public notice → risk of harassment.

4. Legal Concerns Raised

1. Pending SC case (since 2022) on whether Arya Samaj marriages must follow SMA requirements.
2. BJP-ruled states' anti-conversion laws ban alternative conversion-based marriages without prescribed process.
3. Shuddhi before Arya Samaj interfaith marriages often skips legal conversion procedure.
4. HCs flagged mass-scale marriages without age verification or proper conversion compliance.
5. Allegations of marrying minors with forged documents.
6. 2022: SC said Arya Samaj has "no business" issuing marriage certificates.
7. Delhi HC directed verified witnesses for authenticity.

5. Way Forward

Create a regulatory framework for:

1. Age verification
2. Proper documentation
3. Compliance with anti-conversion laws

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/why-arya-samaj-marriages-are-under-the-scanner-of-courts-10164498/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20Supreme%20Court,by%20the%20temple%20were%20genuine.>

Editorial of the Day – 01.08.2025

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1. An unravelling – On the Malegaon acquittals (TH)

2. For energy security, a redesign (IE)

1. An unravelling – On the Malegaon acquittals (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3 – Internal Security

TOPIC – Internal Security & Role of Investigative Agencies

Malegaon Blast Case

1. Context

1. 2008 Malegaon blast during Ramzan killed 6, injured 95; initially linked to Hindutva extremists.
2. Case reveals flaws in investigation, prosecution, and political neutrality.

2. The 2008 Blast

1. Intended as a “blast for a blast” retaliation, mimicking Islamist terror tactics.
2. Key evidence –
 1. Electronic transcripts of covert meetings.
 2. Confession by Aseemanand (Sangh Parivar activist).
3. Politically sensitive, tied to communal tensions.

3. ATS Investigation

1. ATS probed impartially after wrongful arrests in 2006 Malegaon case.
2. Aimed to break religion–terror stereotype.
3. Later shifted as Hindutva-aligned political forces gained power.
4. Case transferred to NIA, which faced allegations of going soft on accused.
5. 2018 Special Court resisted dilution, ordered full trial.

4. Final Acquittal (After 17 Years)

1. All accused, incl. Lt. Col. Purohit & Pragya Singh Thakur, acquitted.
2. Concerns –
 1. Lapses in investigation.
 2. Witnesses turning hostile (alleging ATS coercion).
 3. Political influence undermining justice.

5. Evidentiary Failures

1. Electronic transcripts rejected for procedural flaws.
2. Hostile witnesses weakened case.
3. Purohit’s infiltration claim dismissed, but acquitted due to lack of proof.

6. Political & Communal Dimensions

1. Accused reframed as victims of communal targeting.
2. 2019 – Pragya Singh Thakur contested & won Bhopal seat while still under trial.
3. Her remarks praising Nathuram Godse showed mainstreaming of extremist ideas.

7. Conclusion

1. Case shows how politicised investigations and weak prosecution erode justice.
2. Terrorism has no religion; failure to uphold this weakens democracy.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/an-unravelling-on-the-malegaon-acquittals/article69890434.ece>

2. For energy security, a redesign (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3 – Environment & Ecology

TOPIC – Energy, Environment, Infrastructure

Energy Security & Renewable Transition

1. Changing Definition of Energy Security

1. Traditionally – Access, reliability, affordability of fossil fuels.
2. Now – Must include climate goals – India targets net zero by 2070.

2. India's Two-Track Energy Path

1. Fossil fuels – Coal, oil, gas – share to be reduced.
2. Renewables – Solar, wind, bio – share to be increased.
3. Goal – Conserve fossils + simplify energy regulations.

3. Fossil Fuel Strategy Successes

1. Diversified crude sources, resisted Western pressure on Russia.
2. Russian crude share up from 2.1% (2021-22) to 35.1% (2024-25) → saved ~\$2/barrel.
3. Improved energy efficiency → less fossil use per GDP unit.

4. Renewable Energy Progress & Issues

1. Renewable capacity up from 19% (5 yrs ago) to 49% (234 GW).
2. Problem – Growth slowdown & lack of matching transmission/distribution infrastructure.

5. Causes of Slowdown

1. Complex, overlapping regulatory approvals – months to get clearance.
2. Capacity building not matched by –
 1. Interstate transmission networks.
 2. Backup storage.
 3. Distribution systems.
 4. Seamless connectivity in the value chain.

6. Structural Advantage in Renewables

1. No geological constraints – sunlight/wind free, tech established, cost-competitive, investor interest.
2. Key obstacle – Multiplicity of regulators, no single nodal authority.

7. Solutions

1. Redesign regulation – Merge agencies, standardise rules, digitise approvals.
2. Simplify land acquisition, align technical & safety standards.
3. Transparent pricing, quick dispute resolution.

8. Conclusion

1. Challenge – Legacy vested interests.
2. Need political will to break growth-energy-environment link → achieve Energy Atmanirbharta.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/vikram-singh-mehta-writes-for-energy-security-a-redesign-10167902/>

Editorial of the Day – 05.08.2025

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1. The missing link in India's battery waste management (TH)

2. How a new project plans to curb rhino poaching through radioactive isotope injections (IE)

1. The missing link in India's battery waste management (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Environment, Pollution, Waste Management, Sustainable Development

Battery Waste Management & EPR Policy

1. Growing Battery Demand

1. EV battery demand: 4 GWh (2023) → ~139 GWh (2035).
2. Boosted by EV adoption + renewable energy storage needs.

2. Environmental Risks

1. Improper disposal → toxic leakage into soil & water.
2. Lithium batteries: 700,000 MT of 1.6 million MT e-waste (2022).
3. Govt introduced Battery Waste Management Rules (BWMR) 2022.

3. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

1. Producers must fund collection & recycling of batteries.
2. They rely on recyclers → recyclers earn EPR certificates.
3. EPR floor price ensures recyclers recover costs for:
 1. Infrastructure, R&D, tech, skilled labour, safe processing.

4. Current Challenges

1. Floor price too low → legitimate recyclers struggle; informal recyclers thrive.
2. Results in fake certificates & hazardous dumping (like in plastic waste sector).
3. Losses: Environmental damage + \$1B forex loss by 2030 due to poor material recovery.

5. Benefits of Fair EPR Pricing

1. Recovers valuable minerals (Li, Co, Ni) → reduces import dependency.
2. Supports circular economy & strengthens supply chain.
3. Doesn't necessarily raise consumer costs — OEMs can absorb due to stable metal prices.

6. Resistance & Global Lessons

1. Large manufacturers often resist compliance, esp. in developing nations.
2. UK recycles EV batteries at ₹600/kg — far above India's rate.
3. India needs globally benchmarked pricing reflecting real recycling costs.

7. Way Forward

1. Revise EPR floor price → fair, realistic, market-shift-ready.
2. Strengthen enforcement:
 1. Digital tracking of EPR certificates.
 2. Robust audits & strict penalties.
 3. Train & integrate informal recyclers into formal system.

8. Conclusion

1. Battery waste management is an environmental, economic & strategic priority.
2. Strong EPR policy → cleaner environment + green growth + true circular economy.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-missing-link-in-indias-battery-waste-management/article69894461.ece>

2. How a new project plans to curb rhino poaching through radioactive isotope injections (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment & Ecology

TOPIC: Environment, Conservation of Biodiversity & Wildlife Protection

Radioactive Isotope Tagging to Prevent Rhino Poaching

1. Project Launch

1. University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) launched Rhisotope Project (31 July).
2. Supported by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

2. How It Works

1. Inject low-dose radioactive isotopes into rhino horns (non-invasive, harmless to rhinos).
2. Radioisotopes emit detectable radiation → traceable via Radiation Portal Monitors (RPMs) at ports, borders, airports.
3. Makes horn detectable, useless for trade, and poisonous to humans.

3. Testing & Safety

1. Used 3D-printed rhino horns to test detection through 40-foot shipping containers.
2. Monitored 20 rhinos using biological dosimetry → no cellular damage found.
3. Safe for rhinos, unlike dehorning which affects social behaviour.

4. Poaching Crisis

1. Rhino population: 500,000 (1900) → 27,000 (present).
2. South Africa lost 10,000+ rhinos to poaching in last decade.
3. Demand driven by Asian markets for medicine & status symbols.

5. Potential Impact

1. Not a "silver bullet" but expected to be a strong deterrent.
2. Less disruptive than dehorning (which reduces poaching by 78% but harms social life).
3. Potential future application for elephants & pangolins.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/rhino-poaching-radioactive-isotope-injections-10167467/#:~:text=Through%20a%20non%2Dinvasive%20procedure,to%20identify%20unauthorised%20unclear%20materials.>

Editorial of the Day – 06.08.2025

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1. Dangerous turn: On Trump and the Ukraine war (TH)

2. What caused Uttarkashi flash floods: Heavy rainfall, rugged topography (IE)

1. Dangerous turn: On Trump and the Ukraine war (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India & Global Affairs, US–Russia Relations, Ukraine Crisis

US–Russia Tensions & Ukraine Conflict

1. Escalating Tensions

1. Trump repositioned two nuclear submarines after remarks by Russia's Dmitry Medvedev calling his tariff threats "a step towards war."
2. No clarity if subs were nuclear-armed.
3. Marks shift from Trump's earlier promise to improve US–Russia ties.

2. Ukraine War Frustrations

1. Trump gave Putin 50-day deadline to end war → later cut to 10–12 days.
2. Threatened secondary tariffs on nations trading with Russia (incl. India, China).
3. Urged Ukraine to accept ceasefire & assured no NATO membership.
4. Russia only agreed to limited Black Sea truce & temporary pause in attacks.

3. Diplomatic Gap

1. West wants immediate ceasefire.
2. Russia demands comprehensive peace deal including NATO non-expansion.
3. Russia holds military advantage; Ukraine struggling on the ground despite drone strikes.
4. Trump's bombing of Iran (for Israel) may have hardened Russia's stance.

4. Need for Diplomacy

1. Past diplomatic approach more constructive than current escalation.
2. Nuclear brinkmanship risks global peace; dialogue is the only sustainable solution.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/dangerous-turn-on-trump-and-the-ukraine-war/article69897650.ece>

2. What caused Uttarkashi flash floods: Heavy rainfall, rugged topography (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Disaster Management

TOPIC: Flash Floods

Uttarkashi Flash Floods

1. Incident

1. 4 dead in Dharali village, Uttarkashi; buildings, shops, hotels damaged.

2. Flash Flood Cause

1. Common in upper Uttarakhand; usually triggered by cloudbursts, but not this time.
2. Trigger: Continuous heavy rainfall → landslides → mud, debris rush into rivers → downstream flash floods.

3. Topography

1. Elevation: 800–6,900 m above sea level.
2. Contains Gangotri & Yamunotri glacier sources.
3. Rugged terrain: sharp ridges, deep gorges, steep valleys, slope towards southwest.

4. Rainfall Pattern

1. Annual avg: 1,289 mm; July wettest (312 mm avg).
2. Monsoon: June–Sept; southern slopes get most rain.
3. Frequent thunderstorms in hills.

5. Why Flood Risk is High

1. Continuous rain + steep slopes + loose moraine & soil = high landslide & flood risk.
2. Climate change → increased rainfall intensity + faster glacier melt.
3. Region built on centuries-old mudslide layers; limited vegetation.

6. Why Not a Cloudburst

1. Cloudburst definition (IMD): ≥ 100 mm rain/hour over 10×10 km area.
2. Rainfall recorded was below threshold.

7. Way Forward

1. Region-specific adaptation: factor in topography & soil.
2. Improve early warning systems.
3. Targeted disaster preparedness & long-term adaptation plans.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/heavy-rainfall-rugged-topography-what-caused-flash-floods-in-uttarkashi-10171931/>



Editorial of the Day – 07.08.2025

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1. Judicial overreach: On the top court and democratic dissent (TH)

2. How India's pesticide market is changing (IE)

1. Judicial overreach: On the top court and democratic dissent (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Governance

TOPIC: Separation of Powers, Judiciary, Constitutional Provisions

Supreme Court's Observations on Rahul Gandhi

1. Background

1. Case relates to Rahul Gandhi's 2020 Galwan remarks about Chinese intrusion in Indian territory.
2. Supreme Court stayed proceedings in a defamation case but made oral comments on patriotism.

2. Court's Remarks & Concerns

1. Justice Dipankar Datta said if Gandhi were a "true Indian" he wouldn't have made those remarks.
2. Critics say this is outside legal scope and risks undermining constitutional principles.
3. Court's role: interpret law, not define patriotism or enforce nationalism.

3. Legitimacy of Opposition Critique

1. Gandhi's comments targeted government's border policy, not the nation.
2. Such criticism is part of Opposition's democratic role.
3. Protected under Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech.
4. Political criticism keeps government accountable.

4. Factual Basis for Remarks

1. Claims supported by satellite imagery, news reports, parliamentary documents.
2. Parliamentary report: loss of access to patrol points in eastern Ladakh.
3. Independent defence experts estimate loss of ~2,000 sq. km.
4. Local communities confirm loss of grazing access.

5. Risks of Judicial Commentary

1. Could create a chilling effect on political speech.
2. Sets precedent to delegitimise dissent by questioning patriotism.

6. Need for Judicial Restraint

1. Courts should avoid moral/nationalistic judgments.
2. Focus on objective legal reasoning.
3. Protect constitutional freedoms and democratic dialogue.

7. Conclusion

Judicial credibility depends on restraint & impartiality. Gandhi's remarks were based on public evidence and within democratic rights. Criticism of government = strength in democracy, not a threat.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/judicial-overreach-on-the-top-court-and-democratic-dissent/article69902142.ece>

2. How India's pesticide market is changing (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Agriculture

TOPIC: Major Crops, Cropping Patterns, Irrigation, and Use of Agrochemicals

Crop Protection Chemicals

1. Commonly called pesticides; include insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides.
2. Protect crops from insects, diseases, and weeds.
3. Example: White-backed plant hopper damages rice and spreads Fiji virus, causing stunted growth.

Market Scenario in India

1. Organised domestic market size: ~₹24,500 crore.
2. Largest segment: Insecticides; fastest-growing: Herbicides (>10% annual growth).
3. Key MNC players: Bayer (15%), Syngenta (12%), ADAMA (10%), Corteva (7%), Sumitomo (6%).
4. Indian players: Dhenuka Agritech (6%), Crystal Crop Protection Ltd – CCPL (4%).
5. CCPL acquisitions:
 1. *Ethoxysulfuron* from Bayer (rice, sugarcane weeds).
 2. *Gramoxone* (Paraquat-based herbicide) from Syngenta.

Why Herbicide Demand is Rising

1. Weeds compete with crops for nutrients, water, and sunlight; may also host pests/diseases.
2. Manual weeding:
 3. Labour-intensive (8–10 hrs/acre) & repeated often.
 4. Labour wages: ₹447.6/day in Dec 2024 (vs ₹326.2 five years ago).
 5. Labour shortage at crucial times.
3. Power weeders: Faster (2–3 hrs/acre) but ineffective for deep-rooted/densely planted weeds.
4. Herbicides act as labour-saving substitutes, similar to tractors.

Usage Patterns

1. Insecticides & fungicides: Sprayed based on pest/disease presence (economic threshold).
2. Herbicides:
 1. Mostly “post-emergence” (after weeds appear).
 2. Increasing “pre-emergent” (around/just after sowing) & “early post-emergent” use for preventive weed control.
 3. *Pre-emergent paddy herbicide market*: ~₹550 crore of total ₹1,500 crore.
 4. Preventive spraying growing fastest due to timely weed management needs.

Conclusion

Crop protection chemicals industry dominated by MNCs; Indian companies trying to compete via acquisitions and innovation. Herbicides emerging as a key growth area, driven by agricultural labour scarcity and shift to preventive weed control.

Source: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/india-pesticide-market-change-growth-fungicide-](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/india-pesticide-market-change-growth-fungicide-10167612/#:~:text=The%20fastest%2Dgrowing%20segment&text=The%20largest%20segment%20within%20that,rate%20%E2%80%93%20over%2010%25%20annually.)

[10167612/#:~:text=The%20fastest%2Dgrowing%20segment&text=The%20largest%20segment%20within%20that,rate%20%E2%80%93%20over%2010%25%20annually.](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/india-pesticide-market-change-growth-fungicide-10167612/#:~:text=The%20fastest%2Dgrowing%20segment&text=The%20largest%20segment%20within%20that,rate%20%E2%80%93%20over%2010%25%20annually.)

Editorial of the Day – 08.08.2025

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1. Mending ties: On state visit of Philippines President to India (TH)

2. Best of Both Sides: On tariffs, Russia is a red line for India (IE)

1. Mending ties: On state visit of Philippines President to India (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: Philippines –India Ties (Bilateral Ties)

India–Philippines Strategic Partnership

1. Introduction & Context

1. Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. made his first state visit to India since assuming office in 2022.
2. Visit marked a significant turning point in bilateral ties — both countries formally elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership.
3. The move comes amid heightened tensions in the Indo-Pacific, signalling India's intent to:
 1. Expand defence cooperation
 2. Strengthen maritime security posture
 3. Deepen diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asia

2. Strategic & Defence Alignment

1. Strategic Partnership Agreement signed during the visit — adds a hard power dimension to India–Philippines ties.
2. Marcos has adopted a firm stance against Chinese incursions in the West Philippine Sea, aligning closely with India's Indo-Pacific policy.

3. First-ever India–Philippines Joint Naval Exercises

1. Indian Navy conducted joint maritime exercises with the Philippine Navy in the South China Sea — a first in the history of bilateral relations.
2. Drills drew criticism from China, underlining the growing strategic alignment between New Delhi and Manila.
3. India reiterated support for the 2016 UNCLOS Tribunal ruling, reinforcing its advocacy for a rules-based Indo-Pacific order.
4. Philippines expressed appreciation for India's consistent diplomatic backing on maritime sovereignty issues.

4. Elevated Defence & Military Cooperation

Area	Key Developments
BrahMos Missiles	Philippines already the first export customer; expressed interest in purchasing more units
Military Framework	Terms of Reference exchanged to enhance cooperation across the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard
Other Agreements	MoUs signed to deepen strategic & defence collaboration

With this agreement, Philippines becomes India's 5th Strategic Partner, after:

1. Japan
2. Vietnam
3. Australia
4. South Korea

5. Diplomatic Reset & ASEAN Engagement

1. Philippines to Chair ASEAN in 2026 — also serves as the coordinator for the ASEAN–India Strategic Partnership.
2. The invitation to Marcos seen as part of damage control after strained ties due to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's June 2025 remarks, where he called some ASEAN members “B-team of China”.
3. India accelerating talks to revise AITIGA (ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement).
4. Separate negotiations underway for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between India and the Philippines.

6. Trade & Connectivity – Gradual Progress

Aspect	Current Status
Bilateral Trade	\$3.3 billion (2024–25)
Investments	Growing in technology and pharmaceuticals
Travel	Visa liberalisation measures agreed; direct flights between India and the Philippines to be established
Facilitation	
Trade volume still modest, but private sector collaborations are expanding steadily.	

7. Larger Geopolitical Implications

1. Signals India's active outreach in Southeast Asia beyond the Quad framework.
2. Demonstrates India's commitment to:
 1. Peace & security in the Indo-Pacific
 2. Multi-alignment diplomacy — engaging with regional players as well as global powers
3. Marcos's visit reflects convergence of strategic interests between New Delhi and Manila in light of regional tensions.

8. Conclusion

Visit reaffirmed India's commitment to a rules-based Indo-Pacific, extending beyond its role in the Quad alliance. Enhanced military cooperation, emerging trade links, and resetting ASEAN ties underline India's calibrated yet assertive regional diplomacy. The Strategic Partnership with the Philippines serves as a symbol of India's expanding influence in an evolving multipolar Asian order.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/mending-ties-on-state-visit-of-philippines-president-to-india/article69906347.ece>

2. Best of Both Sides: On tariffs, Russia is a red line for India (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India–Russia Relations

India–Russia Relations

Context

NSA Ajit Doval visited Moscow (Aug 5) to discuss:

1. Regional stability
2. Counter-terrorism
3. Energy security
4. Defence purchases

High-Level Engagement

1. Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit India later this year (first in 4 years).
2. Strong activity in India–Russia ties, slower pace in India–US ties.

Economic & Trade Context

1. India negotiating FTAs with 6 countries (including US); has signed 16 in 5 years.
2. ASEAN–India FTA under review; >24 countries want trade links with India.
3. India building industrial capacity, new markets, supply chains (China+1 strategy).

4. Discounted Russian oil → keeps economy stable & prices in check.

Defence Cooperation

1. Russia: long-time reliable security partner.
2. S-400 system successful in Operation Sindhoor (vs Pakistan).
3. Russian defence deals worth \$50B in 20 years; technology transfers & co-production.
4. US deals since 2008: \$24B.
5. Domestic defence industry tripled in a decade → 65% of equipment made in India now.

India-US Contrast

1. US tariff threats, post-Operation Sindhoor outreach to Pakistan tilted public opinion towards Russia.
2. QUAD future uncertain; Trump's approach unpredictable.

Russia's Concerns with India

1. Trade imbalance → \$68.7B bilateral trade, 90% oil, India has deficit.
2. Local currency trade (rupee-rouble) limits Russian investment in India.
3. India's neutral stance on Ukraine not pleasing Moscow.
4. At SCO: Russia aligned with China-Central Asia, India as outlier.
5. Ukraine war limiting Russia's defence exports to India.

Geopolitical Factors

1. US sanctions on Iran, Venezuela, and now Russia threaten India's oil supply.
2. BRICS tensions with US; India to chair BRICS in 2026.
3. India holding back Russia-India-China trilateral meeting to avoid US irritation.

Way Forward

1. Maintain oil supplies from Russia now + plan future diversification.
2. Take a stronger Ukraine stance → urge West to recognise Russia's concerns.
3. Putin's visit to India → signal strong partnership, may irk US.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/best-of-both-sides-on-tariffs-russia-is-a-red-line-for-india-10176334/>

Editorial of the Day – 09.08.2025

Index

1. Industrial Accidents in India – Human Cost of Indifference (TH)

2. Was Jaisalmer ever a part of the Maratha empire?

Here's what historians say (IE)

1. Industrial Accidents in India – Human Cost of Indifference (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Disaster Management

TOPIC: Industrial Safety

Context

Recent tragedies (Sigachi Industries blast in Telangana, Tamil Nadu firecracker unit explosion) show a deep national crisis in industrial safety.

Background & Scale of Crisis

1. Writer with 37 years in oil & energy sector has witnessed factory tragedies firsthand.
2. These are not accidents of fate — they result from poor decisions, failed systems, and negligence.
3. Past 5 years: At least 6,500 worker deaths in factories, construction sites, and mines (~3 fatalities/day).
4. Andhra Pradesh & Tamil Nadu → >200 deaths from major industrial accidents in the last decade.
5. Real toll likely higher (especially in informal/unregistered sectors) but under-reported.
6. Each death = loss of breadwinner, families in trauma & poverty.
7. CSE 2022 study: >130 major chemical accidents in 30 months after 2020 → 218 deaths, 300+ injuries.
8. Most in SMEs outside strict regulatory scrutiny.

Common Causes (Preventable)

1. Factories running without Fire NOC.
2. Lack of firefighting equipment (alarms, sensors, extinguishers).
3. No permit-to-work system for high-risk jobs.
4. No safety training, especially for migrant/contract workers (language barriers).
5. Fire exits blocked, locked, or hidden.
6. Weak accountability — superficial audits, rare convictions, minimal penalties.

Safety Culture

1. Large Corporates: Focus on operational excellence, but safety is treated as compliance, not a core value.
2. Global Comparison: Germany, Japan embed safety into workplace design; India lags.

State Safety Records

1. Poor records not just in AP & TN; Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, UP also bad.
2. Gujarat in 2021 → >60 major fires/gas leaks.

Accident Frequency

1. DGFASLI data: 1 serious industrial accident every 2 days in registered factories.
2. Status of unregistered units unknown.

Recurring Pattern After Accidents

1. Tragedy → public outrage → compensation → committee formation → silence → repeat.
2. Root causes remain unaddressed.

Why the Cycle Continues

1. National indifference: public silence, regulator inertia, company cost-cutting.
2. Contract workers treated as disposable.

Class Bias in Enforcement

1. High-profile offices/software parks get more safety attention.
2. Migrant, contract, and poor workers undervalued.

The “Act of God” Excuse

1. Used to avoid responsibility, but these are man-made disasters.
2. Global evidence: accidents caused by negligence & failed systems.

Global Practices & Needed Reforms

1. South Korea, Singapore → corporate manslaughter laws (execs held criminally liable).
2. India must begin this conversation.

Call to Action

1. Not just regulatory reform — a moral and social commitment: “We care.”
2. Reforms Needed:
 1. Corporate accountability.
 2. Strengthen labour safety boards.
 3. Digitise risk reporting.
 4. Protect whistle-blowers.
3. Safety is a right, not a favour.
4. Question is not capability, but willingness to act.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/industrial-accidents-the-human-cost-of-indifference/article69910773.ece>

2. Was Jaisalmer ever a part of the Maratha empire? Here's what historians say (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES I: History

TOPIC: Modern Indian History (18th century) – Maratha expansion & polity

Princely State of Jaisalmer & Maratha Expansion

Background

1. Chaitanya Raj Singh → scion of the royal family of erstwhile princely state of Jaisalmer.
2. Royal records → No Maratha dominance, invasion, taxation, or authority over Jaisalmer.
3. Marathas never interfered in Jaisalmer's affairs.

Northern Expansion of the Marathas (18th Century)

1. Mughal empire breaking up → Peshwa Bajji Rao I drove Marathas northwards.
2. Marathas already collecting tribute from Mughal territories in the Deccan.
3. Expansion into:
 1. Parts of Rajasthan
 2. Areas around Delhi & Punjab
 3. Bundelkhand
 4. Parts of Orissa, Bengal, Bihar
4. Control over Malwa after Battle of Bhopal.
5. Bengal raids under successors of Bajji Rao I.

Early Conquest Policy

1. Marathas rarely displaced local rulers.
2. Agreements with zamindars to collect tribute.
3. Collected chauth & sardeshmukhi from Rajput territories.

Jaisalmer's Position

1. Historians confirm: Marathas raided Rajasthan for tribute but did not raid Jaisalmer & Bikaner.
2. Expansion mainly targeted Jaipur & Jodhpur.
3. Rajput's paid tribute, but no Rajput state was annexed for direct rule.
4. Jaisalmer remained under Bhati clan of Rajput's.

Nature of the Maratha Empire

1. Maratha control was patchy and irregular:
 1. Some regions fully administered by Peshwa's men.
 2. Others loosely controlled; zamindars often resisted from fortified strongholds.
2. Debate among scholars: Was Maratha polity a confederacy?

Three Historical Interpretations of Maratha Polity

1. Rise of regional consciousness in Maharashtra.
2. Hindu response to oppressive Muslim rule.
3. Attempt to reform Hindu society & uplift poorest members.

Extent of Claim vs Actual Control

1. Dominant Maratha clans in 18th century claimed sovereignty over large parts of north, northwest & Deccan.
2. Actual control varied greatly.

Conclusion & Map Representation

1. Short timeline for textbook preparation limits scope for in-depth primary source research.
2. Maps should use different colour shades to indicate:
 1. Direct control
 2. Tributary states
 3. Temporarily captured territories
 4. Areas of influence

Source: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-history/jaisalmer-maratha-empire-history-](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-history/jaisalmer-maratha-empire-history-10178204/#:~:text=Jaisalmer%20never%20part%20Maratha%20empire&text=Malwa%20was%20annexed%20to%20the,was%20also%20under%20Maratha%20rule.)

[10178204/#:~:text=Jaisalmer%20never%20part%20Maratha%20empire&text=Malwa%20was%20annexed%20to%20the,was%20also%20under%20Maratha%20rule.](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-history/jaisalmer-maratha-empire-history-10178204/#:~:text=Jaisalmer%20never%20part%20Maratha%20empire&text=Malwa%20was%20annexed%20to%20the,was%20also%20under%20Maratha%20rule.)

Editorial of the Day – 11.08.2025

Index

1. Signing off on an entrenched symbol of stigma (TH)

2. The first step to Universal Healthcare: Make diagnostics accessible and cheap (IE)

1. Signing off on an entrenched symbol of stigma (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 1: Indian Society

TOPIC: Social Empowerment and Social Justice, Caste Issues, Social Inclusion and Exclusion, and Social Change.

Renaming Villages Ending with 'Colony' in Tamil Nadu

Announcement:

On April 29, 2025, Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin announced in the Legislative Assembly that all village names ending with 'colony' or containing derogatory caste references (e.g., *Pallappatti*, *Paraiyappatti*, *Naavidhan Kulam*, *Paraiyan Kulam*, *Sakkilippatti*) will be removed from State records and renamed.

Historical Background of Segregation:

1. Practice of segregating lower castes into separate settlements based on *varnashrama* system likely began around the 12th century CE.
2. Literary references from 12th century onwards confirm such segregation.

Caste-based Naming in Rural Tamil Nadu:

3. Names like *Cheri Street*, *Paraya Street*, *Palla Street*, *Scavenger Street*, *Harijan Colony*, *Adi Dravidar Colony*, *Old Colony*, *New Colony*, *Ambedkar Colony* evolved over centuries to denote lower caste areas.
4. In rural Tamil Nadu, 'colony' specifically refers to lower caste localities (unlike urban uses such as *Railway Colony* or *Jayendrar Colony*).

European Influence on the Word 'Colony':

5. Originated with Portuguese (15th century) and other Europeans referring to their settlements as 'colonies'.
6. Initially meant elite European quarters; over time, in rural Tamil Nadu, it came to mean ostracised Dalit settlements.

Social Stigma & Impact:

7. In rural contexts, 'colony' is a dog whistle revealing caste identity via addresses on Aadhaar, ration cards, passports, voter IDs, etc.
8. Leads to prejudice, discrimination, and psychological distress among marginalised communities.

Historical Usage of the Word 'Chery':

9. Ancient Tamil literature (e.g., *Tolkappiyam*, 7th century BCE) used 'Chery' neutrally to mean "settlement" without caste connotation.
10. *Kurunthokai* and *Aha-nanooru* mention 'Chery' neutrally.
11. *Silappathikaram* (2nd century CE) uses 'puranchery' for outskirts, including Brahmin settlements.

Shift in Meaning During Later Eras:

12. Bhakti movement (6th–9th century CE) → rise of grand temples → increased social segregation.
13. *Periya Puranam* (12th century CE) uses 'theendachery' (untouchable chery).
14. Vijayanagar rule & Nayakkas (14th–17th century) enforced *varnashrama dharma* harshly, deepening segregation.

Colonial & Modern Periods:

15. Mahatma Gandhi coined 'Harijan' for untouchables – later used derogatorily in names like *Harijan Colony*.
16. Iyothee Thass Pandithar suggested 'Adi-Dravidar'.
17. M.C. Rajah (Justice Party) in 1922 passed a resolution to replace 'Parayar' & 'Panchamar' with 'Adi-Dravidar'.
18. Even 'Adi-Dravidar' became a stigmatised term.
19. British administration documented caste-based locality names officially, preserving derogatory references.

Current Government Plan:

20. Remove 'colony' and 'chery' from names of Dalit neighbourhoods in rural Tamil Nadu.
21. Replace with names of flowers, poets, or scientists (avoid political leaders).
22. Urban names like 'Velachery', 'Pondichery', or secular colonies will remain unchanged.

Significance:

23. Not a welfare scheme but a symbolic and historic gesture for positive social change.
24. Aims to promote social integration and reduce caste-based stigma.
25. Seen as essential for progress and collective prosperity.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/signing-off-on-an-entrenched-symbol-of-stigma/article69917298.ece#:~:text=The%20Tamil%20Nadu%20government's%20administrative,aim%20of%20greater%20social%20integration&text=In%20rural%20Tamil%20Nadu%2C%20the,a%20'lower%20caste%20neighbourhood'>.

2. The first step to Universal Healthcare: Make diagnostics accessible and cheap (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Governance

TOPIC: "Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources."

Diagnostic Services in India's Healthcare System: Challenges and Progress

1. Accurate diagnosis is crucial before selecting and administering effective therapy.
2. Diagnosis relies on:
 1. Well-recorded medical history
 2. Careful clinical examination
 3. Laboratory tests confirming or altering initial diagnosis
3. Lack of diagnostic access causes delays, misidentification, and mistreatment.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India

1. India committed to UHC under:
 4. National Health Policy 2017
 5. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
2. UHC demands:
 6. High service coverage
 7. Financial protection (especially outpatient care)
3. Outpatient care is over 60% of out-of-pocket expenses.
4. Health insurance covers hospital expenses, not outpatient diagnostic services.

Diagnostic Services Availability

1. Private sector offers many diagnostic services.
2. However, rural poor and many rural areas lack easy access.
3. Private sector reaches farthest via point-of-care devices and mobile clinics.
4. Public healthcare system provides diagnostic services closer to home:
 1. Ayushman Aarogya Mandir (Health & Wellness Centre at sub-centre level)
 2. Primary Health Centre (PHC)

5. UHC objectives are met only if diagnostics are close to home.

Need to Match Diagnostics with Changing Disease Burden

1. Need to consider changing priorities of diseases:
 1. Rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes.
 2. Persistent infectious diseases like tuberculosis and malaria.
2. Early, accurate diagnostic assessments are necessary.

Advances in Diagnostic Technology

1. Molecular diagnostics and imaging have increased precision.
2. Technologies like tele-radiology, tele-pathology, and tele-dermatology connect primary care to advanced expertise.
3. Technical capacity in primary health centres and district hospitals has improved:
 1. Semi-auto analysers
 2. Imaging capabilities

Cost-Effectiveness Considerations

1. Need to evaluate:
 1. Which tests provide maximum diagnostic benefit?
 2. Balance between advanced, expensive tests and simpler, cheaper ones.
 3. Optimal sequencing or simultaneity of tests.
2. Government provides diagnostic algorithms and evidence-based guidelines.
3. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) should lead this effort.

National List of Essential Diagnostics (NLED)

1. First revised in 2019 by ICMR.
2. Considers epidemiological and technological transitions.
3. Expands diagnostic services at primary care frontlines.

Specific Recommendations by ICMR

1. Blood samples for HbA1c testing at PHC for diabetes monitoring.
2. Collection of sputum samples at sub-centres for molecular TB testing.
3. Transport of samples from primary centres to higher centres.
4. Recommendations for in-house TB testing at community health centres, sub-district, and district hospitals.

Challenges in TB Diagnosis

1. High burden of TB cases with many latent and late detections.
2. Improved molecular diagnostics needed for better detection.
3. Covid pandemic accelerated public focus on lab diagnostics.
4. RT-PCR and molecular tests are now common.
5. Need to build capacity at primary and secondary healthcare levels.

Training and Interpretation

1. Need to train more lab technicians and frontline health workers for point-of-care testing.
2. Interpretation of results requires understanding of:
 1. Sensitivity
 2. Specificity
 3. Predictive values
 4. Likelihood ratios
3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help bridge diagnostic capacity gaps.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-first-step-to-universal-healthcare-make-diagnostics-accessible-and-cheap-10181669/>

Editorial of the Day – 12.08.2025

Index

1. Reviving civic engagement in health governance (TH)

2. Global warming alone is not behind Uttarkashi flash floods. Greed is (IE)

1. Reviving civic engagement in health governance (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Social Justice

TOPIC: Health

Context

1. States like Tamil Nadu (Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam, 2021) and Karnataka (Gruha Arogya, 2024–25) deliver health care at citizens' doorsteps.
2. Raises key question: Are citizens able to participate in and influence health governance, or just passive receivers?

Citizen Engagement in Health

1. Health Governance Expanded: Now involves government, civil society, professional bodies, unions, etc.
2. Public Engagement Value: Strengthens self-respect, democracy, and reduces injustice.
3. Inclusion Impact: Ensures accountability, reduces corruption, prevents elite capture.
4. Benefits: Better trust, collaboration with frontline workers, improved service use, better outcomes.

Existing Platforms

1. NRHM (2005): Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs), Rogi Kalyan Samitis with funds for local use.
2. Urban Platforms: Mahila Arogya Samitis, Ward Committees, NGO-led groups.

Implementation Gaps

1. Many committees absent or weak.
2. Problems: unclear roles, rare meetings, unused funds, poor coordination, social hierarchy domination.

Problems in Current System

1. Mindset Issue: Communities seen as "beneficiaries," not partners.
2. Target-driven: Focus on numbers, not quality.
3. Language: "Beneficiary" implies dependency, not rights.
4. Policy-Practice Gap: Bottom-up planning exists on paper, weak in reality.
5. Medical Dominance: Leadership dominated by doctors, not public health trained administrators.
6. Hierarchy: Seniority-based promotions, not community-sensitive leadership.
7. Resistance: Fear of workload, accountability, loss of power.
8. Alternative Voices: Citizens resort to protests, media, courts to demand accountability.

Need for a Shift

1. Mindset Change: See people as partners, not passive targets.
2. Beyond Instrumentalism: Respect rights, not just use people to achieve outcomes.
3. Value of Process: Participation itself is as important as health outcomes.
4. Empowerment: Spread health rights awareness, provide tools/resources to citizens.
5. Early Education: Build civic awareness from school level.
6. Marginalised Focus: Actively include excluded/vulnerable groups.
7. System Training: Train officials to avoid blaming citizens for poor participation.

Conclusion

1. Blaming citizens risks deepening inequalities.
2. Real progress = treating communities as partners, not beneficiaries.

3. Strengthen and sustain engagement platforms for genuine impact.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reviving-civic-engagement-in-health-governance/article69921178.ece>

2. Global warming alone is not behind Uttarkashi flash floods. Greed is (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES I: Geography

TOPIC: "Salient features of world's physical geography," "Distribution of key natural resources," "Critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and their location, changes in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes."

Monsoon Destruction in Himalayas

Recent Situation

1. This year's monsoon in Uttarakhand & Himachal Pradesh caused heavy erosion, flash floods, and destruction.

Causes – Beyond Climate Change

2. Climate change is real, but blaming all disasters on it hides the local, man-made causes.
3. The Himalaya is naturally unstable (hydrology, erosion, earthquakes).
4. Human actions like deforestation, unplanned construction, and land misuse worsen vulnerability.

Problem of Construction

5. Growing number of homes, hotels, guesthouses, ashrams, dhabas, military camps built along rivers and fragile slopes.
6. Many built on river margins and past landslide debris, making them unsafe.
7. Char Dham Yatra route expansion and religious tourism have triggered rapid construction.
8. Supreme Court ban in Mussoorie ignored → new illegal homestays and houses on fragile land.

Tourism Pressure

9. Pilgrimage routes once accessible only by foot now connected by wider roads and helicopters.
10. Uncontrolled inflow of pilgrims = more hotels, shops, yoga retreats, all built in risky zones.

Main Issues

11. Political opportunism & bureaucratic negligence allow unsafe construction.
12. People build in risky areas due to scarcity of flat land.
13. Disasters are often the result of greed and indifference, not just climate change.

Conclusion

14. True effects of global warming = melting glaciers & changing weather patterns, which are long-term.
15. But today's Himalayan disasters are mainly due to avoidable human factors like illegal construction and unchecked tourism.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/global-warming-alone-is-not-behind-uttarkashi-flash-floods-greed-is-10183574/>

Editorial of the Day – 13.08.2025

Index

1. Justice and equality: On organ transplantation, gender skew (TH)

2. Opening India's agriculture to a free-for-all would have serious repercussions for the sector (IE)

1. Justice and equality: On organ transplantation, gender skew (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Social Justice

TOPIC: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context

1. No person in urgent need of an organ transplant should be denied access.
2. NOTTO advisory is a progressive step to address gender disparity in organ transplants.

Introduction

1. Women are more often donors than recipients in organ transplants.
2. The advisory challenges patriarchal norms in healthcare.
3. Aim: Make organ allocation fairer and more just.

Principle & Purpose

1. Natural Justice: Corrects social inequities.
2. NOTTO Advisory: Priority to women patients and relatives of deceased donors.
3. Rewriting Narratives: Addresses gender gaps in transplant access.

Evidence of Gender Imbalance

1. Decadal Data (2013–23): Clear skew in donor vs recipient roles.
2. Living Donor Transplants (2023):
 1. 63% women as donors.
 2. Far fewer as beneficiaries.
3. Share of Women as Beneficiaries (2023):
 3. Heart: 24%
 4. Lung: 47%
 5. Kidney: 37%
 6. Liver: 30%
 7. Pancreas: 26%
4. BMJ Analysis (2018–23):
 8. Women gave 36,038 donations, but received only 17,041 transplants.

Implementation Challenges

1. Current Protocols: Allocation based on health grounds only, no gender-based preference.
2. Unclear Scope: Ambiguity on "near relatives" and old donor families (since 1995).
3. Risk of Misuse: Organ rackets, fear of out-of-turn allotments.
4. Need for Balance: Don't discard policy, as it tackles deep-rooted gender bias.

Way Forward

1. Make policy participatory → consult all agencies.
2. Ensure compliance with Transplantation of Human Organs Act.
3. Expand organ access without weakening health-based priority.

Conclusion

1. Advisory intent = commendable step for justice & equality.
2. Success needs: clear rules, transparency, safeguards against misuse.
3. With integrity & accountability, it can:

1. Protect donor families.
2. Ensure gender fairness.
3. Set a precedent for socially just healthcare policy in India.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/justice-and-equality-on-organ-transplantation-gender-skew/article69924723.ece>

2. Opening India's agriculture to a free-for-all would have serious repercussions for the sector (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Economy

TOPIC: Agriculture – issues of subsidies, MSP, farm pricing, procurement & food security.

Agriculture & Subsidy Debate

Introduction

1. Agriculture = 16% of India's GDP, but much bigger in employment & livelihood impact.
2. 250 million people directly depend on farming; 700 million linked to rural/agriculture sector.
3. Protecting farming is not just policy → it is economic, social, political, cultural survival.

Subsidy Issue in India vs US/EU

1. India → MSP (Minimum Support Price) for select crops; govt procures crops at MSP.
2. US → ERP, PLC, ARC, DMC systems:
 1. ERP = Effective Reference Price (like MSP).
 2. PLC (Price Loss Coverage) & ARC (Agriculture Risk Coverage) → direct govt payments to farmers if prices fall (no crop procurement).
 3. DMC (Dairy Margin Coverage) → supports dairy sector.
3. EU → Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) → direct income support if prices fall below intervention levels.

Key Differences

1. India → govt buys crops at MSP; US/EU → no procurement, only direct payments.
2. US/EU → complex, paperwork-heavy, suited to literate farmers. India's system → simpler, transparent.
3. Shifting Indian farmers to US/EU-style subsidies = bureaucratic mess + decades to implement.

Comparison of Subsidies

1. US spends \$20 billion; EU spends \$50 billion annually on subsidies.
2. Many US/EU subsidies are hidden; India's MSP is transparent.
3. US/EU → 80% subsidies to large farms.
4. India → 80% subsidies to small/medium farmers.
5. India = focus on small farmers' upliftment.
6. EU (latest reforms) moving closer to Indian model, targeting small farmers.

Way Forward for India

1. India must push for equitable, development-centred agreements globally.
2. Indian MSP is clear & context-based, unlike US/EU's complex systems.
3. Opening up fully to global markets while US/EU protect large farms with subsidies = asymmetric warfare against Indian farmers.
4. Uncontrolled liberalisation → huge social & economic upheaval in India.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/opening-indias-agriculture-to-a-free-for-all-would-have-serious-repercussions-for-the-sector-10185549/>

Editorial of the Day – 14.08.2025

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1. Limited gains: On the inflation space (TH)

2. New Income Tax Bill 2025 passed in Parliament: key features, what changes (IE)

1. Limited gains: On the inflation space (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Economy

TOPIC: Inflation, Growth, and Structural Challenges

Context

Inflation has dipped sharply, but the benefit may not last.

Introduction

1. India's inflation has fallen from above RBI's comfort band (2–6%) to well below it.
2. July 2025 retail inflation: 1.55% (lowest since June 2017), mainly due to cheaper food.
3. Short-term relief, but economy still faces structural weaknesses.

Shift in Inflation Dynamics

1. 2 years ago, → inflation above RBI's range.
2. Now → below the lower limit (1.55%).
3. Driven by fall in food prices, not just a statistical "base effect."

Base Effect Significance

1. Base effect was already low in July 2024.
2. Current contraction shows real price reduction, not an illusion.

Drivers of Low Inflation

1. Good monsoon and sowing conditions.
2. Supportive base effect from late 2024.
3. Core inflation stable at 4.1% (RBI target level).

External Risks to Price Stability

1. If India shifts from Russian crude to costlier Gulf oil → prices may rise.
2. Trump–Putin talks may ease tariff pressures.

RBI's Inflation Outlook

1. Inflation likely to rise only from January 2026.
2. Short-term looks good, but RBI warns against complacency.

Signs of Growth Slowdown

1. IIP at 10-month low.
2. Weak output of capital & consumer goods.
3. GST revenue growth slowed (single digits).
4. Direct tax collections contracted.
5. Car sales (to dealers) at 18-month low.
6. UPI transactions declined 3 times in 2025 → weak demand.

Risks to GDP Outlook

1. RBI projects 6.5% growth (FY 2025–26) → may be too optimistic.
2. Even if new U.S. tariffs are removed, existing duties may cut GDP by 0.2% points.
3. Growth remains fragile.

Structural & Demand-Side Challenges

1. Deep structural bottlenecks continue.
2. Demand subdued despite low inflation.

3. Price relief is temporary without major reforms.

Conclusion

1. Low inflation = temporary breathing space.
2. Economic fragility: weak demand, sluggish industry, poor tax growth.
3. Without structural reforms, current price stability won't ensure long-term growth.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/limited-gains-on-the-inflation-space/article69928821.ece>

2. New Income Tax Bill 2025 passed in Parliament: key features, what changes (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Economy

TOPIC: Taxation & fiscal policy reforms.

Income Tax Bill, 2025

Context

1. Parliament passed a new Income Tax Bill (replacing 1961 Act), effective from April 1, 2026.
2. Aim: Simplify provisions, reduce ambiguity, modernize tax law.

Key Features

Refunds

1. Restrictive clause removed → taxpayers can claim refund even if filed late.

TCS (Tax Collection at Source)

2. Nil TCS on foreign education remittances via financial institutions (clarified).

Corporate Taxpayers

3. Corrected errors in dividend deduction for concessional tax rate companies.
4. AMT (Alternate Minimum Tax) for LLPs aligned with old Act (kept at 12.5%, not 18.5%).
5. Nil-TDS certificate allowed for those with no liability.
6. Clearer rules for transfer pricing & carry-forward of losses.
7. Section 79 aligned → "beneficial owner" reference removed.

House Property Income

8. 30% standard deduction after municipal taxes clarified.

Non-Profits (NPOs)

9. Exemption: 5% of total donations (not just anonymous donations).

Tax Year Concept

10. New definition: April 1 → March 31.
11. Redundant provisions & archaic language removed.

Digital Searches & Powers

12. Tax authorities can access digital platforms (emails, social media, cloud servers, investment accounts).

Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025

Foreign Investment Funds

13. Full I-T exemption to Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (like Abu Dhabi's ADIA earlier).

Pensions

14. Tax-free withdrawal (up to 60%) allowed for Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) like NPS.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/new-income-tax-bill-passed-in-parliament-key-features-10186767/#:~:text=The%20new%20Bill%20removes%20redundant%20provisions%20and%20archaic%20language%20and, chapters%20from%2047%20to%2023.>

Editorial of the Day – 15.08.2025

Index

1. Ceremonial heads: On Governors (TH)

2. Only united action can stop the hyacinth's invasion (TH)

3. Push for transparency: What Supreme Court's order on Bihar SIR says (IE)

1. Ceremonial heads: On Governors (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Governance

TOPIC: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Context

1. Governors, acting as Chancellors, often hinder rather than help universities.
2. SC has censured Governors for overstepping powers, yet clashes continue.
3. Raises the issue of colonial legacy vs need for modern university autonomy.

Supreme Court vs Governor Interventions

1. April 2025: SC censured TN Governor R.N. Ravi for blocking 10 Bills on universities.
2. Court set timelines for Governors to act on Bills.
3. Declared Presidential intervention based on Governor's delay as invalid.
4. Despite this:
 1. Ravi referred the Kalaingar University Bill to the President.
 2. Kerala Governor Arlekar ordered "Partition Horrors Day" in universities → ideological criticism.
 3. Former Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan delayed/vetoed Bills.
5. President has also challenged SC rulings through references.

Universities as a Political Battleground

1. State universities = frequent conflict zones between Governors & State govts.
2. Governors' role as Chancellors gives them leverage.
3. Colonial Legacy:
 1. British made Governor's ceremonial heads to maintain control & influence.
 2. Post-independence, role retained to prevent separatism.
4. Many States (incl. TN, Kerala) still keep Governors as Chancellors.
5. Often Governors act as central proxies with political/ideological agendas.

Towards University Autonomy

1. Draft UGC Regulations: propose giving Chancellor full authority in VC appointments (reducing State govt role).
2. NEP 2020: stresses university autonomy → institutions should:
 1. Raise own funds
 2. Be accountable for spending
 3. Have professional leaders (academic + admin + fundraiser + manager)
3. Trend points towards professional leaders instead of Governors as university heads.

Conclusion

1. Conflicts highlight tension between constitutional role vs political agenda.
2. For healthy higher education:
 1. Move towards autonomy & professional leadership.
 2. Implement NEP 2020 vision + UGC draft reforms.
 3. Ensure accountability, independence & academic freedom.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/ceremonial-heads-on-governors/article69933460.ece>

2. Only united action can stop the hyacinth's invasion (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context

1. Water hyacinth = invasive aquatic weed spreading every monsoon.
2. Introduced in colonial era as ornamental plant → now covers 2,00,000+ hectares of inland waters.
3. Worst-hit: Kerala backwaters & Vembanad Lake.

Impact on Livelihoods, Ecology & Climate

1. Farmers: Blocked irrigation channels, choked fields → ↑ cost & labour.
2. Fishermen: Reduces fish stock, blocks access, damages nets & boats.
3. Aquatic biodiversity: Blocks sunlight & oxygen → suffocates flora & fauna.
4. Tourism: Ramsar sites like Vembanad threatened → hits ecotourism & transport.
5. Climate: Decaying hyacinth releases methane → 25x more harmful than CO₂.

Innovations & Experiments

1. Odisha: Women SHGs → crafts, baskets, furniture.
2. Assam & West Bengal: Used for paper & biogas.
3. Limitation: Scattered, small-scale; need expansion.

Need for Policy & Coordination

1. Responsibility spread across multiple departments → piecemeal actions.
2. Requires single-point accountability & national + region-specific strategy.
3. Must give financial incentives, value chains, policy support.

Way Forward

1. Scientific removal: Mechanisation & local tech (esp. in Kerala).
2. Private sector role: Incentivise startups, promote research for crafts, biofuels, compost, textiles.
3. Collaborative models: Universities, experts, govt. & communities to scale solutions.
4. Awareness: Campaigns to turn experiments into sustainable practices.

Conclusion

1. Water hyacinth → not just ecological problem, but livelihood, food security & climate issue.
2. Needs urgent, united action by govt., communities, entrepreneurs & citizens.
3. Time to remove both the weed & policy inertia.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/only-united-action-can-stop-the-hyacinths-invasion/article69933965.ece>

3. Push for transparency: What Supreme Court's order on Bihar SIR says (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Polity & Governance

TOPIC: Election Commission of India (ECI) – Powers & Functions

Supreme Court Order on Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR) Issue:

~65 lakh voter names deleted from Bihar draft electoral roll; reasons included death, migration, duplication.

Challenge:

Petitioners questioned

1. Substantive: Does ECI have power to conduct SIR?
2. Procedural: Validity of 11 documents as citizenship proof, use of 2003 voter list as cut-off, exclusion of Aadhaar.

SC's Observation:

3. ECI has power to conduct SIR.

4. Transparency is essential—citizens must know why their names are deleted.

ECI's Stand:

5. No legal requirement to publish deleted list separately.
6. Risk of misuse by political parties.
7. Concern: Violation of voter privacy.

SC's Interim Order:

8. ECI must publish booth-wise, searchable online list of deleted voters.
9. Reasons for deletion must be provided (death, migration, duplication).
10. Lists to be displayed at Panchayat Bhavans & BDO offices.

Significance:

11. Enhances transparency & accountability in electoral rolls.
12. Balances citizen's right to information vs. privacy concerns.
13. Ensures fair electoral process before Bihar polls.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/push-for-transparency-what-supreme-courts-order-on-bihar-sir-says-10190140/>



Editorial of the Day – 18.08.2025

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1. A conservation manual, drafted by the ordinary citizen (TH)

2. Planning the next leap forward (IE)

3. In Namibia, India shows a new way to engage Africa

1. A conservation manual, drafted by the ordinary citizen (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 1: History

TOPIC: Indian Heritage & Culture

Conservation of Monuments (ASI)

1. Current Approach & Challenges

1. PM stresses remembering freedom fighters; but memorialisation is often symbolic.
2. ASI's approach → isolates monuments, repairs, sometimes beautifies → outdated & limited.
3. Framework shaped by colonial methods (e.g., John Marshall's *Conservation Manual*, 1923).
4. Despite 3,600 protected monuments, many are in poor condition.
5. 2014 conservation policy not effectively implemented.
6. Govt inviting corporates to adopt monuments (e.g., *Adopt a Heritage scheme*).

2. Need for a New Approach

1. Conservation should not only protect structure but also improve lives of communities around.
2. Visitors should learn about builders' skill, resilience, and history.
3. Must involve experts from diverse fields (translators, ecologists, biologists, economists).

3. Lessons from Other Disciplines

Translators' perspective: Meanings change with time → ASI should make interventions transparent & review materials used in preservation.

Wildlife biologists' perspective: Focus on ecosystems, not isolated animals → ASI should see linkages of monuments with water bodies, forests, settlements, etc.

Mycologists' perspective: Fungi show value in decay → Even small forgotten monuments (walls, tanks, dovecotes) can provide groundwater recharge, local economy boost, habitats, tourism.

Economists' perspective: Value lies in *function*, not appearance → e.g., restore natural ventilation in havelis > repainting.

1. Promote research on monuments' significance to justify higher budget.
2. Use *creative destruction* → e.g., old submerged temples as labs for underwater archaeology.

4. Role of Citizens

1. Citizens must engage in conservation awareness.
2. Learn to "read stones" → understand stories, biases, silenced voices.
3. Treat India itself as a monument without walls → inclusive heritage preservation.

2. Planning the next leap forward (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Economy

TOPIC: Agriculture: Issues of subsidies, food security, agri-R&D, value chains.

Key Theme:

1. India has made major strides in growth, food security, and innovation since independence.
2. Now, the focus must shift towards rationalising subsidies, investing in agricultural R&D, efficient value chains, and environmental sustainability.

1. India's Growth Story Since Independence

1. India's GDP projected to cross \$4.91 trillion by 2025, making it the fourth-largest economy (after US, China, Germany).

- Poverty has reduced drastically – population below \$3.3/day (World Bank estimate) has fallen to just 13.5%.
- Literacy rate has reached ~77%, while life expectancy more than doubled (72 years in 2023).
- Agriculture production multiplied manifold, now the world's largest rice exporter.
- Foodgrain production ~353.9 MMT (2024–25), up from 51 MMT in 1950s.
- India has achieved food security & is moving towards nutrition security.

2. Transformational Achievements

- Green Revolution → Food Security.
- Digital Revolution → UPI crossing 10 billion transactions/month.
- Space Achievements → Chandrayaan, Mangalyaan, Moon's South Pole landing.
- Women's empowerment, improved life expectancy, literacy.
- India emerging as a global innovation hub.

3. Challenges Ahead

Nutritional Security: Malnutrition among children persists despite food surplus.

Subsidy Inefficiencies:

- Govt spends heavily on subsidies (food, fertiliser, power).
- Studies suggest 200–250% of actual benefit lost due to inefficiency & leakage.

Environmental Unsustainability:

- Over-extraction of groundwater.
- Soil degradation.
- Rising climate risks.

Health & Human Development:

- Malnutrition, stunting, anaemia remain high.
- Gender gap in nutrition & education.
- Poor sanitation (though improved via ODF).

4. Way Forward (Author's Prescription)

- Rationalise subsidies – target the truly needy.
- Shift focus to investments in agricultural R&D and innovation.
- Build efficient value chains to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Prioritise environmental sustainability in agriculture.
- Invest in human capital (nutrition, education, healthcare).
- Promote inclusive innovation for equitable growth.
- Move towards "Viksit Bharat @2047" with focus on sustainability + equity.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/planning-the-next-leap-forward-10195278/>

3. In Namibia, India shows a new way to engage Africa

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India–Namibia Relations (Role of India in Global South & South–South Cooperation)

India–Namibia Relations & Africa Diplomacy

1. Modi's Diplomacy in Namibia

- Used local culture & language (poet, plant, Springbok, Oshiwambo phrases).
- Showed inclusive & grounded approach → different from the West's aid-driven, conditional engagement.

2. India's 3-Step Approach in Africa

1. **Shared anti-colonial history**

- Support to SWAPO liberation movement.
- Indian general led UN peacekeeping during Namibia's independence.
- Creates long-term solidarity (contrast to West's episodic presence).

2. **Present-day cooperation**

- Bilateral trade: \$800 million.

5. India's \$12 billion development partnership across Africa.
6. Capacity building: IT excellence centre, India Wing at Namibia University.
3. **Future-oriented roadmap**
 7. Namibia = 1st African country to adopt India's UPI digital payments.
 8. Model for exporting India's digital public infrastructure + regulatory frameworks.

3. Namibia's Advantage

1. Politically stable, resource-rich (esp. uranium), growing tech base.
2. Shares India's call for reform of global economic & financial systems.
3. Seen as a partner in the Global South → reshaping world order for fairness & justice.

4. Challenges in India's Africa Policy

1. Long gaps in high-level visits (30 years gap before this).
2. Outcomes of visit modest → only MoUs on entrepreneurship, health, disaster resilience, biofuels.
3. Missed opportunity → no major deal on Namibia's critical minerals (esp. uranium).
4. India often struggles with implementation & consistency.

5. Way Forward

1. Move beyond symbolism → show sustained political will & follow-through.
2. Upcoming India-Africa Forum Summit → chance to formalize partnerships.
3. India must:
 1. Ensure institutional coherence.
 2. Back commitments with resources & implementation.
 3. Build trust through dialogue & African-led priorities.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/in-namibia-india-shows-a-new-way-to-engage-africa/article69944513.ece>

Editorial of the Day – 18.08.2025

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- 1. Required reforms: On reforms to the GST system (TH)**
- 2. Familiar impasse: On the global response to eliminating plastic pollution (TH)**
- 3. Why Centre is considering 'equivalence' in application of 'Creamy layer' condition in OBC quota (IE)**

1. Required reforms: On reforms to the GST system (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Economy

TOPIC: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. (GST is a key tool for resource mobilization).

Core Idea

The central government is planning major GST reforms in 2025 to benefit the middle class and businesses by sacrificing some revenue to boost consumption.

Key Proposed Changes

Tax Rate Reduction:

1. Move 99% of items from the 12% slab to the 5% slab.
2. Move 90% of items from the 28% slab to the 18% slab.

Procedural Simplification:

3. Make GST registration easier.
4. Streamline the process for filing returns.
5. Speed up tax refunds.

Expected Economic Impact

1. Revenue: The government anticipates a temporary revenue loss.
2. Consumption: Lower taxes are expected to increase consumer spending and boost the domestic economy.
3. Compliance: A lower 5% tax rate is likely to reduce tax evasion and input tax credit scams.
4. Tax Base: The government hopes that increased consumption will widen the overall tax base, offsetting the revenue loss.

State Government Concerns

1. States are worried about their potential revenue loss from these rate cuts.
2. While they may not openly oppose the cuts, they are likely to ask the central government for compensation.
3. Bringing petroleum products under GST is unlikely in the near future due to these revenue concerns.

Conclusion

1. The reforms aim to create a simpler, fairer, and more growth-focused tax system.
2. Success will depend on effective discussions and coordination between the central and state governments.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/required-reforms-on-reforms-to-the-gst-system/article69947636.ece>

2. Familiar impasse: On the global response to eliminating plastic pollution (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment:

The Core Problem

1. Global efforts to create a legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution are stalled.
2. The main disagreement is whether to limit plastic production at the source or just focus on improving waste management.
3. Negotiations are stuck due to a lack of trust between countries, with some fearing that production caps could be used as trade barriers.

Scale of the Plastic Crisis

Globally:

1. Over 430 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually.
2. Most of it is for short-term use and quickly becomes waste.
3. Plastic production is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

In India:

4. India generates about 3.4 million tonnes of plastic waste each year.
5. Only about 30% of this waste is recycled.
6. Bans on single-use plastics have had limited impact on the overall problem.

Why Current Solutions Fall Short

1. Focusing only on waste management and recycling has proven ineffective over the past decades.
2. Plastic, especially microplastics, is now found in human bodies, animal life, and marine ecosystems.
3. Coastal and island nations are being overwhelmed by plastic waste washing up on their shores.

Conclusion

1. Plastic pollution is a critical environmental and health crisis.
2. Experts believe the only effective long-term solution is to reduce plastic production.
3. Without cooperation and mutual trust, any global treaty will likely fail.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/familiar-impasse-on-eliminating-plastic-pollution-global-response/article69947653.ece>

3. Why Centre is considering 'equivalence' in application of 'creamy layer' condition in OBC quota (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Social Justice

TOPIC: Vulnerable Sections

What is the 'Creamy Layer'?

1. It's a concept established by the Supreme Court in 1992 to exclude the more affluent members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the benefits of reservation.
2. The goal is to ensure that quotas reach the most deserving individuals within the OBC community, not those who are already well-off.

The Core Problem: A Lack of Uniformity

1. The rules for identifying the creamy layer are applied differently for different types of jobs.
2. For Central Government Employees: Their salary is NOT counted towards the creamy layer income limit (currently ₹8 lakh per annum). Their status is determined by their rank (e.g., children of high-ranking officers are excluded).
3. For Employees in PSUs, Universities, State Bodies: Often, their entire salary IS counted towards the income limit.
4. The Anomaly: This creates an unfair situation. For example, the child of a government school teacher might get reservation, while the child of a university teacher with a similar salary might be denied it and placed in the creamy layer.

What's Happening Now?

1. The government is trying to establish "equivalence" – a fair system to compare jobs across all sectors (central government, PSUs, state organizations, universities) to apply the creamy layer rule uniformly.
2. This was triggered after more than 100 successful Civil Services candidates had their OBC certificates rejected since 2015 because of this inconsistent application of rules.
3. There is a proposal to apply the new, fairer policy retrospectively (back-dated), which would allow those 100+ candidates to get their positions.

The Goal

The main objective is to ensure fairness and consistency in the reservation system. It aims to remove the disadvantages faced by children of employees in state government bodies, PSUs, and other institutions compared to the children of central government employees.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/why-centre-is-considering-equivalence-in-application-of-creamy-layer-condition-in-obc-quota-10197523/>



Editorial of the Day – 20.08.2025

Index

1. Sedition redux: On trampling on press freedom (TH)

2. 3 new cases of 'brain-eating amoeba' in Kerala: What you should know

3. Making India's climate taxonomy framework work (TH)

1. Sedition redux: On trampling on press freedom (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Polity

TOPIC: Fundamental Rights

The Core Issue

1. Police are using the new sedition law, Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), to target and intimidate journalists.
2. This confirms fears that the new law is just a rebranded and more dangerous version of the old colonial-era sedition law.

The Assam Police Case

1. Police in Assam summoned two senior journalists from *The Wire*.
2. The summons was issued on the same day the Supreme Court agreed to hear a challenge against Section 152 and protected these journalists from coercive action.
3. The summons was also procedurally flawed (lacked necessary details), suggesting the main purpose was intimidation.

Why Section 152 is Considered More Dangerous

1. Vague Terms: It uses broad and undefined terms like "sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India," which can be easily misused.
2. Lower Bar for Prosecution: Unlike the old law, it doesn't require proof of "malicious intent," making it easier to file cases against critics.
3. Chilling Effect: The law discourages free speech and dissent, as even legitimate criticism of the government can be targeted.

The Way Forward

1. The Supreme Court's intervention is critical to prevent the misuse of this law.
2. There is a need for strong judicial safeguards to protect freedom of expression.
3. Many argue that the Supreme Court should declare such sedition laws unconstitutional as they have no place in a democracy.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/sedition-redux-on-trampling-on-press-freedom/article69952849.ece>

2. 3 new cases of 'brain-eating amoeba' in Kerala: What you should know

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Science & Technology

TOPIC: Awareness in the fields of Bio-technology; Public health; New and emerging diseases.

What is it?

1. It's a rare but extremely deadly brain infection called Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM).
2. It's caused by a single-celled organism, an amoeba named *Naegleria fowleri*.
3. This amoeba thrives in warm, fresh water like lakes, rivers, and poorly maintained swimming pools, as well as in soil.

How Does Infection Occur?

1. The amoeba enters the body through the nose, typically when someone is swimming or puts their head in contaminated water.
2. It then travels up the nerves to the brain, where it destroys brain tissue.

3. Crucially: You cannot get infected by drinking contaminated water, and the disease is not contagious (it doesn't spread from person to person).

Symptoms and Treatment

1. Early Symptoms: Headache, fever, nausea, vomiting.
2. Later Symptoms: Stiff neck, confusion, seizures, hallucinations, and coma.
3. Outcome: The infection is almost always fatal, with death usually occurring within 1 to 18 days. The global fatality rate is over 97%.
4. Treatment: There is no single effective cure. Doctors use a combination of strong drugs, but survival is extremely rare.

Situation in India & Kerala

1. Recent cases, including two deaths, have been reported in Kerala.
2. Until July 2024, every known case in India was fatal. A 14-year-old from Kerala became the first known survivor in the country.
3. The rise in cases in Kerala may be due to increased testing for brain infections, climate change, and environmental pollution.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-health/brain-eating-amoeba-meaning-kerala-case-symptoms-10198678/>

3. Making India's climate taxonomy framework work (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment:

What is the Climate Taxonomy?

1. It's a classification system to define what qualifies as a "green" or "climate-friendly" investment in India.
2. Main Goals: To attract climate-focused investment, prevent "greenwashing" (false environmental claims), and provide clear guidance to investors.
3. It's designed as a "living document," meaning it needs to be regularly updated.

How to Keep it Updated: A Two-Tier Review System

1. Annual Reviews: For small, timely adjustments based on new policies, stakeholder feedback, or international rules. This ensures the framework remains responsive.
2. Five-Year Comprehensive Reviews: For a deep reassessment of the entire framework. This aligns with India's climate targets (NDCs) and the global climate review process (Global Stocktake).

What the Reviews Should Check

1. Legal Coherence: Ensure the taxonomy aligns with India's other laws (like the Energy Conservation Act, SEBI norms) and international obligations to avoid conflicts.
2. Content Clarity: Keep the definitions and technical benchmarks (e.g., emission reduction targets) accurate, clear, and up-to-date with the latest science and market standards.
3. Inclusivity: The rules must be practical and accessible for small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and the informal sector, not just large corporations. This could involve simpler guidelines or phased deadlines.

Who Should Be in Charge?

1. A dedicated body, likely under the Ministry of Finance, should be created to manage the review process.
2. This body must include a diverse group of experts: financial regulators, climate scientists, legal experts, and civil society representatives.
3. Transparency is vital: The process should involve public dashboards for feedback, and all review reports and proposed changes must be published openly.



Why This Matters Now

1. The taxonomy is being launched as other key climate finance initiatives, like the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme and green bonds, are gaining momentum in India.
2. A clear and credible taxonomy will strengthen these initiatives. A poorly designed one could undermine them.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/making-indias-climate-taxonomy-framework-work/article69952694.ece>

Editorial of the Day – 21.08.2025

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1. India's democracy is failing the migrant citizen (TH)

2. After Wang Yi's visit, taking stock of India-China bilateral ties (IE)

1. India's democracy is failing the migrant citizen (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Governance

TOPIC: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act:

The Core Problem

1. Millions of migrant voters, particularly from Bihar, are being removed from electoral rolls.
2. In Bihar, 3.5 million names were deleted after they were marked as "permanently migrated" simply because they were not present during house-to-house verification.
3. This is leading to mass disenfranchisement, effectively taking away their right to vote.

Why the System Fails Migrants

1. Designed for "Sedentary Citizens": India's electoral system is built for people who live in one place and can easily provide proof of residence.
2. Barriers in Host States: Migrants often live in temporary housing and lack the documents needed to register as voters in their place of work.
3. Political Hostility: They are often seen as "outsiders," and local politics in host states discourages their enrolment.
4. The Double Loss: Migrants are unable to register in their host state and are now being removed from their home state's voter list.

Scale and Impact

1. Low Voter Turnout: States with high out-migration like Bihar have the lowest voter turnouts in India.
2. A Systemic Issue: The problem is similar to the challenges faced by the "One Nation One Ration Card" scheme, where bureaucracy and fear of losing entitlements limit its use by migrants.
3. Dual Identity Demonised: Migrants maintain an economic role in host states but a political identity in their home states. The current system punishes this reality.

Proposed Solutions (The Way Forward)

1. End Blanket Deletions: The Election Commission of India (ECI) should immediately stop the practice of deleting names based on absence during verification.
2. Create a Portable System: Move towards a flexible, mobile voter identity that is not tied to a single permanent address.
3. Cross-State Verification: Before deleting a name, officials should cross-verify with the electoral rolls of the destination state.
4. Empower Local Bodies: Use panchayats and civil society organizations to conduct outreach and re-registration drives for migrants.
5. Conduct Migration Surveys: States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh should adopt the "Kerala model" of conducting surveys to understand migration patterns and better serve their migrant populations.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-democracy-is-failing-the-migrant-citizen/article69956801.ece>

2. After Wang Yi's visit, taking stock of India-China bilateral ties (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India and its neighbourhood- relations; Bilateral agreements involving India; Effect of policies of other countries on India's interests.

Background: From Conflict to Cautious Rapprochement

1. 2019: High point with the Modi-Xi informal summit in Mahabalipuram.
2. 2020: Low point with the violent Galwan Valley clash, leading to a rupture in ties and massive military build-up on the border.
3. Late 2024: Both countries agreed to disengage at the last friction points (Depsang and Demchok) and mend ties. This led to the recent visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The New Strategy: A "Twin-Track" Approach

1. India and China have agreed to revive an old strategy of working on two parallel tracks:
 1. Track 1: Continue to manage and resolve complex border issues.
 2. Track 2: Simultaneously move forward on other aspects of the bilateral relationship (like trade and travel).
2. The idea is to prevent the border dispute from completely halting all other forms of cooperation.

Key Agreements and Steps Forward

On the Border:

1. Three new border mechanisms will be created to work on boundary delimitation and effective border management to maintain peace.

On Bilateral Ties:

2. Resume direct flights and simplify the visa process.
3. Reopen border trade at key passes like Nathu La, Shipki La, and Lipulekh.
4. River Cooperation: China has agreed to share hydrological data on trans-border rivers during emergencies.

The Biggest Challenge: The "Trust Deficit"

India's trust in China remains very low due to several key issues:

1. Repeated Border Incursions: A pattern of Chinese aggression at the border since 2013.
2. China-Pakistan Military Axis: China's support for Pakistan, including supplying weapons and intelligence.
3. Brahmaputra Dam: Concerns over China's mega-dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo river.
4. Export Curbs: China's restrictions on exporting items crucial for India, like fertilizers and rare earths.

Conclusion

1. For the new "twin-track" strategy to be successful and lasting, the responsibility lies with China (Beijing) to address India's security and trust concerns.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/after-wang-yis-visit-taking-stock-of-india-china-bilateral-ties-10201684/>

Editorial of the Day – 22.08.2025

Index

1. On the bills for political probity (TH)

2. How Haryana's new 'dictionary meaning of forest' will affect the Aravalli's (IE)

1. On the bills for political probity (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 4: Ethics

TOPIC: Probity in Governance

What the New Bills Propose

1. The central government has introduced new bills, including a constitutional amendment.
2. Key Provision: A Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Minister will be removed from their post if they are arrested and detained for a serious offence (punishable with 5+ years in jail).
3. They can only be reinstated if a court finds them innocent (acquittal).
4. Stated Goal: To enhance probity and accountability in high office.

Major Concerns and Criticisms

Centralization of Power: Critics argue the bills are designed to concentrate power with the central government.

Selective Application:

1. In theory, the law applies to everyone, including the Prime Minister.
2. In practice, central investigative agencies (like CBI, ED) are controlled by the Centre and are unlikely to arrest a sitting PM.
3. However, these agencies have a history of arresting Opposition leaders, suggesting the law could be used as a political weapon against state governments.

Undermining Federalism: The bills weaken the power of states by giving the Centre a tool to remove elected Chief Ministers.

Threats to Justice and Democracy

Removal Without Conviction: The bills allow an elected official to be removed from office based on a mere **arrest by police**, not a conviction by a court. This goes against the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

Disrespecting the Electorate: It allows an administrative action (an arrest) to overturn the democratic mandate of voters who elected that official.

Weakening Justice System: At a time when getting bail is already difficult under harsh laws (like PMLA), this adds another layer of punishment before a trial is even completed.

Conclusion

While the stated aim is to fight corruption, the proposed method is seen as dangerous. The bills risk being used to target political opponents, weaken state governments, and undermine fundamental principles of justice and democracy.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/lawfare-politics-on-the-bills-for-political-probity/article69960989.ece>

2. How Haryana's new 'dictionary meaning of forest' will affect the Aravalli's (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Environment

TOPIC: Conservation; Environmental laws (specifically the Forest Conservation Act, 1980); Environmental degradation; Issues related to land use change.

The Background: Supreme Court's Order

1. In 1996, the Supreme Court (T.N. Goda Varman case) ruled that the term 'forest' must be understood by its broad "dictionary meaning". This protected any land that looked like a forest, even if not officially recorded as one.
2. In response to a recent amendment to the Forest (Conservation) Act, the Supreme Court in 2024 reiterated this order and directed all states to formally define and identify their forest areas based on this broad meaning.

What Haryana's New Definition Says

The Haryana government has now defined a 'forest' as a patch of land that meets BOTH of the following strict conditions:

Minimum Size: At least 5 hectares (if isolated) or 2 hectares (if adjacent to an existing forest).

Canopy Density: Must have at least 40% tree cover.

Exclusions: Plantations along roads, canals, railway tracks, and orchards are explicitly not considered forests.

Why Environmentalists are Criticizing It

Threshold is Too High: The conditions for size and density are considered extremely high and restrictive.

Excludes the Aravallis: The Aravalli hills in Haryana are a naturally dry and rocky ecosystem with sparse, thorny, and scrub-type forests. These unique forests will not meet the 40% canopy density requirement.

Loss of Protection: As a result, large parts of the ecologically fragile Aravalli's will be left without the legal protection of the Forest (Conservation) Act, potentially opening them up for real estate and mining interests.

Violates SC's Intent: Critics argue that this narrow definition goes against the spirit of the Supreme Court's Goda Varman judgment, which intended to provide broad protection to all forest-like areas.

Conclusion

Haryana's restrictive definition is seen as a way to legally exclude the Aravalli range from being classified as a 'forest', thereby removing its legal safeguards.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-haryanas-dictionary-meaning-of-forest-will-affect-the-aravallis-10202954/>

Editorial of the Day – 23.08.2025

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1. A productive visit: On India-China ties (TH)

2. Success of India's deep-tech push requires removing bureaucracy's colonial roots (IE)

1. A productive visit: On India-China ties (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India and its neighbourhood- relations; Bilateral agreements involving India; Effect of policies of other countries on India's interests.

Purpose of the Visit

1. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India for high-level talks with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
2. The main goals were to discuss the boundary question and normalize relations after the four-year border standoff.

Key Positive Outcomes

Border & Connectivity: Agreed to resume border trade, restart direct flights ✈️, expand slots for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and relax visa rules.

Trade & Economy: Discussed lifting Chinese export restrictions on crucial items like fertilizers and rare earths.

Boundary Talks: Both sides committed to speeding up the resolution of the long-standing border dispute.

Underlying Challenges and Concerns

China's Parallel Diplomacy: Immediately after the India visit, Wang Yi traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan to push for the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into Afghanistan—projects that India opposes.

China-Pakistan Nexus: China's continued strategic support for Pakistan, especially during recent terror-related incidents, remains a major obstacle to building trust with India.

India's Strategic Balancing Act: While India is showing a willingness to move on from the Galwan clashes, it must do so cautiously. Economic pressure from the U.S. might be a factor pushing New Delhi to reset ties with Beijing, but India must manage this without appearing weak.

Conclusion

The visit was productive, with concrete steps forward on trade and travel. However, major geopolitical challenges, particularly China's deep ties with Pakistan and its strategic ambitions in the region, persist.

India's path forward requires a delicate balance of engagement and strength, always prioritizing its own national interests.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-productive-visit-on-india-china-ties/article69965402.ece>

2. Success of India's deep-tech push requires removing bureaucracy's colonial roots (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Governance

TOPIC: Role of civil services in a democracy; Important aspects of governance (accountability & responsiveness); Functions of Constitutional Bodies (UPSC).

The Goal: Technological Self-Reliance (Atmanirbharata)

1. Prime Minister Modi has set a goal for India to become self-reliant in frontier technologies like AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, and jet engines within the next two decades.
2. While India is a massive data consumer, it's mostly in low-tech areas. The push is to become a leader in high-tech and deep-tech.

The Biggest Obstacle: The "Steel Frame"

1. To achieve this technological vision, India must first address fundamental challenges in its core institutions: the bureaucracy, regulatory bodies, and the judiciary.
2. The main problem is that India's bureaucracy—the "steel frame"—is an outdated system inherited from the British colonial era.
3. This system was designed by the British to rule and control, not to foster innovation and development for a modern, democratic nation. It is seen as unaccountable and unresponsive.

Past Reform Efforts Have Fallen Short

1. Several attempts at administrative reform, like the Veerappan Moily Committee (2005), have been made in the past.
2. Key suggestions, such as bringing in domain experts for senior government jobs (lateral entry), have been tried but have met with limited success in changing the rigid system.

The Way Forward

1. The author argues that for a developed India (Viksit Bharat) to become a reality, the colonial bureaucratic model must be completely replaced.
2. A new, more accountable and responsive institutional framework is needed, where the bureaucracy is aligned with the goals of the elected political leadership, similar to models in the US and China.
3. The upcoming centenary of the Public Service Commission (UPSC) in 2026 is presented as an ideal occasion to initiate this overhaul.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/success-of-indias-deep-tech-push-requires-removing-bureaucracys-colonial-roots-10205757/>

Editorial of the Day – 25.08.2025

Index

1. Nourish to flourish, the nutrition and cognition link (TH)

2. Melting of Arctic sea ice has slowed down. This is not 'good news' (IE)

1. Nourish to flourish, the nutrition and cognition link (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Social Justice

TOPIC: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population.

The Critical Window for Child Development

First 1,000 Days: A child's life from conception to their second birthday is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a strong foundation for their future.

Irreversible Impact: If this critical window for nutrition and brain development is missed, a child may never reach their full potential.

What Science Tells Us

Rapid Brain Growth: By age two, a child's brain reaches 80% of its adult weight. This period is crucial for developing skills like planning and self-regulation.

Nutrition is Essential: Nutritional deficiencies before age three can cause irreversible damage to a child's cognitive abilities.

Nutrition + Stimulation = Success: Combining good nutrition with learning activities (like playing and talking) is much more effective than providing food alone.

Fast Learning: Young brains are like sponges; they learn quickly and what they learn sticks with them for life (a concept called neuroplasticity).

Childcare Programs in India

ICDS Programme: One of the world's largest childcare schemes, providing both nutrition and early education.

Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi: An initiative to specifically link nutrition with cognitive development ("Nutrition and Education").

Navchetana Framework: A national guideline with 140 age-specific activities for parents and Anganwadi workers to stimulate a child's growth from birth to age three.

Focus on Play: The approach emphasizes play-based learning and caregiver interaction, not formal teaching.

Areas for Improvement

Wider Coverage: Expand the ICDS program to reach all targeted children.

Better Quality: Focus on high-quality delivery of health, nutrition, and learning services.

Use Technology: Employ digital tools for better monitoring and efficiency.

Urban Focus: Strengthen ICDS services in underserved city areas.

More Daycares (Crèches): Expand childcare options to support working women.

Regular Evaluation: Consistently assess children's health and learning outcomes.

Conclusion: Why This Matters Now

Future Jobs: As automation increases, there will be fewer jobs for unskilled workers.

Preparing for the Future: Investing in early childhood development gives children the strong cognitive and social skills needed to adapt and succeed in a technologically advanced world.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/nourish-to-flourish-the-nutrition-and-cognition-link/article69972351.ece>

2. Melting of Arctic sea ice has slowed down. This is not 'good news' (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 1: World's Physical Geography

TOPIC: Changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps)

The Main Finding

1. For the past 20 years, the rate at which Arctic sea ice is melting has surprisingly slowed down.
2. This is happening despite the fact that overall global warming, caused by human activity, is still accelerating.

Why is the Melting Slowing Down?

1. The slowdown is not because climate change is getting better.
2. It's being caused by natural, long-term climate cycles in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.
 1. Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO)
 2. Atlantic Multidecadal Variability (AMV)
3. These natural cycles are currently bringing cooler ocean water into the Arctic, which is temporarily counteracting the effects of global warming and reducing the rate of ice melt.

Is This Good News? (Spoiler: No)

1. This slowdown is only temporary.
2. Scientists warn that once these natural cooling cycles end, the melting of Arctic sea ice is likely to speed up dramatically.
3. We are still emitting record levels of greenhouse gases, and mean global temperatures continue to rise.

Why This Matters for Everyone

1. The eventual rapid loss of Arctic sea ice will have severe consequences globally.
2. It will accelerate global warming because there will be less white ice to reflect the sun's heat.
3. It will contribute to a rise in sea levels.
4. It will destroy crucial ecosystems that many species depend on.

Source: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/melting-arctic-sea-ice-slowed-down-](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/melting-arctic-sea-ice-slowed-down-10206635/#:~:text=But%20a%20new%20study%20has,term%20average%2C%20the%20study%20said.)

[10206635/#:~:text=But%20a%20new%20study%20has,term%20average%2C%20the%20study%20said.](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/melting-arctic-sea-ice-slowed-down-10206635/#:~:text=But%20a%20new%20study%20has,term%20average%2C%20the%20study%20said.)

Editorial of the Day – 22.08.2025

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1. India-Japan ties — old partners, new priorities (TH)

2. Could we soon have space-based solar panels? Not really (IE)

1. India-Japan ties — old partners, new priorities (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: Bilateral agreements involving India; Effect of policies of other countries on India's interests

The Big Picture

1. PM Modi's visit to Japan comes at a crucial time, as India's relationship with China is tense and its partnership with the U.S. is becoming uncertain.
2. The visit is a clear signal of India's strategy: strengthen ties with reliable friends while managing relationships with competitors.

Japan's Major Commitments to India

Huge Investment: Japan is investing a massive ¥10 trillion (~\$68 billion) in India over the next 10 years.

Key Focus Areas: This investment will target infrastructure, manufacturing, clean energy, and technology.

High-Speed Rail: Japan is funding the next-generation Shinkansen (bullet train) for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad project.

Defence Partnership: The two nations are updating their joint security cooperation to face modern challenges.

Economic Security: They are working together to build secure supply chains for critical goods like semiconductors, essential minerals, and pharmaceuticals.

India's Strategic Balancing Act

The Itinerary Matters: PM Modi is visiting Tokyo (a trusted partner) and then attending a summit in China (a competitor) in the same trip. This shows India is balancing its relationships.

The U.S. Factor: This strategy is especially important now because the U.S. partnership under the Trump administration is seen as unpredictable, weakening a key alliance.

The Quad: The Quad (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) is still important, but its strength is at risk if the U.S. is not consistently engaged.

The Main Message & Conclusion

Japan is the Anchor: In a period of global uncertainty, Japan has emerged as India's most reliable and stable partner.

Shared Vision: Both countries share a commitment to a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific and are grounded in democratic values.

Clear Strategy: India is showing flexibility by keeping communication channels with China open, but it is also making it clear that its deepest partnerships are with like-minded, dependable powers like Japan.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/india-japan-ties-old-partners-new-priorities/article69975928.ece>

2. Could we soon have space-based solar panels? Not really (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Science & Technology

TOPIC: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics

The Problem with Solar Power on Earth

1. It only works during the daytime.
2. It's affected by weather like clouds and rain.
3. It requires a very large amount of land.

The "Silver Bullet" Solution: Space-Based Solar Power (SBSP)

1. The idea is to place giant solar panel satellites in orbit.
2. These satellites would collect powerful, unfiltered sunlight 24 hours a day.
3. The energy would be converted into microwaves and beamed down to a receiving station on Earth, which then turns it into electricity.
4. This would provide a continuous, dispatchable, zero-carbon power source.

Why It's a Good Idea (In Theory)

Continuous Power: It solves the day/night cycle problem, providing electricity around the clock.

More Efficient: Solar radiation is much stronger and more consistent in space.

Weather-Proof: It is not affected by clouds, dust, or weather on Earth.

The Huge Challenges (Why It's "Not Really" Happening Soon)

Extreme Cost: The biggest hurdle is the massive expense of building, launching, and maintaining these giant structures. It is not economically viable with current technology.

Massive Scale: The structures would be gigantic. A single satellite could be over a kilometer long, and the ground station would need a footprint ten times larger.

Launch Logistics: It would require hundreds of rockets launches to build just one space power plant. For comparison, the much smaller International Space Station took over 40 flights to assemble.

Other Risks: The plan doesn't fully account for space-specific challenges like orbital congestion (space junk) or potential interruptions to the energy beam.

Conclusion

While the concept of space-based solar power is promising, the immense cost and logistical challenges mean it is unlikely to become a practical reality before 2050.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/could-we-soon-have-space-based-solar-panels-not-really-10211527/#:~:text=Reasons%20for%20scepticism-.While%20SPSB%20is%20based%20on%20existing%20technological%20principles%20and%20known,on%20Earth%20and%20in%20space.>

Editorial of the Day – 27.08.2025

Index

1. Imagined righteousness: On conduct on social media (TH)

2. Two warships from 2 shipbuilders: Features and legacy of INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri, now commissioned into the Indian Navy (IE)

1. Imagined righteousness: On conduct on social media (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: Indian Constitution

TOPIC: Fundamental Rights, specifically Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech and Expression, and its reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2).

The Core Issue

1. The Supreme Court has asked the Indian government to create guidelines for regulating speech on social media.
2. The main concern is that this move could give the government, which already tends to restrict speech, too much power to control what people say online.

Dangers of Policing Speech

1. When authorities get the power to police speech, they might use it to suppress art, political criticism, or any dissent they dislike.
2. This can lead to citizens self-censoring—becoming afraid to express their opinions for fear of consequences.
3. A climate of censorship stifles the open discussion and creative expression that are essential for a healthy democracy.

Government Overreach pemerintah

1. The government has already expanded its control over online content through measures like the IT Rules, 2021.
2. India already has laws to deal with serious issues like hate speech and incitement to violence.
3. Giving an executive with a history of misusing such regulations even more power is considered highly risky.

The Proper Role of the Courts

1. The primary duty of the judiciary is to protect the constitutional rights of citizens, not to empower the state without limits.
2. Courts should act as a guardian of rights and maintain a balance between liberty and state control.

Conclusion: The Bottom Line

1. Excessive control over online speech by the government and courts threatens the core principles of democracy.
2. While harmful content is a real problem, the solution should not be to grant the state unchecked power that can be used to crush dissent and creativity.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/imagined-righteousness-on-conduct-on-social-media/article69979599.ece>

2. Two warships from 2 shipbuilders: Features and legacy of INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri, now commissioned into the Indian Navy (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Science & Technology

TOPIC: Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

What Just Happened?

1. The Indian Navy simultaneously commissioned two new advanced warships: INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri.
2. This is a significant milestone because it's the first time two major warships from two different Indian shipyards (one in Mumbai, one in Kolkata) were commissioned on the same day.
3. The project is a major boost for the "Make in India" initiative, involving over 200 small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

About the New Warships (Nilgiri-Class)

1. These ships belong to the Nilgiri-class of stealth guided-missile frigates, built under Project 17A (Alpha).
2. A total of seven such frigates will be built. These two are the second and third to be commissioned.
3. They are an advanced follow-up to the existing Shivalik-class frigates.
4. They are "blue water" ships, designed to operate in the deep sea, far from India's coast.

What Can They Do? (Capabilities)

Stealthy: Their design makes them difficult for enemy radar and sensors to detect.

Multi-Mission: They are versatile fighting machines capable of:

1. Anti-surface warfare (fighting other ships).
2. Anti-air warfare (fighting aircraft and missiles).
3. Anti-submarine warfare (hunting submarines).

Key Weapons: They are heavily armed with advanced systems like Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles, Barak-8 anti-aircraft missiles, torpedoes, and the latest radar and sonar technology.

Names and Legacy

1. The new frigates carry forward the names of an older, celebrated class of ships that served from the 1970s.
2. INS Udaygiri is named after a mountain range in Andhra Pradesh and will be based with the Eastern Naval Command.
3. INS Himgiri refers to the snow-clad Himalayan mountains and will be based with the Western Naval Command.

What's Next? (The Future)

1. The remaining four ships of the Nilgiri-class are expected to be commissioned in the next year and a half.
2. The Navy is already planning the next, even more advanced, class of frigates called Project-17 Bravo (P-17B), which will have a higher percentage of indigenous ("Made in India") content.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/warships-navy-features-legacy-ins-udaygiri-himgiri-comission-10211850/>

Editorial of the Day – 28.08.2025

Index

1. H-1B visa changes: Why Trump aides want to change H-1B visa program (IE)

2. Trump's tariffs are a violation – and a lesson for India (IE)

1. H-1B visa changes: Why Trump aides want to change H-1B visa program (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: Effect of Policies of Developed Countries on India's Interests; Indian Diaspora

What is the H1B Visa?

1. It's a US visa that allows American companies to hire skilled foreign workers for specialized jobs that require at least a bachelor's degree.
2. It was created in 1990 to help companies fill skill gaps they couldn't fill with the American workforce.
3. The visa is issued for up to six years. After that, the holder must either get a green card (permanent residency) or leave the US.
4. There's an annual cap of 65,000 new visas, plus an extra 20,000 for applicants with a master's degree or higher from a US university.

Benefits for US Companies

1. During the 1990s tech boom, companies like Google and Amazon used it to hire lakhs of skilled workers from countries like India and China.
2. This helped them overcome a shortage of domestic talent and gain a competitive edge in technology and research.
3. The program has been credited with boosting productivity and innovation in the US tech sector.

Criticism of the Program

1. Critics argue it's used to replace American workers with lower-paid foreign professionals.
2. It is blamed for contributing to problems like unemployment, wage stagnation, and other economic issues in the US.
3. The US Commerce Secretary recently called the program a "scam," urging companies to hire more Americans.

Why It's Important for India

1. Indians are the biggest beneficiaries, securing over 70% of all H1B visas issued.
2. The program boosts India's economy through remittances sent home by workers.
3. Indian IT companies, like Infosys, also benefit significantly from the scheme.
4. On average, an Indian IT worker on an H1B visa earns slightly less than their American counterpart.

The Way Forward for India

1. With the US already imposing tariffs, any negative changes to the H1B program would further harm India.
2. India should try to negotiate a trade deal with the US that includes a fixed quota for H1B visas for its skilled workforce.
3. Simultaneously, India must focus on strengthening its domestic economy by boosting manufacturing, increasing R&D spending, and improving the ease of doing business.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/why-trump-aides-h-1b-visa-program-10214484/>

2. Trump's tariffs are a violation – and a lesson for India (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2: International Relation

TOPIC: India-US Bilateral Relations; Effect of Policies of Developed Countries on India's Interests; World Trade Organization (WTO).

Background of the Trade Issue

1. The US has imposed an additional 25% secondary tariff on Indian products, on top of existing tariffs.
2. This comes after a plan to boost bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 was announced.
3. In response to initial talks, India had already reduced tariffs on US products like bourbon, high-end motorcycles, and electric vehicles.
4. The US still had concerns about limited market access for its genetically modified (GM) crops and dairy products.
5. India restricted these items to protect its small and marginal farmers.
6. The US has now put the trade deal on the back burner, focusing on India's purchase of Russian oil.

Effect of US Tariffs on India

1. Around 55% of India's \$85 billion in goods exports to the US will be impacted.
2. Key Indian exports like gems, jewellery, and textiles will be badly hit.
3. This can lead to job losses in labor-intensive sectors.
4. Export orders may be diverted to competing nations in South and Southeast Asia that face lower tariffs.
5. India should avoid retaliatory tariffs on US imports, as many are raw materials (like mineral fuel, diamonds, machinery) needed for Indian industries.

India's Limited Options

1. The World Trade Organization's (WTO) dispute resolution system is non-functional because the US has blocked appointments to its top body.
2. This makes any complaint to the WTO largely symbolic.
3. The US tariffs violate the WTO's "Most Favoured Nation" principle, which calls for non-discrimination in trade.
4. A possible relief could come if the US administration faces domestic pressure from inflation and job losses before its 2026 mid-term elections.

Way Forward for India

Diversify Exports: Reduce dependency on the US and EU by finding new markets and selling a wider variety of products.

Strengthen Trade Pacts: Negotiate new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and improve existing ones with partners like Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

Expand BRICS Trade: Increase trade with BRICS nations.

Domestic Reforms: Implement multi-sectoral reforms at both Central and State levels to boost economic growth.

View as an Opportunity: Use this challenge to drive economic transformation, much like the 1991 LPG reforms.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/trumps-tariffs-violation-lesson-india-10215256/>

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1. Déjà vu: On India's monsoon vulnerabilities (TH)

2. How India's 'aquanauts' will undertake deep sea exploration under Samudrayaan Project (IE)

1. Déjà vu: On India's monsoon vulnerabilities (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Disaster Management

TOPIC: the causes of disasters (erratic monsoon, landslides, floods), the gaps in preparedness (weak early-warning systems), the reactive nature of relief efforts, and the need for a mitigation-focused approach (climate-resilient infrastructure).

The Problem: Widespread Destruction

1. Heavy and intense monsoon rains have caused massive destruction across North India, especially in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab.
2. This has led to deadly floods, landslides, submerged villages, and destroyed farmland.
3. The monsoon pattern has become erratic and unpredictable, with rain arriving in short, powerful bursts that overwhelm the landscape.

The Real Causes & Our Mistakes

1. Calling these disasters "unprecedented" is a mistake; it prevents us from learning from recurring events.
2. Human activities are making the situation much worse:
 1. Deforestation and clearing of forests.
 2. Unsafe road construction on fragile mountain slopes.
 3. Shrinking natural buffer zones (catchment areas), which increases the risk of floods and landslides.

We Are Not Prepared

1. Despite repeated disasters, our early-warning and evacuation systems remain weak.
2. Improved weather forecasts are not being effectively translated into alerts for people on the ground.
3. Relief and rescue efforts are almost always reactive (acting *after* the damage is done) instead of being proactive.

The Solution: Shift from Relief to Prevention

1. We must stop focusing only on relief efforts after a disaster and instead work to systematically reduce vulnerabilities beforehand.
2. The priority must be on:
 1. Building climate-resilient infrastructure (roads, dams, buildings that can withstand extreme weather).
 2. Implementing effective landslide mitigation projects.
 3. Creating robust and reliable early-warning systems.
3. Without this shift, the next monsoon will just repeat the same cycle of destruction and loss.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/d%C3%A9j%C3%A0-vu-on-indias-monsoon-vulnerabilities/article69984885.ece>

2. How India's 'aquanauts will undertake deep sea exploration under Samudrayaan Project (IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 3: Science & Technology

TOPIC: Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology (for MATSYA-6000); Mobilization of Resources (related to the Blue Economy and deep-ocean minerals)

The Goal: Samudrayaan Project

1. India's Samudrayaan Project aims to send three humans (aquanauts) to a depth of 6,000 meters in the ocean by 2027.
2. Recently, two Indian aquanauts trained deep in the Atlantic Ocean on a French vessel to prepare for this mission.
3. This will make India the sixth country in the world with deep-sea exploration capabilities, joining the US, Russia, China, France, and Japan.

Why Is This Important? The Deep Sea Mission

This project is part of India's larger Deep Sea Mission, which focuses on:

Blue Economy: Harnessing unexplored ocean resources like minerals, fuels, and biodiversity for economic growth.

Mining: Developing technology to mine for Poly-Metallic Nodules, which are rich in valuable metals like nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements.

Climate Study: Improving our understanding of the ocean's role in climate change.

Technology: Developing ways to derive energy and fresh water from the ocean.

The Vehicle: MATSYA-6000

1. India is developing its own deep-sea submersible vehicle named MATSYA-6000.
2. It's being built by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).
3. It will carry a crew of three inside a 2.1-meter wide "personnel sphere".
4. This sphere will be made of a special 80mm-thick titanium alloy to withstand the immense pressure at 6,000 meters.
5. The vehicle has a 12-hour mission capacity and a 96-hour emergency life support system.

Major Challenges of Deep-Sea Exploration

Building the Vehicle: Crafting the titanium sphere is extremely difficult. Even a tiny imperfection (0.2mm deviation) could cause it to collapse under pressure.

Life Support: Oxygen and carbon dioxide levels inside the cramped sphere must be precisely controlled.

Aquanaut Health: The crew will be in a high-stress, high-pressure environment and won't have access to a washroom, limiting food and water intake.

Communication: Standard radio waves don't work underwater. Communication will rely on an indigenously developed "acoustic phone" that uses sound waves.

The Way Forward

1. The recent training mission will provide crucial data for the development of MATSYA-6000.
2. India should continue to collaborate with experienced nations to advance its capabilities.
3. Success in this mission will be a major boost to India's blue economy and scientific prestige.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/india-aquanauts-deep-sea-exploration-samudrayaan-mission-10214405/>

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1. Detoxifying India's entrance examination system (TH)

2. Trump targets cashless bail – How the practice works, situation in India

1. Detoxifying India's entrance examination system (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 2 – Social Justice

TOPIC – Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, and Human Resources.

The Core Problem

Intense Competition – Every year, nearly 70 lakh students in India compete for a limited number of undergraduate seats through exams like JEE, NEET, and CUET.

Systemic Failure – The high-stakes competition has created a broken system marked by a stressful coaching culture, financial issues at coaching centres, and tragic student suicides.

The Coaching Crisis and Its Impact

Extreme Pressure – Around 15 lakh students compete for just 18,000 IIT seats, creating a "rat race."

Expensive Industry – Coaching centres charge ₹6-7 lakh for two-year programs, with students often starting as young as 14.

Psychological Toll – The constant pressure leads to stress, depression, and alienation, depriving students of a normal adolescence.

Flawed Merit System – The system unfairly favors those who can afford expensive coaching, create a **false hierarchy** and worsen urban-rural, gender, and regional divides. It ignores the role of luck and privilege.

Unnecessary Metrics – Distinguishing between students with 91% and 97% is pointless; a score of 70-80% in core subjects is more than enough for engineering studies.

Lessons from Other Countries

The Netherlands' Lottery System –

1. For medical school admissions, students who meet a minimum academic score enter a weighted lottery.
2. Higher grades give you a better chance, but don't guarantee a seat.
3. This reduces bias, promotes diversity, and eases pressure.

China's "Double Reduction" Policy –

4. In 2021, China banned for-profit tutoring for school subjects.
5. Coaching was effectively nationalized overnight to reduce the financial burden on families and protect student well-being.

A Proposed New Admissions System for India

Use Class 12 Boards – Make the Class 12 board examination the main benchmark for university readiness.

Set a Minimum Score – Establish a minimum eligibility threshold, for example, 80% in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics for B. Tech courses.

Introduce a Weighted Lottery –

1. Group all eligible students into categories (e.g., 90% and above, 80-90%).
2. Allocate seats through a weighted lottery, where students in the higher-scoring group have better odds.
3. Incorporate existing gender, regional, and rural reservations into the lottery system.

Other Suggestions for Equity and Diversity

Rural Reservation – Reserve 50% of IIT seats for students from rural government schools.

Ban or Nationalize Coaching – If entrance exams must continue, coaching should be banned or nationalized, with the government providing free online resources.

Promote Integration –

1. Start annual student exchange programs between different IITs.
2. Encourage professor transfers between IITs to ensure uniform academic standards.

Conclusion – The Way Forward

Liberate Students – Scrapping entrance exams for a lottery system would free students from the "coaching treadmill," allowing them to focus on holistic growth, sports, and school life.

Ensure Fairness – It would lower financial barriers and give every qualified student a fair chance, regardless of their background.

Let Youth be Youth – The goal is to stop turning children into machines chasing percentiles and allow them to have a healthy adolescence.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/detoxifying-indias-entrance-examination-system/article69990189.ece>

2. Trump targets cashless bail – How the practice works, situation in India

GENERAL STUDIES 2 – Governance

TOPIC – "Structure, organization and functioning of the... Judiciary" and significant provisions of the "Indian Constitution" (specifically relating to Fundamental Rights).

The Bail System in the US

Recent News – The US President has signed an order to cut federal funding for places that use a "cashless bail" system, citing a rise in crime and the release of dangerous criminals.

Traditional Bail – Courts require the accused to pay a cash deposit as a guarantee (surety) that they will show up for their trial. If they can't pay, they stay in jail.

The Problem with Cash Bail – This system often keeps poor people, who may be innocent, in jail for minor crimes simply because they cannot afford the bail amount.

Origin of Cashless Bail – The idea gained momentum after the case of Kalief Browder, a Black teenager who spent three years in jail for allegedly stealing a backpack because his family couldn't pay the \$3,000 bail. The case against him was eventually dropped, but he later died by suicide.

The Bail System in India

Legal Basis – The rules for bail are in the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023 (which replaced the old Criminal Procedure Code).

How it Works – India has several options for bail –

1. Bail Bond + Cash Deposit – The accused signs a bond promising to attend the trial and submits a cash amount. This money is returned at the end of the trial if they follow the rules.
2. Personal Recognizance Bond (PR Bond) – For those who can't pay immediately, a court can release them on a promise to furnish the money within a given time. However, these are often rejected.
3. Surety Bond – Another person (like a friend or family member) acts as a guarantor, submits the required amount, and promises the court that the accused will not flee.

Problems and Reforms in India's Bail System

The Main Issue – Thousands of undertrials remain in jail even after a court has granted them bail because they are too poor to pay the required security deposit, which can sometimes be as low as ₹5,000.

Law Commission (2017) – Stated that basing bail on a person's ability to pay is unconstitutional and discriminatory.

Supreme Court (2023) – Ruled that if a person stays in jail for more than a week after getting bail, the jail superintendent must inform the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), which will help arrange a lawyer to secure their release.

The Way Forward

Current Crisis – Over 5,000 undertrials are stuck in jail despite having been granted bail. This leads to overcrowded jails and is a financial burden on the state.

Core Principle – The Supreme Court has repeatedly said that "bail should be the rule, and jail the exception."

The Goal – Courts must find a balance between protecting a person's liberty and ensuring they are present to face trial.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/trump-cashless-bail-india-9680578-10218811/>

