P L RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

UPSC

YEARLY COMPILATION

2025 – 2026

MAINS CONTENT (QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER)

NOVEMBER (PART –4)

INDEX

Editorial of the Day – 01.12.2025

Index

1. India needs research pipelines (TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment.(Indigenization of technology and developing new technology)

Introduction

India faces a critical policy challenge- it cannot sustain its economic growth ambitions relying solely on public grants. History shows that economies successfully converting science into industry share a specific discipline—they maintain stable, long-term partnerships where company investments are linked to university strengths. To replicate this, India must shift private research spending from episodic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) gestures to a predictable innovation pipeline that funds real lab time, supports doctoral cohorts, and secures pilot production lines.

Global Models of Corporate–Campus Research

Successful global economies demonstrate specific traits in R&D investment that India can emulate-

Industrial-Scale Budgets- Leading global technology firms invest amounts rivalling national R&D budgets. *Example-* In 2024, Meta allocated ~$44 billion (nearly 1/3rd of revenue). Giants like Alphabet, Amazon, and Microsoft maintain similar multi-billion dollar programs.

High Research Intensity- U.S. companies demonstrate high R&D-to-sales ratios. In 2022, U.S. firms booked ~$692 billion in domestic R&D against $14 trillion in net sales (approx. 5% ratio).

China's High-Intensity Model- Huawei**-** Reported 179.7 billion yuan in R&D in 2024 (20.8% of revenue), with over 50% of the workforce in R&D.

BYD- Invested 54.2 billion yuan with an R&D intensity of nearly 7%.

Policy Instruments for Partnerships

USA (NSF)- The National Science Foundation's *Industry–University Cooperative Research Centres* pool company contributions for pre-competitive university research.

Consortia- The *Semiconductor Research Corporation* supports multi-university consortia to train talent and solve industry-aligned problems.

Key Shared Traits- Successful models utilize joint centres, shared production lines, long-horizon consortia, and open talent pathways.

India's Position and Emerging Leaders

Current National Baseline- India's Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) is approximately 0.65% of GDP. Private enterprises contribute only about two-fifths (40%), significantly lower than the firm share in advanced economies.

Emerging Indian Corporate Leaders (FY24 Data)-DR. Reddy's- Invested ₹22.9 billion (8.2% of sales).Tata Motors- Invested ₹29,398 crore (6.7% intensity).Sun Pharma- Spent 6.7% of global revenue on R&D. Bharat Electronics (BEL)- Dedicated 6.24% of turnover .Reliance Industries- Recorded over ₹4,100 crore in expenditure (FY24-25).

Existing Effective Models

IIT Madras Research Park- Hosts 200+ companies adjacent to labs and student teams.

IDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)- Links start-ups and research labs for defence innovation.

India Semiconductor Mission- Ties investments, skills, and academia (e.g., Micron ATMP project in Sanand).

Roadmap for Scaling Research–Industry Linkages

To build self-reliance with global openness, India requires a structured approach to link Private R&D with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)-

Set Sector-Wise R&D Expectations- Establish three-year R&D-to-sales ratios for strategic sectors (Auto, Pharma, Electronics, Defence, Space, Energy).Targets should rise gradually, respecting cash-flow constraints and export goals. Adopt Shared IP frameworks that reward both academic publication and commercialisation.

Strengthen Co-funded Research Models- Incentivize co-funded projects and matching grants routed through HEIs. Focus on multi-year work with open data, clear deliverables, and industry-relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Create dedicated line items for university-run pilot lines and testbeds that companies can book by the hour. Shift from single projects to problem portfolios managed by multi-university centres.

Modernise Tax Tools for R&D- Shift incentives from inputs to measurable outputs (patents, standards, clinical milestones, field trials). Link tax deductions to collaboration with accredited HEIs and the hiring of graduate researchers.

Build Collaboration Capabilities- Support campus programs to train faculty/PhDs in industry collaboration, IP negotiation, and translational projects.

Talent Pathways- Expand roles for PhDs in product teams, create dual-track roles (adjunct appointments), and sponsor doctoral cohorts aligned with company roadmaps.

Improve Corporate Disclosure- Encourage listed firms to report specific R&D spending and the share directed to Indian HEIs. Publish results in Indian languages and practitioner-friendly formats to build prestige around research careers.

Anchoring Innovation in India’s Knowledge Ecosystem

Contextual Relevance- Indian campuses are situated beside dynamic markets and draw on deep knowledge traditions.

Value Add- When corporate research engages with this heritage and location, it acquires context, depth, and relevance—capabilities essential for high-performing industrial R&D.

Conclusion

India possesses the necessary components—labs, talent, and markets—for world-class innovation. The path forward requires a shift from "wishful thinking" to a national supply chain for innovation.

Industry's Role- Set transparent targets, fund real lab time, and build collaborative networks.

Academia's Role- Focus on research with measurable value, remain open to industry questions, and demonstrate outcomes.

Result- A stable engine of growth where research funding translates into scalable industrial outcomes.

Source- [https- //www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/india-needs-research-pipelines/article70341873.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/india-needs-research-pipelines/article70341873.ece)

2. GDP growth is robust, GST cuts and US tariffs will shape momentum(IE)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment

Introduction

India’s economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience, recording a robust 8.2% GDP growth in Q2 FY26, significantly surpassing the RBI’s estimate of 7%. With a cumulative first-half growth of 8%, India retains its position as the fastest-growing major economy globally. This performance is particularly significant as it occurs against a backdrop of global headwinds, including US tariffs and geopolitical instability. The focus now shifts to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to calibrate a policy that balances this growth momentum with price stability.

Sectoral Performance Analysis

Agriculture (Resilient Foundation)- Registered a growth of 3.5%, driven by a favorable monsoon and increased crop output.

Impact- This is expected to have a multiplier effect on rural incomes, boosting rural consumption and agricultural exports.

Manufacturing (Industrial Revival)- Clocked a strong growth of 9.1%, signalling a recovery in industrial activity and investment demand.

Corporate Health- Corporate profitability surged by 15.5%, reflecting improved balance sheets and strong private sector performance.

Services (Urban Engine)- Growth driven primarily by finance, real estate, and professional services. Highlights the resilience of the urban economy and the formal employment sector. Exports- IT and BPO exports remain crucial for sustaining foreign exchange inflows.

Government Spending (Fiscal Consolidation)- Non-interest, non-subsidy revenue expenditure contracted by 6.4%.While this acted as a drag on immediate growth numbers, it reflects the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation in the post-pandemic era.

Demand and Consumption Trends

Private Consumption- Showing clear signs of recovery, evidenced by a surge in vehicle sales, which indicates a revival in demand for durable goods.

Investment Activity- Maintained steady momentum with capital formation making a positive contribution to GDP.

Policy Boost- The GST rate cuts implemented in September 2025 are projected to further stimulate consumption and investment in Q3.

External Sector Vulnerabilities

Export Contraction- Merchandise exports to the US fell by 9% in October, attributed to tariff barriers and a slowdown in global demand.

Global Risks- The sector faces headwinds from US interest rate policies, rising trade restrictions, and geopolitical conflicts. These factors pose risks to India's export-oriented sectors and balance of payments.

Structural Drivers and Challenges

Key Drivers of Growth- Strong domestic consumption and private investment. Sustained Government capital expenditure (Capex) in infrastructure and energy.

Formalisation- Benefits accruing from GST, digital payments, and improved tax compliance.

Corporate Deleveraging- clean balance sheets enabling fresh investment.

Emerging Challenges

Fiscal Pressure- Lower-than-expected nominal GDP growth could constrain revenue collections.

Uneven Demand- Slower rural demand persists in certain geographical pockets.

Inflation Volatility- Food inflation remains susceptible to climate change and monsoon variability.

Monetary Policy Implications (The MPC Dilemma)

The Inflation Context- Headline inflation remains below the RBI's target, theoretically creating space for rate cuts. Core inflation pressures are currently moderate.

The Growth Context- Strong domestic momentum (8.2% growth) argues against aggressive easing to prevent the economy from overheating. The RBI must prioritize long-term financial stability over short-term stimulus.

External Factors- Exchange rate volatility due to global uncertainties. Risks of imported inflation, particularly from potential oil and commodity price shocks.

Policy Considerations- To Cut or Not to Cut

Arguments for Rate Cut	Arguments Against Rate Cut
Inflation is currently under control and below target.	Strong growth momentum suggests caution; no immediate need for stimulus.
Private consumption and investment need support to sustain the pickup.	Global uncertainty requires maintaining liquidity buffers.
Easing by global central banks could reduce pressure on capital outflows.	Premature easing could compromise the credibility of the inflation-targeting framework.

Conclusion

The Q2 FY26 GDP data underscores the resilience of India's domestic demand and the success of structural reforms like GST and digitization. However, the path ahead requires vigilance. While the domestic engine is strong, fiscal constraints and external risks loom. The MPC's upcoming decision will likely be a balancing act—sustaining this high-growth trajectory without compromising inflation stability—to ensure a durable economic future.

Source- [https- //indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/gdp-growth-is-robust-gst-cuts-and-us-tariffs-will-shape-momentum-10394931/](https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/gdp-growth-is-robust-gst-cuts-and-us-tariffs-will-shape-momentum-10394931/)

Editorial of the Day – 02.12.2025

Index

1. War clouds- On the U.S. and Venezuela (TH)

GENERAL STUDIES 3- International Relation

TOPIC: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Introduction

The geopolitical landscape in the Americas has witnessed a sharp escalation following Donald Trump's declaration that Venezuela's airspace is "closed in its entirety." This move has heightened fears of a looming military confrontation. While Washington frames these aggressive maneuvers as a necessary component of the "war on drugs," critics view the military build-up as a pretext for regime change, exploiting Venezuela's deepening internal political and economic collapse.

Escalating US Pressure and Justification

The "Closed Airspace" Declaration - Donald Trump's assertion that Venezuela's airspace is closed has acted as a flashpoint, triggering immediate fears of a potential US military strike.

Narrative of "War on Drugs" - Washington justifies its intensified operations in the Caribbean and Pacific as measures targeting alleged drug traffickers. The US administration explicitly alleges that President Nicolás Maduro leads the Cartel de los Soles, which they have designated as a foreign terrorist organization.

Strategic Military Build-Up Around Venezuela

The US has significantly boosted its regional military presence, signaling a potential shift from diplomatic pressure to kinetic action -

Naval Deployment - The USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier has been positioned in the region, along with two amphibious ready groups containing over 4,500 Marines and sailors.

Aerial Dominance -F-35 fighter jets and MQ-9 Reaper drones are stationed in Puerto Rico, in close proximity to Venezuela. B-1 Lancer bombers have been flown along the Venezuelan coastline as a show of force.

Political Alignment - These military moves coincide with open support for opposition leader María Corina Machado, suggesting a coordinated push toward regime change.

Venezuela's Internal Political and Economic Crisis

Governance Failures - The Maduro regime is accused of rigging the 2024 election and presiding over a near-total economic collapse, marked by hyperinflation and shortages.

Humanitarian Impact - The instability has caused millions of Venezuelans to flee the country.

The Drug Trade Nuance - While Venezuela is an established transit route for drugs coming from Colombia, the text notes that the US has provided no concrete evidence linking Maduro personally to drug trafficking.

Legacy of Opposition Support - The US and Europe previously recognized figures like Juan Guaidó to delegitimize Maduro, a strategy that is being revisited.

Sovereignty, Sanctions, and Historical Lessons

Impact of Sanctions - US-imposed sanctions have arguably exacerbated the economic distress faced by ordinary Venezuelans rather than just targeting the regime.

Violation of International Law - Recent US strikes resulting in civilian deaths are flagged as violations of international law.

Question of Sovereignty - Threats against the state are viewed as an assault on Venezuela's sovereignty, irrespective of Maduro's governance failures.

Risk of Repetition - Critics warn that the US risks repeating the costly interventionist mistakes of Afghanistan (2001–2021) and Iraq (2003).

Conclusion

The situation in Venezuela presents a complex dichotomy - while the rule of Nicolás Maduro is marred by legitimacy crises and governance failures, the escalating US military pressure threatens to undermine regional stability and sovereignty. Drawing from the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq, a path rooted in dialogue, de-escalation, and diplomacy is advocated as the only sustainable solution to prevent another destabilizing crisis in the Americas.

Source - https -//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/cautious-optimism-on-india-and-growth/article70345469.ece# -~ -text=India's%20challenge%20is%20to%20maintain%20the%20growth%20momentum&text=Growth%20has%20been%20led%20by,also%20provided%20a%20modest%20boost.

2.Give states their fair share, protect their fiscal space(IE)

GENERAL STUDIES 2 - Governance

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

Introduction

Fiscal federalism in India is the constitutional mechanism that ensures a balanced distribution of financial resources between the Union and the States, enabling both tiers of government to meet their developmental and welfare obligations effectively. While the 14th Finance Commission marked a paradigm shift by increasing the states' share in the divisible pool of central taxes from 32% to 42%, thereby enhancing their fiscal space, the subsequent 15th Finance Commission period witnessed a marginal decline. As the 16th Finance Commission begins its deliberations, critical questions regarding equitable allocation, fiscal autonomy, and the shrinking fiscal space—particularly for high-income states—have taken center stage. Addressing these is vital for maintaining cooperative federalism and preventing overdependence on the Centre.

Trends in Fiscal Transfers

The core of states' fiscal resources comprises tax devolution and grants from the Centre. The trends over recent Finance Commission (FC) periods reveal significant shifts -

14th Finance Commission Era - The vertical devolution share of states in central taxes was raised sharply from 32% to 42%. This led to an increase in the post-transfer fiscal space for states, rising from 63.85% to 68.08% of combined receipts.

15th Finance Commission Era - There was a slight reversal in gains, with states' fiscal space declining marginally to 67.39%. The reduction in pure tax devolution was only partially offset by specific Finance Commission grants and non-FC grants, indicating a shift from "untied" funds (devolution) to potentially "tied" or conditional funds (grants).

State-wise Variations and Regional Disparity

The impact of these fiscal shifts has not been uniform, with developed states facing a deeper crunch -

Impact on High-Income States – States like Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu experienced a notable fall of 0.38 percentage points in their fiscal space during the 15th FC period.

Dual Blow - These states faced a simultaneous reduction in their own revenue receipts and central transfers. This reflects the uneven impact of horizontal distribution formulae (which often prioritize equity/need over contribution) and the rising prevalence of non-sharable cesses.

Structural Factors Affecting Fiscal Space

Several policy and structural changes are eroding the revenue autonomy of states -

Rise of Non-Sharable Cesses & Surcharges - The Centre has increasingly resorted to collecting revenue through cesses and surcharges. Unlike the divisible pool of taxes, these are not shared with states, effectively shrinking the pie available for devolution despite high tax collections.

Horizontal Distribution Criteria - The use of "Income Distance" and other equity-based weights in the devolution formula tends to disadvantage high-income states relative to less developed states, reducing the incentive for performance and contribution.

GST Reforms & Compensation - The potential GST 2.0 reforms, which may include rate rationalization (reductions), pose a revenue risk. The cessation of the GST compensation cess has removed a guaranteed revenue cushion, exposing states to market volatilities and reducing their revenue autonomy.

Implications for Governance and Development

Constrained Developmental Spending - Reduced fiscal space directly limits the ability of states to finance critical sectors such as infrastructure, public health, education, and social welfare programs.

Erosion of Autonomy - A shift from high tax devolution to grant-based transfers often come with central conditionalities. Excessive central control strains the spirit of cooperative federalism and undermines the fiscal autonomy of states to plan according to local needs.

Equity vs. Efficiency - While equity is necessary, the current trajectory risks alienating performing states. Balanced and predictable transfers are essential to maintain harmony while respecting both contribution (efficiency) and need-based (equity) principles.

Way Forward

Role of 16th Finance Commission - The Commission needs to revise the horizontal distribution formulae to better account for regional disparities while addressing the concerns of contributing states regarding revenue shortfalls.

Rationalization of Cesses - The Centre must limit the use of non-sharable cesses and surcharges or devise a mechanism to share a portion of these proceeds, preventing the erosion of the divisible pool.

Enhancing Revenue Efficiency - Both Union and State governments must focus on improving tax buoyancy and implementing efficient collection mechanisms to expand the overall resource base rather than fighting over a shrinking pie.

Transparency - Establishing a transparent and equitable transfer mechanism will reinforce trust, support sustainable economic growth, and strengthen the federal fabric

Conclusion

Ensuring a fair share for states in central transfers is not merely a fiscal imperative but a constitutional necessity for cooperative federalism. Protecting the fiscal space of states enables them to meet their specific developmental obligations and reinforces equitable growth across India. The path ahead requires a dual strategy - strengthening the overall tax base through economic growth and reforms, and rationalizing the transfer mechanism to sustain fiscal stability while respecting the twin principles of equity and contribution.

Source - [https -//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/give-states-their-fair-share-protect-their-fiscal-space-10396773/](https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/give-states-their-fair-share-protect-their-fiscal-space-10396773/)

Editorial of the Day – 03.12.2025

Index

1. Speed breakers Ahead- On India's Economic Data (TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Introduction

The Indian economy is currently exhibiting a volatile performance pattern. While the Second Quarter (Q2) witnessed an impressive GDP expansion of 8.2%, leading to initial optimism, recent high-frequency indicators for the Third Quarter (Q3) reveal deep-seated vulnerabilities. A divergence has emerged between strong headline GDP numbers and weaker ground-level data in industrial output (IIP), manufacturing, and exports, suggesting that the recent economic highs may face significant "speed bumps" and may not be sustainable in the short term.

Economic Data Volatility- A Mixed Picture

Roller-Coaster Trend- The economic narrative has shifted rapidly from high optimism to emerging caution.

GDP vs. Realities- The robust 8.2% Q2 GDP growth significantly boosted government sentiment. However, this is juxtaposed against low nominal growth and a recent growth forecast downgrade by the IMF, indicating underlying structural softness.

Industrial and Manufacturing Slowdown

Sharp Decline in IIP- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth plummeted to 0.4% in October 2025, marking the lowest growth rate in 14 months.

The Manufacturing Divergence

GDP Data- Showed a robust 9.1% growth in manufacturing for Q2.

IIP Data- In contrast, October data revealed a slowdown to just 1.8%.

Base Effect- Part of the Q2 growth can be attributed to a low-base effect, as manufacturing had grown only 2.2% in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Tariff Shock- A critical factor is the imposition of 50% tariffs by the U.S. *Initial Phase*- There was a rush to fulfill older orders before tariffs kicked in. *Current Phase*- This was followed by a sharp 12% contraction in exports in October as the full weight of tariffs was felt.

Weakening Export Momentum

PMI Contraction- The manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dropped to a nine-month low of 56.6 in November.

Order Book Stress- New export orders are growing at their slowest pace in over a year, directly pointing to disruptions caused by rising global tariffs and trade barriers.

Sectoral Strains- Supply-Side Constraints

Weather Impact-

Electricity- Output was reduced due to winter weather conditions.

Mining- Extended rains dragged down mining activities.

Primary Goods- The combination of these factors resulted in a net contraction in the primary goods sector in October.

Investment and Capital Goods Concerns

Conflicting Signals

GDP Data- Indicated a healthy 7.3% rise in investment during Q2.

IIP Data- Suggests a slowdown heading into Q3.

Capital Goods Slump- Growth in capital goods—a proxy for private investment activity—stood at a mere 2.4% (a 14-month low). This indicates a softening of investment momentum in the economy.

Consumption Weakness Breakdown

The Consumption Paradox-

GDP Data- Showed Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) growing at approximately 8% in Q2.

IIP Data- Conversely, recorded a contraction in both consumer durables and non-durables.

Performance Low- This contraction marks the worst performance for these segments in two years.

GST Indicators- Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections stood at ₹1.7 lakh crore in November. While substantial, this indicates that aggregate demand has not strengthened as rapidly as anticipated post-rationalisation.

Conclusion

The early trends for Q3 highlight growing economic headwinds. The economy is currently characterized by a dichotomy- strong past GDP figures versus fragile current industrial output, weakening exports due to external tariff shocks, and slowing consumption. With investment momentum moderating, the overall outlook signals a period of caution for policymakers. A sustained recovery will require stabilizing external demand, improving domestic consumption conditions, and ensuring growth remains broad-based rather than statistically skewed.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/speedbreakers-ahead-on-indias-economic-data/article70349466.ece#google_vignette

2. With Putin in Delhi, an Opportunity- With Old BFF Russia, Go Beyond Defence

GENERAL STUDIES 2- International Relation

TOPIC- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Introduction

President Vladimir Putin's scheduled visit to India in December 2025 serves as a critical juncture to recalibrate and modernize the India-Russia strategic partnership. Historically anchored in defence, the relationship currently faces stress tests from the ongoing Ukraine conflict, Russia's deepening ties with China, and India's need to balance its relations with the West. This visit offers a timely opportunity to transition the partnership from a purely buyer-seller defence dynamic to a multi-dimensional collaboration in economy and technology, thereby reinforcing India's strategic autonomy.

Current State of India-Russia Relations

Historical & Strategic Pillars-

Deep-Rooted Trust- The relationship enjoys political trust and strategic goodwill dating back to the Soviet era.

Defence Dominance- Russia remains a linchpin in India's defence architecture, supplying critical platforms like the S-400 missile systems and Su-57 fighter jets.

Energy Security- Cooperation extends significantly into the nuclear energy sector and, more recently, oil imports.

Economic Asymmetry-

Low Trade Volumes- Despite strong political ties, bilateral trade (excluding recent oil spikes) has historically hovered around $5 billion annually.

Comparative Weakness- This figure is notably lower than India's trade with smaller neighbours like Bangladesh (approx. $11 billion).

G2G Nature- The engagement is almost entirely Government-to-Government, with minimal participation from the private sector or civil society.

Geopolitical Complexities-

China Factor- Russia's isolation from the West has increased its dependence on China, a regional adversary of India, adding a layer of strategic complexity.

Western Friction- India's continued energy imports from Russia during the Ukraine war have drawn criticism from the US and Europe, challenging New Delhi's diplomatic balancing act.

Challenges and Risks

Geopolitical Sensitivity- India faces the difficult task of navigating relations with Russia without alienating key Western partners (US and Europe), whose capital and technology are vital for India's growth. Western concerns regarding India's ties with Moscow could spill over into unrelated trade and investment negotiations.

Economic Constraints- The current low base of trade limits immediate commercial gains. Geopolitical tensions and sanctions regimes restrict private sector enthusiasm and complicate payment mechanisms.

Global & Internal Uncertainty- The unpredictability of Ukraine peace negotiations makes long-term planning difficult. Russia's domestic economic constraints and internal priorities may limit its capacity to engage in robust new partnerships.

Opportunities for India

Diversification of Ties- There is an urgent need to move beyond the "defence-only" narrative. Potential exists to expand into trade, technology, scientific research, and infrastructure collaboration.

Joint Ventures & Innovation- Collaborative opportunities exist in emerging technologies, renewable energy, and joint research initiatives to ensure long-term engagement.

Post-Conflict Economic Participation- A potential peaceful resolution in Ukraine will likely trigger a reconstruction phase and economic expansion in Russia. India can position itself early to leverage opportunities in trade, investment, and technology transfer during Russia's recovery.

Reinforcing Strategic Autonomy- Engaging Russia prevents over-dependence on any single power bloc. Maintaining robust ties with Moscow, alongside Washington and Brussels, enhances India's leverage and validity as a truly multi-aligned global power.

Way Forward

Broadening the Agenda- The partnership must pivot toward energy security, renewable resources, space research, and digital technologies. Active efforts should be made to involve the private sector to reduce the reliance on G2G frameworks.

Strategic Diplomacy- Use the high-level visit to reaffirm India's commitment to global peace while staunchly protecting its multi-alignment policy. Diplomatic messaging must balance support for Russia's legitimate interests with India's adherence to the UN Charter and territorial integrity.

Long-Term Vision- India must prepare a strategy for Russia's eventual economic revival post-conflict. The goal is to build a partnership that is sustainable, mutually beneficial, and resilient against the fluctuations of global geopolitics.

Conclusion

President Putin's visit is not just a ceremonial engagement but a strategic necessity to transform a defence-heavy relationship into a comprehensive partnership. By expanding the basket of cooperation to include technology and commerce, India can convert historical goodwill into tangible economic gains. A modernized India-Russia tie is essential for India's global diplomatic influence, ensuring that New Delhi remains a key player in the emerging multipolar world order.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/c-raja-mohan-writes-with-putin-in-delhi-an-opportunity-with-old-bff-russia-go-beyond-defence-10398902/

Editorial of the Day – 04.12.2025

Index

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

General Studies 2- Social Justice

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

Eliminating Legal Barriers for Persons with Leprosy

Introduction

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

Background and Current Burden of Disease

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

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

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

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

The Nature of Stigma and Discrimination

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

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

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

Legal Discrimination- The Current Status

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

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

Civic Rights- Eligibility to contest elections.

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

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

NHRC Recommendations for Reform

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

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

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

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

Call for Immediate Remedial Action

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/taking-the-leap-on-leprosy-in-india-and-discriminatioin/article70353527.ece

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

General Studies 3- Economy

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

Rupee Breaches 90-Mark- Drivers and Implications

Introduction

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

Key Drivers of Depreciation

Widening Trade Deficit

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

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

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

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

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

Other Drivers- Silver, fertilizers, and industrial machinery.

Delayed US-India Trade Agreement

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

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

Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) Outflows

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

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

RBI's Soft-Touch Intervention

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

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

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

Global Factors

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

Implications for the Indian Economy

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

Way Forward & Recommendations

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

Editorial of the Day – 05.12.2025

Index

1. Freeze and thaw- On the winter session of Parliament(TH)

General Studies 2- Polity

Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures (Structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.)

Parliament Winter Session- Issues and Agenda

Introduction

The Winter Session of Parliament, scheduled from December 1 to 19, 2025, has commenced amidst heightened friction between the Government and the Opposition. Spanning 15 sittings, this session is critical due to its heavy legislative agenda and the backdrop of sharp accusations regarding the erosion of parliamentary conventions and the shortening of schedules.

Overview of the Winter Session

Duration and Schedule- The session is relatively short, commencing on December 1 and concluding on December 19, comprising only 15 sittings.

Political Climate

Government Stance- The Prime Minister has cautioned against "political theatrics" while asserting the government's willingness to discuss any issue.

Opposition Grievances- The Opposition has criticized the truncated nature of the session. They have also alleged a break in convention regarding the exclusion of Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi from diplomatic engagements.

Role of the Chair- Expectations are placed on Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan (Rajya Sabha Chairman) to mediate and ease the strained relations between the treasury and opposition benches.

Legislative Agenda and Key Bills

The government has listed 14 Bills for consideration, several of which carry significant political and administrative implications-

Jan Vishwas (Amendment) Bill, 2025- Aims to further simplify criminal justice processes and decriminalize minor offenses to improve ease of doing business and living.

Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill, 2025- Seeks to replace existing regulators like the UGC (University Grants Commission) and AICTE with a single overarching body. *Contentious Point-* States are likely to challenge this as it may infringe upon federal autonomy in education.

Health Security se National Security Cess Bill- Introduced by the Finance Minister, this bill aims to repackage/restructure the existing cess on tobacco products.

Other Significant Legislation- National Highways (Amendment) Bill, Atomic Energy Bill, Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill

Scheduled Debates and Electoral Issues

Electoral Reforms- A major focus will be on the Special Summary Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Government View- Prioritizing the push for "One Nation, One Election" (synchronised national elections).

Opposition View- Raising concerns regarding alleged malpractices in the maintenance of electoral rolls and the general conduct of elections.

Historical Commemoration- A special discussion is scheduled to mark 150 years of the composition of *Vande Mataram.*

Opposition Demands and Concerns

The Opposition is pushing for urgent debates on pressing national issues, specifically-

Internal Security- Discussions on the recent Delhi blasts.

Economic Distress- Rising prices (inflation) and agrarian/farmers' issues.

Environmental Crisis- Severe air pollution affecting major cities.

Institutional Integrity- Allegations regarding the misuse of federal investigation agencies against political opponents.

Conclusion

For the parliamentary system to function effectively, the focus must shift from political confrontation to substantive deliberation. Both sides need to engage constructively to address critical challenges like electoral integrity, national security, and economic stability. A productive session is essential to uphold the constitutional spirit of dialogue and ensure governance accountability.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/freeze-and-thaw-on-the-winter-session-of-parliament/article70357837.ece

2. Census is about who we are. It cannot ignore caste and migration (IE)

General Studies 1- Indian Society

Topic- Population and associated issues, Poverty and developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies

Governance Implications of the Delay

Historic Gap- The Census 2021 was postponed citing the COVID-19 pandemic, despite elections continuing in several states. This has resulted in a 16–17-year void without updated population data, blinding policy formulation.

Resource Misallocation

Welfare Schemes- Critical programs (e.g., PDS, Food Security) and Finance Commission transfers continue to rely on outdated 2011 data, excluding millions of eligible beneficiaries.

Urban Planning- Cities are severely under-planned as they fail to account for the rapid population surge of the last decade.

Constitutional & Electoral Impact-

Delimitation Freeze- Naming the exercise "Census 2027" ensures compliance with the 84th **Constitutional Amendment**, which froze delimitation until "the first Census taken after the year 2026" is published.

Women's Reservation- The implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill is constitutionally linked to delimitation. Since delimitation is a 4–6-year process, women's reservation in Parliament is unlikely to materialize before the mid-2030s.

Caste Enumeration- The Debate and Necessity

Historical Context- The last comprehensive caste enumeration occurred in 1931. Post-independence, Census data has been restricted to SCs and STs for constitutional reservation mandates. The SECC 2011 (Socio-Economic Caste Census) attempted full data collection but the data was never released due to quality concerns.

Necessity for Data-

Evidence-Based Policy- Essential for rationalizing OBC and SC/ST reservations and affirmative action policies.

Social Justice- Guides targeted resource allocation for education, employment, and poverty alleviation based on empirical backwardness rather than estimates.

Challenges & Risks

Political Polarization- Fears that detailed caste data could deepen social fissures and lead to caste-based political mobilization.

Administrative Complexity- enumerating thousands of castes, sub-castes, and clan names requires scientific rigor to avoid errors.

Editorial Stance- Ignoring caste reality is not a neutral act. Census 2027 must enumerate caste with the same scientific rigor applied to variables like age, literacy, and occupation.

Migration- The Crisis of "Invisibility"

Current Issue- Millions of migrants are statistically counted in their native villages rather than the cities where they live and contribute economically.

Structural Implications

Urban Governance Deficit- Municipalities struggle to provide services (water, sanitation, housing) to populations that officially do not exist in their records.

Electoral Distortion- Migrants often cannot vote in their city of residence, rendering them politically **invisible** and reducing the incentive for urban leaders to address their needs.

Rural Misallocation- Villages receive funds for populations that have long migrated away.

Proposed Solutions

Residency-Based Counting- Register migrants at their place of residence if they have lived there for more than 6 months.

Inter-State Coordination- Update voter rolls and coordinate between source and destination states to ensure migrants are enfranchised where they live.

Digital Census- Opportunities vs. Risks

Advantages

Efficiency- Faster enumeration, reduced manual errors, and quicker publication of final results.

Tracking- Enables real-time monitoring and district-wise progress tracking.

Risks & Privacy Concerns

Surveillance- The collection of personal, biometric, and socio-economic data raises fears of state surveillance.

Data Linkage- Potential linking with Aadhaar, NPR (National Population Register), or voter rolls could compromise citizen privacy and lead to profiling.

Essential Safeguards-

Purpose Limitation- Census data must be strictly used for statistical purposes, never for law enforcement or citizenship verification (NRC).

Independent Audits- Robust privacy protocols and independent audits are required to validate data security and anonymization.

Transparency and Federal Trust

State Access- State governments must have real-time access to enumeration data to trust the process.

Public Monitoring- Public dashboards should be established to track district-wise progress and ensure accountability.

Data Release- To maintain credibility, all collected variables—including caste—must be published transparently after independent validation.

Conclusion

Census 2027 represents more than a mere statistical update; it is the bedrock of Indian governance and democracy. To be effective, it must evolve into a comprehensive exercise that accurately counts caste and migration, ensuring representation for the marginalized. By balancing technological efficiency with democratic accountability and strict privacy safeguards, the Census can empower evidence-based policymaking, ensure fair delimitation, and lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and just republic.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/s-y-quraishi-writes-census-is-about-who-we-are-it-cannot-ignore-caste-and-migration-10402996/

Editorial of the Day – 06.12.2025

Index

1. Marked for Life- On Acid Attack Survivors(TH)

General Studies 1- Social Issues

TOPIC- Role of women and women's organization, social empowerment

Introduction

The Supreme Court of India has recently issued a strong critique regarding the sluggish pace of justice for acid attack survivors, highlighting a specific case that has dragged on for 16 years. Terming such delays as a "mockery of the system," the Court emphasized that perpetrators of such heinous crimes deserve no sympathy. The observations underscore an urgent need for systemic reforms, including day-to-day hearings, stricter laws, and comprehensive rehabilitation measures to restore dignity to survivors.

Judicial Observations and Stance

"Mockery of the System"- The Supreme Court expressed deep shock over the 16-year delay in concluding the trial of an acid attack survivor, labelling the administrative and judicial lethargy as a mockery of justice.

Zero Sympathy Doctrine- Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant explicitly stated that courts should not show any leniency or sympathy towards acid attackers.

Call for Firm Response- The Court urged the entire judicial ecosystem to respond with firmness and urgency to ensure that justice is not just theoretical but delivered in practice.

Case Study- The Struggle of Shaheen Malik

Timeline of Injustice

2009- Shaheen Malik was attacked at the age of 26 while pursuing her MBA.

2009–2013- The case saw zero progress, reflecting initial systemic apathy.

Current Status- The trial was transferred from Haryana to Rohini Court, Delhi. Despite the passage of 16 years, final arguments are still pending.

Physical and Social Toll- The survivor has undergone multiple reconstructive surgeries over the years to address severe disfigurement and health complications.

Advocacy and Rehabilitation- Turning her trauma into activism, Malik founded the NGO 'Brave Souls' in 2021 to provide medical and legal assistance to other survivors.

Issues Raised in the PIL (Public Interest Litigation)

Disability Recognition- The petition seeks the inclusion of acid attack survivors under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

Internal Injuries- The PIL highlighted a specific, often overlooked category of victims—those forced to ingest acid. These survivors suffer life-threatening internal injuries without visible external scarring, yet they struggle to receive formal acknowledgment and state support.

Demand for Dignity- The plea seeks formal recognition of the unique suffering of acid attack victims to ensure they receive adequate state-sponsored support and rehabilitation.

Supreme Court Directives and Government Response

Legislative Action- The CJI suggested that the Central Government consider bringing an ordinance to strengthen the legal response mechanism against acid attacks.

Government Support- Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta supported the petition, asserting that perpetrators of such "inhuman" acts should face equal ruthlessness from the law.

Data Collection- The Court directed the Registrar-Generals of all High Courts to compile and furnish data regarding the number of pending acid attack trials across India.
Special Courts- To tackle delays, the Court proposed the establishment of special courts to conduct **day-to-day hearings**, ensuring trials are concluded swiftly.

Legal and Policy Landscape

Precedent (Laxmi vs. Union of India)- The summary recalls this landmark judgment where the SC had previously ordered strict regulations on the sale of acid, along with mandatory compensation and rehabilitation for victims.
Current Legal Provisions- Section 124 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) specifically outlines the punishment for acid attacks, replacing older provisions.
Implementation Gap- Despite the existence of these legal frameworks, conviction rates remain low, and trials are excessively lengthy.

Statistical Context (NCRB 2023 Data)

National Prevalence- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) recorded 207 acid attack cases nationwide in 2023.
Regional Hotspots
West Bengal- Highest incidence with 57 cases.
Uttar Pradesh- Second highest with 31 cases.
Inference- The data indicates that despite legal deterrents, acid attacks remain a prevalent form of extreme gender-based violence.

Conclusion

Acid attacks persist as one of the cruellest forms of gender violence in India. While the legal framework exists, the ground reality is marred by delayed trials, low conviction rates, and inadequate victim support. The Supreme Court's latest intervention signals a critical pivot toward special courts and strictly enforced timelines. For justice to be meaningful, India must bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring survivors receive not just verdicts, but holistic rehabilitation and the dignity they are "marked for life" to be denied.
Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/marked-for-life-on-acid-attack-survivors/article70362175.ece

2. Delhi HC Rejected Semaglutide Patent Suit(IE)

General Studies 2- Social Justice
Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Introduction

The Delhi High Court has delivered a significant verdict allowing Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) to manufacture and export generic versions of Semaglutide, a breakthrough drug used for Type 2 diabetes and obesity. The Court rejected the plea of the patent holder, Novo Nordisk, which sought to restrain DRL based on a formulation patent. This ruling reinforces India's strict stance against "evergreening"—the practice of extending patent monopolies through minor modifications—thereby prioritizing public health and affordable access to essential medicines.

Key Details of the Case

The Drug Involved
Name- Semaglutide (a GLP-1 receptor agonist).
Market Names- Sold by Novo Nordisk as Ozempic (for diabetes) and Wegovy (for weight loss).
Function- It mimics the GLP-1 hormone to stimulate insulin secretion, inhibit glucagon, and suppress appetite.

The Patent Conflict

Patent No. 275964 (Composition Patent)- This covered the original chemical compound. It expired in September 2024, theoretically opening the market to generics.

Patent No. 262697 (Formulation Patent)- Novo Nordisk held this secondary patent on the specific delivery/formulation method, valid until March 2026.

The Dispute

Novo Nordisk's Argument- They claimed the formulation was novel and offered significantly higher efficacy, thus deserving protection.

DRL's Argument- They challenged the second patent, arguing it lacked "inventive step" and "novelty." DRL contended this was a classic case of evergreening prohibited under Indian law, as the changes were minor modifications of the known substance.

The Delhi High Court's Ruling

Verdict- The Court refused to grant an injunction against DRL, effectively allowing them to manufacture and export the drug.

Rationale- The Court found DRL's challenge to the patent to be *prima facie* (on the face of it) valid. It observed potential double patenting by Novo Nordisk, attempting to extend exclusivity beyond the expiry of the primary molecule patent.

Restriction- While manufacturing for export is allowed, domestic sales in India are restricted until the original composition patent issues are fully resolved or the patent term ends (though the primary patent has already expired in Sept 2024, the legal nuance lies in the formulation patent's validity).

Legal Context- Combating Evergreening

Section 3(d) of the Patents Act, 1970- This is the cornerstone of India's IPR regime regarding pharmaceuticals. It prevents the patenting of "mere use of a known substance" or "mere discovery of a new form of a known substance" unless it results in significantly enhanced efficacy.

Purpose- To stop pharmaceutical giants from making trivial changes to existing drugs just to keep generics off the market.

Constitutional Duty- The ruling aligns with Article 47 of the Indian Constitution, which mandates the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.

Precedent- This decision strengthens the jurisprudence established in the landmark Novartis vs. Union of India (Glivec case, 2013), where the Supreme Court rejected a patent for a cancer drug on similar grounds.

Implications for the Pharma Industry & Economy

Boost for Generics- Strengthens India's reputation as the "Pharmacy of the World." Encourages other major players like Cipla, Sun Pharma, and Mankind Pharma to enter the GLP-1 market.

Economic Impact

Exports- Allows Indian companies to tap into the massive global demand for obesity and diabetes drugs, contributing to the trade surplus.

Make in India- Reinforces domestic manufacturing capabilities and the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiative.

Market Dynamics- Promotes competition, which inevitably drives down the cost of life-saving drugs for both domestic and international consumers.

Public Health & Science Perspective

Disease Burden- India faces a rising burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and obesity. Affordable access to advanced drugs like Semaglutide is critical for management.

Healthcare Access- Lower costs mean these drugs can potentially be included in broader public health programs under the National Health Mission. Aligns with WHO standards that advocate for access to generic versions of essential medicines**.**

Way Forward

Regulatory Vigilance- The Patent Office must remain vigilant to identify and reject frivolous patent applications that aim to "evergreen" monopolies.

Balance of Interests- India must continue to balance its TRIPS compliance (protecting genuine innovation) with its public health obligations.

Domestic Innovation- While promoting generics, policy frameworks should also incentivize genuine R&D within India to move from being a "volume" leader to a "value" leader in pharma.

Conclusion

The Delhi High Court's decision is a victory for public health over corporate monopoly. By enforcing strict checks against evergreening, the judiciary has ensured that patent laws serve their true purpose- rewarding genuine innovation without blocking access to essential, life-saving treatments. This ruling not only benefits Indian patients but also reinforces India's pivotal role in the global pharmaceutical supply chain.

Source- [https-//indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/why-delhi-hc-rejected-semaglutide-patent-suit-10405013/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/why-delhi-hc-rejected-semaglutide-patent-suit-10405013/)

Editorial of the Day – 08.12.2025

Index

1. Balancing, not swinging- on India-Russia ties, Indian diplomacy(TH)

General Studies 1- International Relation

Topic- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Introduction

India's foreign policy is currently navigating a high-stakes geopolitical landscape, best exemplified by the recent visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi. This visit, marking the 25th year of the India-Russia strategic partnership, serves as a testament to India's pursuit of "Strategic Autonomy." By hosting the Russian President amid the ongoing Ukraine conflict and Western sanctions, India has signaled a commitment to continuity in its historic ties while cautiously managing its burgeoning relationship with the West.

Significance of the Visit

25th Anniversary- The visit commemorated 25 years of the Strategic Partnership between the two nations.

Timing- This was President Putin's first visit to India since the onset of the Ukraine invasion in 2022.

Geopolitical Pressure- The visit occurred despite an active International Criminal Court (ICC**)** arrest warrant against Mr. Putin. Intensified Russian attacks in Ukraine. Russia's rejection of new U.S. peace proposals, which has heightened European security concerns.

India's Resolve- Proceeding with the visit under these conditions underscores India's willingness to prioritize its national interest over external diplomatic pressure.

Diplomatic Signals- Continuity and Trust

Warm Reception- The Indian Prime Minister received President Putin personally, according him a full state visit. This visual symbolism conveys that New Delhi still regards Moscow as a **"**trusted partner," disregarding efforts by the West to isolate Russia.

Stance on Ukraine- India maintained its consistent position- It reiterated a general call for peace and dialogue. Crucially, it refused to directly criticise Russia for the war in Ukraine.

Resilience to Sanctions- Despite the looming threat of secondary sanctions and U.S. pressure on tariffs regarding oil trade, India demonstrated a clear intent to preserve and protect its economic engagement with Russia.

Key Economic Takeaways

The focus of the summit was heavily tilted toward economic cooperation rather than military engagement

Labour Mobility- A new agreement was discussed to facilitate labour mobility between the two nations.

Fertilizer Security- An MoU was signed to jointly establish a urea plant in Russia, securing a vital input for India's agricultural sector.

Economic Roadmap 2030- Both sides adopted the roadmap announced earlier in 2024 to deepen trade and connectivity.

Financial Infrastructure- Plans to explore national currency payment systems to bypass Western financial sanctions. Promotion of maritime corridors (e.g., Chennai-Vladivostok or INSTC routes) to streamline logistics.

Trade Goals- The leaders reiterated the ambitious goal of reaching $100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030.

The Balancing Act- Managing Western Sensitivities

India displayed strategic caution to avoid antagonizing the U.S. and Europe, evident in what was *not* announced-

Strategic Omissions- There were no major announcements regarding- Defence hardware/deals. Nuclear energy projects. Space collaboration.

Reasoning- Avoiding these sensitive sectors signals India's awareness of Western "red lines."

Oil Imports- India avoided committing to *higher* volumes of oil imports. This makes the $100 billion trade target harder to achieve but helps avoid further friction regarding the trade deficit and sanctions.

"Dhruv Tara"- While the PM described Russia as a "Dhruv Tara" (Guiding Star), the overall conduct of the visit showed a prioritization of ties with the U.S. and EU alongside maintaining the Russian connection.

Defining Strategic Autonomy

Consistency is Key- The article argues that true strategic autonomy is about consistent engagement with all major power blocs (Russia and the West).

Avoiding "Swinging"- India must not "swing" back and forth based on momentary pressures but should maintain a steady equilibrium.

The Path Ahead- Sustaining this autonomy requires a careful blend of diplomacy where India defends its independent foreign policy without becoming a junior partner to any single bloc.

Conclusion

India's handling of President Putin's visit reflects a sophisticated exercise in realpolitik. By stripping the visit of controversial military deals and focusing on economic essentials like fertilizers and connectivity, India safeguarded its historic partnership with Russia while minimizing fallout with the West. The visit reinforces that for New Delhi, strategic autonomy is not about isolation, but about the capacity to engage multiple conflicting powers simultaneously to serve India's National Interest.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/balancing-not-swinging-on-india-russia-ties-indian-diplomacy/article70368877.ece

2. Economy beyond headline numbers – better jobs, green growth needed(IE)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Introduction

India's economy has demonstrated resilience and strength, recording a robust headline GDP growth of 8.2% in Q2FY26. While this signals strong macroeconomic performance on the surface, beneath these figures lie significant structural challenges. Concerns raised by international bodies like the IMF regarding data quality, coupled with domestic issues of jobless growth and severe environmental degradation in North India, suggest that high growth rates alone are insufficient. True development requires a shift towards inclusivity, data transparency, and environmental sustainability.

The Paradox- High Growth vs. Data Credibility

While the growth numbers are impressive, the credibility of the data underpinning them is under scrutiny.

Strong Headline Numbers- The 8.2% growth rate in Q2FY26 positions India as a fast-growing major economy.

IMF's "C" Rating- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reportedly graded India's national accounts with a "C" rating for the quality of underlying data.

Outdated Base Year- A primary criticism is the continued reliance on the 2011-12 base year for GDP calculations. This old base fails to capture new economic activities, digital shifts, and modern consumption patterns.

The Invisible Informal Sector- With approximately 90% of the economy operating in the informal sector, current data collection methods chronically undercount this segment. This leads to a significant mismeasurement of- Actual GDP. Employment levels. True welfare standards of the population.

The Challenge of Jobless Growth & Structural Transformation

Economic expansion has not translated proportionately into formal employment, creating a phenomenon of "jobless growth."

Over-reliance on Agriculture- Despite the service sector boom, about 46% of India's workforce remains dependent on agriculture.

Contrast- The agriculture sector grew by only 3.5% in Q2FY26, indicating a disparity between where the growth is (Services/Industry) and where the people are (Agriculture).

Informality Trap- Government schemes and welfare transfers are providing relief but are not a substitute for high-quality, formal-sector jobs.

Stalled Structural Transformation- A healthy developing economy typically moves labor from low-productivity agriculture to high-productivity manufacturing. In India, this transition is slow, impeding sustainable structural transformation.

The Environmental Cost of Growth

The current growth model appears to be environmentally expensive, particularly in North India, undermining the quality of life.

Air Pollution Crisis- Cities like Delhi consistently rank among the most polluted globally. AQI levels frequently exceed 400, which severely impacts life expectancy and public health.

Water Toxicity- Groundwater contamination, particularly with heavy metals, poses long-term health risks that are not factored into GDP calculations.

"Defensive Consumption" Paradox- A portion of the GDP growth is fueled by people spending money to protect themselves from pollution (e.g., buying air purifiers, water filters, medical treatments). While this increases economic activity figures, it actually represents a decline in human welfare.

Recommendations for Meaningful Growth

To bridge the gap between GDP figures and ground reality, the following interventions are recommended

Area of Reform	**Specific Actions**
Job Creation	Accelerate private investment, improve Ease of Doing Business, and align Skill India programs with actual market demands to move workers to formal jobs.
Data Modernization	Immediately update the GDP Base Year (ideally every 5 years). Institutionalize high-frequency data collection to better capture the informal economy.
Environmental Action	Implement coordinated policies on Crop Residue Management, urban transport overhaul, and strict industrial emission norms.

Way Forward

Strengthen Employment Generation- Focus on MSME growth as they are labor-intensive. Encourage start-ups and industries that can absorb labor migrating out of agriculture.

Modernize National Accounts- Move towards real-time data tracking to build confidence among domestic and global investors. Transparency in data is crucial for effective policy formulation.

Promote Green and Sustainable Growth- Green GDP- Integrate environmental indicators into GDP measurement to get a "Holistic View" of growth. Invest heavily in urban public transport to reduce reliance on private vehicles.

Policy Integration- Economic, labor, and environmental policies must not work in silos. PMO-level coordination is suggested to ensure strictly implemented monitoring across states.

Conclusion

India's growth story remains impressive on paper, but for it to be truly "developed" (Viksit) by 2047, the focus must shift from *quantity* of growth to *quality* of growth. Addressing the "Jobless" nature of expansion, fixing the "Data Deficit," and reversing "Environmental Degradation" are the three pillars required to make India's rise sustainable and inclusive**.**

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/economy-beyond-headline-numbers-better-jobs-green-growth-needed-10408015/?ref=opinion_pg

Editorial of the Day – 09.12.2025

Index

1. Prudent action- On RBI Interest rate cuts

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. (Monetary Policy (RBI), Inflation vs. Growth, Banking Sector & Interest Rates.)

Introduction

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has executed a strategic rate cut, reflecting a nuanced approach to monetary policy. Despite strong headline GDP numbers, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) remains cautious about the underlying strength of the economy and external headwinds. This move is a "careful balancing act" aimed at sustaining investment and protecting exporters while maintaining a neutral stance to allow for swift policy reversals if inflation risks re-emerge.

The MPC's Decision- Key Statistics

Rate Reduction- The MPC reduced the policy rate by 25 basis points (bps), bringing it down to 5.25%.
Cumulative Action- This adds up to a total reduction of 125 bps in the year 2025.
Historical Context- Such aggressive cumulative cuts were last witnessed in 2019, a period marked by a sharp slowdown in growth.

The Growth Paradox

There is a divergence between the rising GDP figures and the central bank's dovish policy action.
GDP Momentum- Growth has accelerated from 5.6% in Q2 of the previous year to 8.2% in Q2 of the current year.
Skepticism on Durability- The rate cut suggests the RBI is not fully convinced that this growth momentum is secure or self-sustaining.
The Deflator Factor- The analysis notes that real growth figures might look inflated due to a low GDP deflator (implying nominal growth might not be as robust as real growth suggests).

Rationale Behind the Rate Cut

The MPC's decision is driven by both domestic capacity issues and external threats.
Idle Capacity- Indian firms still possess ample idle capacity. This implies that stimulating demand will not immediately lead to overheating or inflation, making a rate cut a "safe" bet to push growth.
Supporting Investment- Cheaper credit is intended to encourage corporate investment, which is currently present but often funded by debt.
External Shocks (US Tariffs)- The MPC is preemptively cushioning the economy against the unfolding impact of 50% tariffs imposed by the U.S. on global supply chains, which threatens Indian exports.

Sectoral Impact- Focus on MSMEs

Credit Lifeline- Lower interest rates are specifically targeted to benefit Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
Competitiveness- Many MSMEs rely heavily on affordable credit for survival. Lower rates reduce their operational costs, enhancing their competitiveness in the export market amidst global trade volatility.

Inflation Dynamics and Future Risks

Current Forecast- The MPC has lowered its inflation forecast to a modest 2%.
Volatility Warning- Despite the low forecast, the committee remains alert to potential spikes in food or oil prices which could quickly reverse the low-inflation trend.

Lesson from History (2019)- The text cites a cautionary tale from 2019, where inflation surged from 2% to 7.6% within a year following rate cuts, highlighting how quickly the landscape can change.

Policy Stance- Flexibility Over Commitment

Neutral Stance- By maintaining a neutral stance, the RBI avoids committing to a long-term low-rate regime.

Preparedness- This signals readiness for a swift policy reversal (hiking rates) if global uncertainty alters the growth trajectory or if inflation suddenly spikes.

Conclusion

The RBI's latest policy action is a proactive measure to support an expansion that still feels fragile despite high headline growth. By prioritizing flexibility, the MPC has positioned itself to support the economy against external trade shocks and internal structural weaknesses while keeping its powder dry to fight inflation should it resurface.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/prudent-action-on-rbi-interest-rate-cuts/article70372583.ece

2. India and the UK- A Defence Partnership with Potential to Make a Better World

General Studies 2- International Relation

Topic- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Introduction

The India-UK defence partnership has evolved into a modern, comprehensive strategic relationship that goes beyond traditional buyer-seller dynamics. Rooted in shared democratic values, respect for sovereignty, and freedom of navigation, this partnership aims to bolster security in the Indo-Pacific region while fostering mutual economic growth through industrial collaboration and high-level strategic alignment.

Joint Military Exercises & Interoperability

The partnership focuses heavily on enhancing combat readiness and tactical coordination through regular military engagements.

Key Exercises-

Ajeya Warrior (Army)- Has evolved to simulate complex battlefield scenarios, allowing Indian and British forces to operate under unified command structures.

KONKAN (Navy)- Focuses on advanced maritime manoeuvres and air defence drills. Recent iterations have seen high-level assets like India's INS Vikrant and the UK's HMS Prince of Wales operating together.

Significance- Enhances multi-domain operational readiness. Fosters professional bonding and mutual trust, which is crucial for coordinated responses to regional security threats.

Defence Industrial Cooperation & Technology Sharing

A shift towards co-development and co-production marks the current phase of relations, aligning with India's domestic goals.

10-Year Roadmap- Both nations are guided by a Defence Industrial Roadmap that promotes joint Research & Development (R&D) and technology transfer.

Key Initiatives

Missile Systems- A £350-million deal for the supply of Lightweight Multirole Missiles.

Naval Technology- Collaboration on maritime electric propulsion systems, vital for the modernization of future Indian naval platforms.

Strategic Alignment- These initiatives support India's Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) vision by leveraging advanced UK expertise to modernize Indian defence capabilities.

Knowledge Sharing & Human Capital Development

The partnership places a strong emphasis on institutional exchanges and training to build long-term capacity**.** Institutional Training- Indian officers undergo training at prestigious UK institutions like the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and Britannia Royal Naval College. Instructor Exchange- Future plans include integrating Indian Air Force Qualified Flying Instructors into UK training programs.

Impact- Standardizes training methodologies and enhances leadership skills. Promotes cross-cultural understanding and builds professional networks between the armed forces of both nations**.**

Strategic and Geopolitical Dimensions

The collaboration extends beyond bilateral ties to address broader geopolitical realities.

Indo-Pacific Focus- Both nations advocate for a free and open Indo-Pacific, emphasizing adherence to international law and respect for territorial sovereignty**.**

Global Security- The partnership acts as a counterbalance to emerging regional threats and reinforces multilateral security frameworks.

Proactive Stakeholders- By integrating defence with diplomacy, India and the UK position themselves as key contributors to global security governance.

Integration with Economic and Trade Cooperation

Security cooperation is designed to work in tandem with economic prosperity.

Synergy with CETA- The partnership is reinforced by ongoing negotiations for the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Virtuous Cycle

Defence-industrial collaboration benefits from improved investment flows and trade facilitation. Conversely, economic growth is supported by a secure, stable, and rules-based regional environment maintained through defence cooperation.

Conclusion

The India-UK defence partnership is a multidimensional effort that successfully merges military readiness with industrial innovation and strategic vision. By deepening ties across security, technology, and training, both nations are not only addressing contemporary global challenges but are also securing their mutual economic and geopolitical interests for the long term.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-and-the-uk-a-defence-partnership-with-potential-to-make-a-better-world-10409885/?ref=opinion_pg

Editorial of the Day – 10.12.2025

Index

1. Note of harmony-On the debate on Vande Mataram(TH)

General Studies 1- History

Topic- The Freedom Struggle- Contributions from different parts of the country**.**

Introduction

Vande Mataram, a timeless tribute envisioning the nation as "Mother India," served as a unifying force during India's freedom struggle. As the nation observes the 150th anniversary of this historic hymn, the focus must remain on its spirit of sacrifice and shared identity. However, recent events have sparked a debate on how best to honor this legacy—whether by reopening old historical wounds or by strengthening modern social cohesion.

The Historical Legacy of Vande Mataram

Origin and Authorship- The song was penned by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. It was published in his novel *Anandamath* in the early 1880s. This year marks the song's 150th anniversary.

Role in the Freedom Struggle- It served as a battle cry that inspired generations of freedom fighters. It successfully united diverse communities against colonial rule, fostering a collective national identity.

Political Adoption (1937)- In 1937, the Indian National Congress (INC) leadership officially adopted the **first two stanzas** of the song for use at its gatherings. This decision was rooted in a strategy of accommodation to respect the sensibilities of all communities while retaining the song's patriotic core.

Constitutional Status- Post-independence, the Constitution of India recognized these stanzas as the **National Song**. It stands equal to the National Anthem in stature, symbolizing nation-building and collective identity.

The Recent Parliamentary Controversy

A parliamentary session intended to commemorate the 150th anniversary devolved into a partisan debate, highlighting contrasting interpretations of history.

The Ruling Party's Argument (BJP)- Argued that the historical decision to limit the song to only two stanzas was an act of appeasement. Claimed that this specific concession contributed to the rise of separatist sentiments, ultimately leading to the Partition of India.

The Opposition's Counter-Argument (INC/Opposition)- Leaders like Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Mallikarjun Kharge contended that the historical context was being misrepresented.

Question of Relevance- They questioned the utility of debating settled historical matters in the present day.

Focus on Governance- Ms. Vadra emphasized that Parliament should prioritize current issues affecting citizens rather than excavating old divisions.

Critical Historical Lessons

To avoid repeating past errors, it is essential to draw the correct lessons from the freedom movement rather than rewriting it.

Unity through Accommodation- The national movement succeeded because it built unity across religious, linguistic, and cultural lines within a shared political space. The adoption of specific stanzas of *Vande Mataram* highlights a tradition of mutual respect, not the imposition of a singular cultural identity.

Shared Heritage- Historical records show that for decades, Hindus and Muslims together chanted **Vande Mataram** during mass mobilizations against the British.

Fragility of Unity- While the unity project was remarkable, the eventual Partition exposed its fragility. This underscores the danger of promoting specific identities that overshadow the broader, secular, and constitutional Indian commonness.

Reaffirming National Purpose (Way Forward)

Avoid Weaponizing Symbols- Twisting a symbol of harmony (*Vande Mataram*) into a source of political division serves no constructive purpose for the nation.

Strengthen Constitutional Values- The truest tribute to Mother India is to uphold unity, harmony, and mutual respect.

Future Outlook- India must renew its sense of national purpose by ensuring that the legacy of *Vande Mataram* continues to inspire future generations toward cohesion, not conflict.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/note-of-harmony-on-the-debate-on-vande-mataram/article70376936.ece

2. India's small enterprises hold key to job growth(IE)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Employment- Growth, formalisation, and issues relating to employment

Small Enterprises, Big Jobs- Transforming India's Employment Landscape

Introduction

India's employment challenge extends beyond mere job creation; it is fundamentally about enhancing productivity and growth within the millions of small and unincorporated enterprises. While policy often favors large industries, the true engine for inclusive and broad-based economic growth lies in empowering the unorganized sector to formalize, access credit, and adopt technology.

Current Employment Structure in India

Understanding the composition of the workforce is crucial to diagnosing the employment challenge.

Scale of the Sector- As of 2023-24, over 12 crore workers are employed across 7.3 crore non-agricultural enterprises dominance of Self-Employment (OAEs)

Own Account Enterprises (OAEs)- These are units that *do not* hire paid workers. They constitute 87% of all enterprises.

Nature of Work- This statistic highlights that a significant portion of self-employment in India is driven by necessity (survival) rather than entrepreneurial dynamism.

Role of Hired Worker Enterprises (HWEs)- Although HWEs form a small fraction of total enterprises, they contribute disproportionately to Gross Value Added (GVA). This disparity indicates that enterprises with hired labor are significantly more productive than single-person operations.

The Link Between Growth and Employment

Data suggests a strong correlation between enterprise growth (productivity) and job creation.

Productivity-Employment Elasticity- A 10% increase in GVA (Gross Value Added) among small enterprises correlates with a 4.5% rise in hired workers.

The Transition Opportunity- Since nearly 9 out of 10 enterprises currently hire *no* workers, upgrading even a fraction of OAEs into HWEs can trigger a massive expansion in employment opportunities.

Structural Challenges Faced by Small Enterprises

Despite their potential, small enterprises face three critical hurdles that stifle growth ("The Missing Middle" problem).

Low Formalisation- Many micro-enterprises avoid registration (e.g., Udyam portal) because they perceive the compliance costs to be higher than the potential benefits. Impact- This exclusion prevents them from accessing government schemes and formal market linkages.

Limited Access to Credit

The Credit Gap- Only 10–12% of unincorporated enterprises have access to formal institutional loans.
Productivity Multiplier- Access to credit is transformative. For medium-sized enterprises, formal credit can boost GVA by 72%. For large enterprises, GVA can increase more than threefold.

Poor Technology Adoption- The use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools is low. Gains from tech adoption (digital payments, online marketplaces) are highly pronounced, yet micro-enterprises lag in utilizing basic IT tools which could enhance efficiency.

Policy Implications & Initiatives

To unlock the potential of this sector, policy must shift from "protection" to "promotion of growth."

Ease of Doing Business- Simplify regulatory norms to encourage voluntary formalisation.

Differentiated Credit- Move beyond simple microloans. Providing stage-appropriate credit is vital *Subsistence credit* for tiny units. *Working & Growth capital* for expanding units.

Digital Inclusion Programs- Expansion of digital infrastructure through

1. Digital MSME Scheme
2. ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce)
3. UDYAM Registration
4. DISHA (Digital Saksharta Abhiyan)

Note- These require local handholding and skills training to be effective.

Way Forward- A Roadmap for Transformation

Formalisation Drive- Incentivize the move from informal to formal by reducing compliance burdens and offering tangible benefits for registration**.**

Graded Credit Expansion- Link credit availability to the maturity stage of the enterprise (Micro $\rightarrow$ Small $\rightarrow$ Medium).

Technology & E-Commerce- Aggressively promote digital tools and platforms with mentorship to help micro-units access wider markets.

Skill Development Integration- Align vocational education with enterprise needs, focusing on-

1. Digital Literacy
2. Financial Management
3. Market Linkages

Integrated Ecosystem Approach- Ensure coordination between the Ministries of MSME, Skill Development, Finance, and IT to create a cohesive support system.

Monitoring & Evaluation- Utilize surveys like ASUSE (Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises) to assess impact and ensure policies are results-oriented.

Conclusion

India's path to creating "Big Jobs" lies in the transformation of its "Small Enterprises." By facilitating the transition of Own Account Enterprises (OAEs) into Hired Worker Enterprises (HWEs) through credit, technology, and formalisation, India can unlock sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/indias-small-enterprises-hold-key-to-job-growth-10411882/

Editorial of the Day – 11.12.2025

Index

1. A Verdict That is an Abdication of Judicial Function(TH)

General Studies 2- Polity/Governance

Topic- Role of Governor- Discretionary powers, Article 200, relation with State Legislature.

A Verdict of Abdication- Timelines for Constitutional Functionaries

Introduction

The Supreme Court's recent judgment in the 16th Presidential Reference regarding the setting of timelines for constitutional authorities (President, Governors, Speakers) has sparked significant debate. While the Court's refusal to prescribe strict timeframes reflects judicial restraint, critics argue it constitutes an "abdication of judicial function." The central concern is that this reluctance allows constitutional silence to be weaponized, undermining the spirit of the Constitution and the doctrine of

Constitutional Morality

The Constitutional Context- "Silence" on Timelines

Lack of Specificity- The Constitution of India does not prescribe specific time limits for actions required by high authorities like the President, Governors, or Speakers of Houses.

Open-Ended Nature- The framers left these provisions open-ended, trusting the high constitutional functionaries to act with dispatch and responsibility.

Judicial Restraint- The Supreme Court's reasoning in the recent verdict adheres strictly to the text—arguing that since the Constitution does not explicitly state a timeline, the Judiciary should not infer or impose one.

The Anomaly of the Speaker (Anti-Defection Law)

A major critique of the "no timeline" stance is visible in the functioning of the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law).

Quasi-Judicial Role- Speakers function as quasi-judicial authorities when deciding disqualification petitions.

The Loophole- Assemblies have a fixed five-year term. However, the adjudication process for defection is open-ended.

Consequence- An elected member can defect and complete their entire term without facing disqualification simply because the Speaker delays the decision.

Undermining Democracy- This renders the anti-defection law ineffective and subverts the mandate of the electorate.

The Governor's Role- Weaponizing Article 200

The judgment effectively validates the growing trend of Governors delaying legislative business.

Indefinite Delays- Governors have increasingly withheld assent or delayed Bills passed by State Legislatures.

The "Pocket Veto" Issue- While Governors can return a Bill for reconsideration, they cannot constitutionally withhold assent *indefinitely*. Doing so acts as a "pocket veto," effectively neutralizing a law passed by an elected legislature.

Separation of Powers- The power to strike down a law as *ultra vires* belongs solely to the Constitutional Courts, not the Governor. By stalling bills, Governors are effectively usurping this judicial power.

Critique of the Verdict- An Irony of Interpretation

Legitimizing Inaction- By ruling that "no text means no timeline," the Court has unintentionally validated the partisan delays by Governors and Speakers.

Failure of Interpretation- The author argues the Court missed an opportunity to interpret "constitutional silence" in a way that protects the system from abuse.

Abdication of Duty- As the ultimate guardian of the Constitution, the Court is expected to intervene when constitutional processes are stalled, rather than hiding behind textual silence.

The Doctrine of Constitutional Morality

The analysis invokes Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision to critique the judgment.

Ambedkar's Warning (1948)- He warned that the Constitution could be subverted not just by changing the text, but by altering administrative practices (e.g., deliberate delays). He emphasized that "Constitutional Morality" is not a natural sentiment but must be cultivated.

Modern Application- Recent landmark judgments (e.g., Sabarimala, LGBTQIA+ rights) have relied on Constitutional Morality to interpret the text in harmony with evolving public conscience. The current verdict is seen as a regression from this progressive trend.

The Core Argument- The administrative details were left out of the Constitution because the framers trusted future generations and the Courts to uphold the *spirit* of the law. The Court's refusal to set timelines betrays that trust.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's reluctance to evolve a timeframe for constitutional functionaries' risks normalizing the subversion of democracy through administrative delay. By failing to check the "constitutional distortion" caused by partisan Speakers and Governors, the verdict weakens the very system it is meant to protect, highlighting a significant gap in internalizing the Constitutional Morality envisioned by the founding fathers.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-verdict-that-is-an-abdication-of-judicial-function/article70381516.ece

2. Childcare Isn't Just a Social Safety Net. It's a Lever for Growth(IE)

General Studies 1- Indian Society

Topic- Role of Women and Women's Organizations**-** Challenges faced by working women, constraints on female labour force participation

The Unavoidable Growth Lever- Childcare as Soft Infrastructure

Introduction

India's ambition to achieve 8-10% annual economic growth faces a significant, often overlooked hurdle- the lack of robust childcare infrastructure. Moving beyond the traditional view of childcare as a mere social safety net, this analysis argues for its recognition as critical "soft infrastructure"—an economic springboard. By addressing the productivity drag caused by women leaving the workforce due to care duties, and by fostering early human capital development, investing in childcare is a non-negotiable strategy for securing India's demographic dividend.

The Economic Imperative- Childcare as Infrastructure

The absence of affordable childcare is not just a family issue but a systemic economic bottleneck.

Addressing Productivity Drag- Millions of women are forced to scale back work hours or exit the workforce entirely due to inaccessible or unaffordable childcare. This creates a "hidden" drag on national productivity, stalling growth ambitions.

Unlocking Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP)- Reliable childcare enables women to take up jobs that match their skills and aspirations rather than settling for flexible but low-paying work.

Evidence from Southern States- States like Tamil Nadu and Telangana that invested in social infrastructure (hostels, childcare) now account for nearly three-fourths of women in manufacturing, proving the direct link between infrastructure and employment.

Improving Job Quality- Global evidence (e.g., Vietnam, Rio de Janeiro) demonstrates that accessible childcare does not just increase employment numbers; it shifts women into formal employment and increases productive working hours.

Institutional and Demographic Urgency

Institutional Anchor (NMECC)- To treat childcare as market-shaping infrastructure, a unified approach is required.

Proposal- Establish a National Mission on Early Childhood Care (NMECC) to converge efforts across the Ministries of Women & Child Development (WCD), Labour, Education, Health, and Industry.

The Demographic Deadline

Shrinking Window- Fertility rates are already below replacement levels in several states.

Aging Population- By 2050, one in five Indians is projected to be over 60.

Risk- Without immediate intervention, the demographic dividend risks turning into a deficit—a future workforce with poor capabilities and too few productive workers supporting an aging population.

A Hybrid Model for the Way Forward

The proposed strategy combines physical upgrades with digital innovation to ensure holistic development for both the child and the economy.

Component	**Intervention Strategy**	**Real-world Examples & Evidence**
Physical Infrastructure	Convert existing Anganwadis/crèches into full-day facilities, focusing on industrial belts and service hubs.	Telangana- Increased stipends to extend Anganwadi hours. Tamil Nadu- Added half-time workers to double instructional time for preschoolers.
Human Capital Support	Mobilize para-professionals (SHG members, local youth) to assist Anganwadi workers, reducing their burden.	Meghalaya- Used short-term fellowships. Chandigarh- Utilized internships to bridge the gap.
Early Stimulation (0-3 Years)	Focus on simple parent-child interactions, recognizing that 80% of brain development happens in the first 1,000 days.	Odisha- A study showed that weekly digital/peer learning sessions (mothers' groups) significantly improved children's cognitive skills.
Digital Tools	Use "bite-sized" media and personalized nudges (via WhatsApp/Poshan Tracker) to turn daily routines into learning moments.	Poshan Tracker- Government leveraging this tool to provide early learning guidance directly to parents.

Conclusion

Childcare is the "missing link" that bridges social justice with economic ambition. Treating Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as essential soft infrastructure is a strategic necessity. A unified, hybrid approach involving government mandate, business innovation, and civil society outreach is required to support women's employment today while building the capabilities of the workforce of tomorrow.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/childcare-isnt-just-a-social-safety-net-its-a-lever-for-growth-10413871/

Editorial of the Day – 12.12.2025

Index

1. The Stark Reality of Educational Costs in India(TH)

General Studies 2- Education

The NSS 80th Round (2025) findings highlight a troubling trend in India's basic schooling landscape- despite constitutional guarantees the Right to Free and Compulsory Education for all children aged 6 to 14 years under Article 21A and policy ambitions (National Education Policy 2020), household expenditure on education is rising, and access is becoming increasingly unequal due to growing reliance on private schools and coaching .

Key Findings from the NSS 80th Round Survey

Enrolment Trends (Public vs. Private Education)- At the national level, enrolment remains divided between government and private schools 55.9% in government schools; 11.3% in private aided schools; 31.9% in private unaided schools.

Urban–Rural Divide

Urban areas- 51.4% of students attends private schools.

Rural areas- Only 24.3% attend private schools.

The gender gap in private school enrolment is modest, 34% of boys versus 29.5% of girls.

Rising Private Enrolment Over Time- Private enrolment has increased at all education levels, both in rural and urban areas, compared with the 75th NSS Round (2017–18). It underscores a growing preference for private education often associated with better perceived quality but higher costs.

Cost of Education

Rural government schools- 25.3% of students pays fees.

Urban government schools- 34.7% pays fees.

In contrast, 98% of private school students, rural or urban, pay course fees.

Household Consumption Expenditure (HCES 2023–24)- Pre-primary private school costs equal the monthly income of the poorest 5% of households. Higher secondary private school costs match the income of households in the third income decile. It clearly demonstrates that education has become a heavy financial burden, even at the basic level.

Private Coaching- Hidden Cost of Learning

Incidence of Private Tutoring- Private tuition, now a parallel education system, is widely prevalent

Rural areas- 25.5% of children takes private coaching.

Urban areas- 30.7% of children does so.

Participation increases with grade level, from around 10–13% at pre-primary to over 40% at higher secondary.

Expenditure on Private Coaching- The average annual cost of private coaching is ₹7,066 in rural and ₹13,026 in urban areas, which add significantly to the already high cost of schooling.

Socio-Economic Correlates of Private Tutoring

Cost Burden and Inequality- 80th Round of NSS shows that private school students pay up to 9 times more than those in government schools. Urban households, especially in states like Telangana and Delhi, spend significantly more on education, including tuition, transport, and digital devices. The financial burden is disproportionately high for lower-income families, who often cut back on essentials to afford private schooling or coaching.

Policy Blind Spots- There is limited regulation or oversight of the coaching industry, while the **NEP (2020)** acknowledges the issue of private tutoring. The lack of affordable, high-quality public education options pushes families toward private alternatives, reinforcing socio-economic divides.

Parental Aspirations and Social Mobility- Families with higher household income, parental education, and urban residence view coaching as an investment in academic success and social prestige. Many private school teachers are underpaid and underqualified despite high private school fees, compelling parents to spend even more on private tutoring.

Inequality and the Decline of Public Schooling- Free education is a constitutional right. But costly private education is increasingly the norm, perpetuating inequality. Affluent families can afford private schools and coaching, poorer families rely on underfunded public schools, leading to divergent learning outcomes.

Ongoing Efforts to Improve Public Schooling in India

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018)- Integrates three earlier schemes- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE). It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-primary to Class XII.

PM SHRI Schools (2022)- To develop over 14,500 model schools across India. It focuses onModern infrastructure with smart classrooms;

1. Holistic, inquiry-based pedagogy aligned with NEP 2020;
2. Emphasis on environmental sustainability and experiential learning;

National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)- It aims to create a unified digital infrastructure for education. It includes

1. DIKSHA platform for e-content and teacher training;
2. UDISE+ for real-time school data;
3. Digital learning resources in regional languages;

Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN)- It aims to improve nutritional status and school attendance.

1. Over 11 crore children in government and government-aided schools.
2. Inclusion of pre-primary children and fortified food in some states.

Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme (Union Budget 2025–26)- It aims to provide digital-format textbooks in Indian languages to enhance comprehension and accessibility.

Way Forward- Strengthening Publicly Funded Schools

Addressing inequities requires urgent systemic reforms. Strengthening public education is crucial to ensure that education remains a right, not a privilege. The Journal of Development Studies (2024) finds that private tuition is negatively associated with school quality, students in better schools depend less on tutoring. Improving teaching standards, infrastructure, and accountability in government schools can reduce dependence on private tuition and restore public confidence in free education.

Conclusion

India's constitutional vision of free and universal education remains far from reality. Education is becoming one of the largest household expenditures for many Indian families with rising private school enrolment, high tuition costs, and increasing reliance on private coaching. India needs to urgently revitalize public schooling, ensure equitable funding, and uphold the constitutional promise of 'education for all' to realize the NEP 2020 goal of universal education by 2030.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-stark-reality-of-educational-costs-in-india/article70385413.ece

2. The U.S. has released its first National Security Strategy under Trump's second term.

General Studies 3- International Relations

About National Security Strategy

Legal Basis- The U.S. National Security Strategy is mandated by the Goldwater–Nichols Act of 1986.

Nature of the NSS- It is a grand strategy that reveals how the US views the world for the coming years.

1. The strategy exhibits a paradox the desire to maintain Global Dominance while pursuing Isolationism.
2. This approach is termed Transactional Realism**,** meaning the US seeks to assert dominance but is unwilling to bear the cost or security burden for its allies.

Foreign Policy Priorities Outlined in the Strategy

End of Mass Migration- Washington has identified that the era of mass migration has ended.

Protection of Core Rights and Liberties- Core rights and liberties, including freedom of speech and religion, need to be protected more than ever.

Reduced Global Burden- The U.S. will no longer carry the full burden of global security**.**

Atlas Syndrome- The feeling of carrying the weight of the world on one's shoulders, especially in the context of reducing responsibilities or retrenchment. Derived from the story of the Titan Atlas from Greek mythology, who is forced to hold up the sky.

Shepherding Peace Deals- It will continue brokering peace deals worldwide to solidify U.S. influence abroad.

Economic Security- Economic security is a top foreign policy priority. Key measures include balanced trade, secure access to critical materials, reindustrialisation, stronger defence and energy infrastructure, and leveraging Wall Street and global digital finance.

Concerns Regarding Europe

Patronising Tone- The NSS warns Europe of possible civilizational erasure due to its economic decline It faults Germany and EU countries with unstable minority governments whose policy actions do not match their stated desire for peace in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Germany's Pushback- Germany's Foreign Minister stated that issues of freedom and governance in Germany do not belong in the U.S. NSS and that the country does not need external advice.

Implications of NSS

Anxiety About the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)- The NSS has raised concerns about NATO's effectiveness and cohesion**.**

Risk of Autocracy- By making allies take greater regional responsibility, the U.S. may reduce its own role, giving autocrats more freedom to act aggressively and violate international norms.

Conclusion

The new U.S. National Security Strategy signals a shift toward transactional realism, combining assertive global ambitions with reduced burdens. While prioritising economic security and selective engagement, it risks weakening alliances, unsettling Europe, and emboldening autocratic powers worldwide.

Source- https-//timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/trumps-national-security-strategy-2025-released-india-crucial-era-of-mass-migration-is-over/articleshow/125795567.cms

Editorial of the Day – 13.12.2025

Index

1. A Critical Story that a Chunk of the Media Missed(TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment

IMF's Assessment of India's National Accounts Data

Introduction

The recent release of India's Quarter 2 national accounts data has brought to light a significant contradiction. While the official data showed an unexpectedly strong 8.2% growth, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) simultaneously raised serious concerns about the methodology used to compile these statistics. The IMF assigned India's national accounts—including GDP and GVA—a 'C' grade, the second-lowest rating possible. This analysis highlights the structural flaws in India's economic data and the media's failure to adequately report on it.

Media Coverage- A Crisis of Silence

Despite the severity of the IMF's observation, the issue received minimal public attention due to inadequate media coverage.

Limited Reporting- Most media outlets ignored the IMF's reservations. The Hindu was the notable exception, featuring the story prominently on its front page ("IMF gives 'C' grade for India's national accounts statistics", November 28, 2025).

Silence of Financial Press- The "pink papers" (business newspapers), which are expected to scrutinize economic data, largely overlooked the report.

Buried News- A few outlets that did carry the story relegated it to the inside pages, making it difficult for the public to notice.

Impact- This lack of coverage leaves citizens uninformed and ill-equipped to understand the true state of the economy, reflecting a failure of journalism to act as a watchdog.

The Core Methodology Issue

The primary concern raised by the IMF revolves around how India calculates the growth of its vast informal (unorganized) sector.

The Proxy Problem- India estimates growth in the unorganized sector by using the formal organized sector as a proxy.

Scale of the Sector- Even after excluding agriculture, the unorganized sector contributes nearly 30% of India's GDP.

Fundamental Question- The reliance on proxies raises doubts about whether India has a reliable measurement framework for such a large economic segment or if the GDP figures are merely "informed approximations."

Reliability Concerns- The Divergence of Sectors

Experts like Pronab Sen and Arun Kumar argue that using the organized sector to represent the unorganized sector is fundamentally flawed, especially during economic shocks.

False Assumption- The methodology assumes that both sectors move in the same direction at the same speed.

Reality of Shocks- During major disruptions—such as Demonetization, the GST rollout, and the COVID-19 pandemic—the organized sector often grew (or recovered faster) while the unorganized sector declined or stagnated.

Overestimation- Because the proxy (organized sector) was growing, the data likely overestimated the performance of the shrinking unorganized sector.

Caution on Headline Numbers- Consequently, impressive figures like the 8.2% quarterly growth must be viewed with caution, as they rely heavily on assumptions rather than comprehensive data.

Structural Challenges and Future Outlook

The text suggests that these data issues are structural and unlikely to be resolved in the near future.

Institutional Limitations- The IMF's 'C' grade reflects deep-rooted issues that cannot be fixed quickly.

New Series Update- The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is working on updating the GDP base year and methodology, with a new series expected by February 2026.

Persisting Doubts- However, experts remain skeptical. Pronab Sen frankly states, "I don't think we can" adequately address the IMF's concerns immediately, primarily because robust, real-time data collection for the unorganized sector does not exist.

Conclusion

The IMF's 'C' grade serves as a critical warning about the structural weaknesses in India's economic data system. Updating the base year alone will not solve the problem of accurately measuring the unorganized sector. The situation is compounded by the media's under-reporting, which weakens informed public debate and policy scrutiny. True economic accountability requires both better data infrastructure and a media that acts as a vigilant watchdog.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-critical-story-that-a-chunk-of-the-media-missed/article70389725.ece

2. From Licence Raj to Jan Vishwas, What We Need to Set Our Entrepreneurs Free(IE)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Investment models; Ease of Doing Business.

Jan Vishwas Siddhant – Unlocking Entrepreneurial Potential

Introduction

India's entrepreneurial ecosystem has historically struggled under the weight of "Regulatory Cholesterol"—a legacy of the Licence Raj characterised by excessive prior approvals, complex compliance, and disproportionate punishments. Despite the economic liberalisation of 1991, structural bottlenecks remain. The proposed Jan Vishwas Siddhant aims to dismantle these barriers, shifting the governance model from one of suspicion and control to one of trust and facilitation, thereby unlocking the potential of millions of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Regulatory Pathologies Hindering Entrepreneurship

The text identifies specific structural flaws (pathologies) in the current regulatory framework that act as barriers to entry and growth.

The Burden of Prior Approval

Permission Culture- Entrepreneurs are forced to seek thousands of permissions, No Objection Certificates (NOCs), and licences from various central and state ministries.

Stifled Innovation- Innovation is inherently "permissionless," yet administrative hurdles curtail the fundamental right to practice any profession (Article 19).

Instrument Proliferation

Bureaucratic Overload- Beyond Acts and Rules, the administrative state churns out thousands of non-legislative instruments (circulars, guidelines, SOPs).
Scale- Estimates suggest employers face over 12,000 such instruments, creating deep confusion and inefficiency.
Compliance Blind Spot
Cumulative Burden- Policymakers often ignore the aggregate weight of regulations. As of 2025, compliance obligations reached over 69,000.
Need for Rationalisation- There is a critical need to replicate reforms like the 75% reduction in labour law compliance to decrease regulatory friction.
Enforcing the Unenforceable
Breeding Corruption- Laws that are practically unenforceable inevitably lead to corruption and administrative inefficiency.
Requirement- Effective regulation demands realistic enforcement capabilities and performance management of civil servants.
The Punitive Process
Over-criminalisation- Minor economic offences (e.g., cheque bouncing) are often criminalised, clogging the judicial system and penalising honest errors.
Solution- A shift towards proportional punishments and risk-based inspections is necessary.
Absence of a 'Single Source of Truth'
Opacity- There is no comprehensive, unified database of all applicable Acts, rules, and notifications, leading to compliance errors and harassment.

Jan Vishwas Siddhant- Transformational Reforms

The Jan Vishwas Siddhant proposes a fundamental overhaul of the regulatory architecture.
Perpetual Self-Registration
Paradigm Shift- Moving to a principle where "Everything is permitted until prohibited."
Mechanism- Replacing licences with self-registration for all sectors except those affecting national security, public safety, human health, and the environment.
Risk-Based Inspections & Decriminalisation
Reduced Interference- Inspections will be randomised, risk-based, and potentially third-party to minimize bureaucratic harassment.
Proportionality- Universal application of decriminalisation principles to ensure penalties match the offence.
Digitisation and Transparency
Digital Backbone- All regulatory filings to be digital.
Single Truth- Establishing IndiaCode and e-Gazette as the authoritative "single source of truth" for all laws.
Accountability- Annual Regulatory Impact Assessments to track compliance burdens and punishments.
Empowering Entrepreneurs
From *Ijaazat* to *Koshish*- Shifting policy focus from seeking permission (*ijaazat*) to enabling effort and experimentation (*koshish*).
Outcome- Fostering an iterative business culture that nurtures innovation and job creation.

Way Forward

To fully realise the potential of these reforms, the text suggests a comprehensive roadmap.

Expand Trust-Based Regulation- Extend perpetual self-registration to more sectors, strictly maintaining exceptions only for critical areas (security, health, environment). Cultivate a culture of voluntary compliance.

Digital Governance Integration- Fully integrate IndiaCode and e-Gazette to create a live, verifiable repository of all legal obligations. Ensure all compliance requirements are transparent, dated, and verifiable.

Standardise Decriminalisation- Implement proportionate penalties across all sectors. Decriminalise minor administrative and commercial offences to clear court backlogs and boost investor confidence.

Institutionalise Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

Mandatory Review- Ministries must conduct annual reviews of compliance burdens and enforcement efficiency.

Goal- Use these assessments to simplify rules and remove obsolete regulations.

Capacity Building- Train civil servants to shift from a mindset of "control" to "facilitation." Link performance metrics to Ease of Doing Business outcomes.

Encourage Entrepreneurial Mindset- Provide mentoring, financial facilitation, and skill support to SMEs. Shift the ecosystem to support "freedom to try."

Feedback Loops- Establish a framework for stakeholder consultation with fixed timelines. Continuously monitor implementation to ensure reforms remain adaptive.

Conclusion

The Jan Vishwas Siddhant is not just a policy tweak but a paradigm shift from control to trust. By aggressively removing the regulatory "cholesterol" that stifles enterprise, it seeks to transform India into a hub of innovation. The ultimate goal is to replace the "fear of permission" with the "freedom to try," thereby strengthening India's global economic competitiveness and fostering non-farm job creation.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/from-licence-raj-to-jan-vishwas-what-we-need-to-set-our-entrepreneurs-free-10417633/

Editorial of the Day – 15.12.2025

Index

1. Time to pause- On retail inflation, data takeaways(TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment (Monetary Policy, Inflation targeting, and Consumer Price Index (CPI) reforms.)

Introduction

In late 2025, India's retail inflation has plummeted to historically low levels. This decline is not necessarily a signal of permanently low prices but is driven primarily by favorable base effects and the disproportionate influence of food prices within the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) framework. While this environment has allowed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to execute an aggressive monetary easing cycle, the current economic landscape suggests that a cautious "pause" is now necessary. The central bank must account for the temporary nature of these trends and impending structural changes to inflation measurement.

Retail Inflation- Trends and Statistical Drivers

The recent inflation data reflects a sharp downward trajectory, largely influenced by statistical anomalies rather than a purely structural cooling of prices.

Record Lows- Retail inflation in November 2025 dropped to 0.7%, marking the second-lowest level ever recorded. This followed October 2025, which saw the lowest inflation in the series.

The Role of Base Effects- The primary driver for this dip is the High Base Effect. Inflation was significantly high in the previous year (6.2% in October 2024 and 5.5% in November 2024). When current prices are compared against these high historical values, the resulting inflation percentage appears artificially low.

Future Outlook- This statistical advantage is temporary. The base effect is expected to fade gradually by **July 2026**, after which inflation numbers are likely to normalize and trend higher.

Issues with CPI Composition and Food Prices

The current CPI structure is heavily skewed, making headline inflation highly sensitive to volatile components.

Food Dominance- The current CPI basket assigns a massive weight of roughly 46% to food and inflation figure.

Recent Contraction- In November 2025, food prices contracted by 2.8%. This single factor significantly pulled down the overall inflation rate.

Statistical Illusion- Much like the headline number, this food price decline is largely statistical, measured against a very high base of 8.2% food inflation recorded in November 2024.

Upcoming Structural Reforms- The New CPI Series

To address the limitations of the current framework, the government is poised to introduce structural changes to how inflation is calculated.

Timeline- A new CPI series is expected to be released in Q1 of 2026–27.

Base Year Revision- The base year will be updated from the outdated 2012 to 2024. This is crucial for correcting the mismatch between the index and current consumption patterns.

Weightage Correction- The new series will revise weightages to reduce the over-dominance of food. This will provide a more accurate reflection of how Indian households actually spend their income today.

Impact- The new base year will help neutralize extreme base effects, significantly improving the quality and reliability of inflation measurement.

Monetary Policy Implications and Actions

Despite the known flaws in the current data, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has used these low readings to support growth.

Aggressive Easing- In December 2025, the MPC cut policy rates by 25 basis points, bringing the rate down to **5.25%**.

Cumulative Impact- Throughout 2025, the RBI has delivered cumulative rate cuts totaling 125 basis points, marking the most significant easing cycle since 2019.

The Argument for a Policy "Pause"

The analysis suggests that the RBI should now halt further rate cuts for the following strategic reasons-

Assessment of Transmission- A pause is required to observe how the 125 basis points of cuts already delivered are transmitting through the economy. The MPC needs time to see if these cuts are effectively stimulating demand and investment.

Fiscal Policy Synergy- With the Union Budget 2026 recently passed, the MPC should wait to see the inflationary or expansionary effects of fiscal policy before making further monetary adjustments.

Waiting for New Metrics- Before cutting rates further, it is prudent to study the new CPI series. The revised weightages could fundamentally alter how future rate changes impact inflation, and acting on old data might be premature.

Conclusion

The sharp decline in retail inflation to below 1% in late 2025 should be viewed as a temporary statistical phenomenon rather than a permanent conquest of price pressures. As base effects wane and the new CPI series reshapes the inflation narrative, price pressures may re-emerge. Having already delivered substantial stimulus, the prudent course for the RBI is to pause, monitor the transmission of previous cuts, and recalibrate its strategy once the impact of the 2026 Budget and the new inflation metrics becomes clear.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/time-to-pause-on-retail-inflation-data-takeaways/article70395261.ece#google_vignette

2. From Brazil, a lesson on antibiotic use for India(IE)

General Studies 2- Social Justice

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Introduction

India has emerged as the global epicenter of the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) crisis, driven largely by the rampant and unchecked preventive use of antibiotics. While Indian medical practices often rely on antibiotics for routine viral ailments, Brazil offers a contrasting model of strict regulation and disciplined medical practice. The comparison highlights that curbing AMR is not a matter of medical expertise, but rather of effective enforcement and a systemic shift from "preventive" to "curative" antibiotic usage.

The Crisis of Antibiotic Misuse in India

Current practices in India reveal a systemic reliance on antibiotics for conditions where they are medically ineffective or unnecessary.

Rampant Prescription for Viral Infections- There is a widespread trend of prescribing antibiotics for common viral infections like coughs, colds, and flu. Since antibiotics act only against bacteria, their use in viral cases offers no benefit and accelerates resistance.

The "Preventive" Mindset- Doctors and patients often favor the preventive use of antibiotics out of fear of potential secondary infections. This leads to a culture of "quick fixes" rather than evidence-based medical observation.

Agricultural and Environmental Contamination- Misuse is not limited to humans; antibiotics are extensively used as growth promoters in livestock.This allows drug-resistant bacteria to survive in animals and enter the human food chain, compounding the resistance crisis.

Lessons from Brazil- A Model of Discipline

Brazil provides a successful case study in managing antibiotic consumption through strict regulatory frameworks and disciplined healthcare delivery.

Mandatory Regulation- Unlike the easy availability of drugs in India, Brazil enforces a strict policy where a local doctor's prescription is mandatory for purchasing antibiotics. Over-the-counter sales are effectively banned.

Curative vs. Preventive Approach- Brazilian healthcare providers prioritize curative use (treating an established infection) over preventive use. There is a medical discipline to allow minor bacterial growth or viral infections to resolve naturally via the body's immune system, intervening only when serious symptoms arise.

Systemic Enforcement- The success of Brazil's model lies in the efficient enforcement of prescription norms, ensuring that the rational use of drugs is not just a guideline but a practice.

India's National Response- The NAP-AMR

India has recognized the threat at a policy level, but implementation remains the bottleneck.

The National Action Plan (NAP-AMR)- Formulated initially for 2017–2021 and recently revised for the **2025–2029** period. It adopts a multi-sectoral approach covering human health, agriculture, and environmental waste management.

Barriers to Implementation- Despite the plan, execution has been weak due to-

1. **Regulatory Gaps-** Lack of stringent checks on pharmacy sales.
2. **Limited Surveillance-** Inadequate monitoring of resistance trends.
3. **Cultural Factors-** A healthcare culture that prioritizes immediate symptom relief over long-term antibiotic stewardship.

Significance and Threat Assessment

Long-Term Public Health Risk- AMR threatens to render antibiotics ineffective for serious infections, potentially taking modern medicine back to a pre-antibiotic era where minor injuries could be fatal.

The Necessity of Behavioral Change- The key takeaway from the Brazil comparison is that regulations must be paired with a shift in mindset. Public awareness and doctor discipline are as vital as government policy.

Way Forward- A Roadmap for India

To combat the AMR crisis effectively, India must move beyond policy formulation to strict ground-level execution.

Strict Enforcement of Regulations- Immediate crackdown on over-the-counter (OTC) antibiotic sales without valid prescriptions.

Operationalizing NAP-AMR- Effective implementation of the revised NAP-AMR (2025–29) across all sectors (Human, Animal, Environment).

Behavioral Modification- Launch extensive public awareness campaigns to educate patients that antibiotics do not cure viral fevers. Train physicians to resist patient pressure for quick-fix prescriptions.

Adopting the 'One Health' Approach- Integrate monitoring systems to control AMR emerging from livestock, poultry, and environmental sources, acknowledging that human health is linked to animal and environmental health.

Conclusion

The editorial concludes that India's struggle with Antimicrobial Resistance is not a failure of medical knowledge but a systemic failure of regulation and enforcement. To safeguard public health, India must mirror the Brazilian approach- enforcing strict prescription laws, ending the practice of preventive dosing, and fostering multi-sectoral cooperation to ensure antibiotics remain effective for future generations.

Source- https-//www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20251215/282162182549218?srsltid=AfmBOooGOoGPxwwPA42c5UUKHdDiMqgqaE7bX4lE7_GmUcFwo8Glxuzt

Editorial of the Day – 16.12.2025

Index

1. A broad-based development models

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment. (Inclusive growth; Investment models; Industrial policy; Infrastructure (Energy, Ports, Roads)

Tamil Nadu – A Broad-Based Development Model

Introduction-Tamil Nadu (T.N.) has emerged as a national benchmark for a "broad-based development model," successfully integrating robust industrial growth with extensive social welfare and environmental sustainability. With a diversified economy and progressive governance, it has become the second-largest state economy in India, demonstrating that economic efficiency and social equity can coexist.

Macro-Economic Performance (GSDP)

The state has demonstrated resilience and high growth, outperforming national averages significantly.

Nominal Growth- The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices expanded by 16% in 2024–25, rising from ₹26.88 lakh crore (2023–24) to ₹31.19 lakh crore.

Real Growth (Constant Prices)- T.N. clocked an impressive 11.2% growth in 2024–25, making it the fastest-growing state in India (significantly higher than the national average of 6.5%).

Sustained Momentum- The state has maintained consistency over the last three years 2021–22- 15.91%, 2022–23- 14.47%, 2023–24- 13.34%

Sectoral Analysis- The Engines of Growth

Manufacturing and Industrial Powerhouse- The secondary sector is the core driver, characterized by high employment and export capabilities.

Comparative Advantage- In the last four years, manufacturing GSDP rose by ₹1.46 lakh crore, which is nearly double the increase recorded by Maharashtra (₹0.71 lakh crore).

Growth Rate- Ranked 1st nationally in four-year average real manufacturing growth (9.38%).

Employment Hub- Hosts 40,121 factories. Employs 24.75 lakh factory workers (Top national position in factory employment).

MSME Ecosystem- Ranks 3rd nationally with over 39 lakh Udyam-registered MSMEs.

Export Leadership- Merchandise exports nearly doubled from $26.15 billion (2020–21) to $52.07 billion (2024–25).

Sectoral Leader- Electronics, Textiles, and Leather.

Runner-up- Engineering exports.

Infrastructure & Energy

Industrial Corridors- The only state where *every* district is covered under one or more industrial corridors.

Power Capacity- Installed capacity rose from 35,139 MW to 42,772 MW (2021–25), ensuring energy security for industries.

Services Sector & Investment Climate

The services sector complements the industrial base, transitioning towards a knowledge economy.

GVA Contribution- Services contribute 53.6% to the State's Gross Value Added (GVA).

Growth (2024–25)- Recorded a real growth of 11.3%.

Key Sub-sectors- Public Administration- 14.2%, Real Estate- 12.42%, Transport & Communication- 11.29%

FDI Inflows- Consistently ranks among top states for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI Equity inflows increased to **$3,681 million** in 2024–25, defying the national trend of declining FDI.

Global Investors Meet 2024- Signed 631 MoUs worth ₹6.64 trillion.

Overseas Outreach- Commitments of ₹23,000 crore secured from the U.S., U.K., and Germany.

Human Capital and Social Welfare (The "Dravidian Model")

The state's unique selling point is its "Welfare-Led Social Development," ensuring that economic gains translate into human development.

Key Welfare Schemes

Women's Empowerment- Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thittam (Financial assistance), Magalir Vidiyal Payanam Thittam (Free bus travel for women).

Education & Youth- *Naan* Mudhalvan Thittam (Skill development), *Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme* (Nutrition/School attendance).

Social Security- Mudhalvarin Kaakkum Karangal *Scheme*.

Human Development Outcomes

Education

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)- Ranks 1st in higher education at 47% (National Avg- 28.4%).

Female GER- Ranks 3rd at 47.3%.

Institutions- Highest number of technical institutions (955) in India.

Health

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)- Low at 12 per 1,000 live births.

Life Expectancy- Ranks 3rd nationally at 73.4 years.

Poverty- One of the lowest Multidimensional Poverty levels in India at 1.43%.

Fiscal Stability and Rankings

Despite high welfare spending, the state has maintained fiscal prudence.

Rankings

1st- Export Preparedness Index.

2nd- Credit-Deposit Ratio (120.5%), indicating high lending for economic activity.

3rd- Per Capita NSDP Income (₹3.62 lakh).

Fiscal Health

Fiscal Deficit- Projected at 3% of GSDP (2025–26), adhering to fiscal discipline targets.

Debt Management- Debt-to-GSDP ratio declined from 27% (2021–22) to 26% (2024–25), despite reduced central transfers.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's trajectory offers a blueprint for inclusive capitalism. By leveraging a highly skilled workforce, robust infrastructure, and a welfare-oriented governance structure, the state has insulated itself from global uncertainties. With sustained growth in manufacturing and services, alongside controlled inflation and fiscal deficits, Tamil Nadu is firmly on course to achieve its ambitious target of becoming a $1 trillion economy by 2031.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-broad-based-development-model/article70399703.ece#-~-text=It%20also%20ranks%20first%20in,in%20achieving%20broad%2Dbased%20development.

2. MGNREGA needs reform but changes fray the safety net

General Studies 2- Polity/Governance

Topic- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Introduction

The Government of India has proposed a significant structural overhaul of the rural employment

GRAMG) Bill. This bill seeks to replace the existing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The primary objective is to modernize rural employment by increasing guaranteed workdays and integrating advanced technology. However, the proposed shift from a "demand-driven" model to a "normative allocation" model, coupled with changes in fiscal federalism (funding patterns), has sparked a debate on balancing efficiency with the sanctity of the social safety net.

Key Features of VB-GRAMG

The VB-GRAMG Bill introduces four major pillars of reform

Expanded Guaranteed Employment

Increased Duration- The bill promises 125 days of guaranteed wage employment per rural household annually, a significant increase from the statutory 100 days provided under MGNREGA.

Agricultural Synchronization- It introduces a 60-day restricted period during the peak sowing and harvesting seasons.

Rationale- This is designed to prevent labor shortages in the agricultural sector, ensuring that government schemes do not compete with private farming needs during critical crop cycles.

Advanced Technology Integration

To align with the vision of a "Digital India" and reduce system leakages, the bill mandates

Biometric Authentication- Mandatory for worker verification**.**

Real-time Monitoring- Utilization of GPS monitoring and mobile-based tracking of worksites**.**

Artificial Intelligence (AI)- Deployment of AI tools specifically for fraud detection and data analysis.

Objective- To enhance transparency and ensure accountability in the disbursement of wages, addressing long-standing complaints of ghost beneficiaries.

Restructured Fiscal Design (Funding Pattern)

A major shift in "Fiscal Federalism" is proposed

Centre-State Split- Unlike MGNREGA, which was primarily centrally funded, VB-GRAMG proposes a 60-40 cost-sharing ratio between the Centre and States.

Special Category Exceptions- The Centre will retain 90% funding only for Northeastern and Himalayan states.

Implication- This significantly increases the financial burden on state exchequers.

Allocation Mechanism (Top-Down Approach)

Normative Allocation- The bill envisages a model where the Centre allocates funds based on norms/estimates rather than real-time demand.

Shift from Legacy Model- This reverses the core ethos of MGNREGA, which was a bottom-up, demand-driven scheme where funds were released based on work demanded by the Gram Sabhas.

Critical Analysis and Implications

Strengths (The Case for Reform)

Enhanced Income Security- The provision of 125 days of employment directly translates to higher potential income for rural households, addressing rural distress more aggressively.

Reduction in Leakages- The alignment with NITI Aayog's recommendations for e-governance (AI, GPS) is expected to curb corruption, ghost workers, and fund misappropriation.

Support for Agriculture- By restricting public works during the 60-day sowing/harvesting window, the bill protects the agricultural supply chain, ensuring farmers have access to labor when it is most needed for food production**.**

Concerns (The Challenges)

Fiscal Burden on States- States with weaker fiscal health may struggle to meet the 40% matching grant.

Precedent- Similar issues were observed in the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), where delays in state subsidy payments led to scheme failures. If states cannot pay their share, wage payments to workers will be delayed.

Centralization Risks- Moving away from a demand-driven model to centralized (normative) allocation risks a mismatch between resources and needs.

Impact- High-demand districts might face under-provisioning of funds, undermining local planning. This contradicts the Ministry of Rural Development's own past evaluations favoring bottom-up planning.

Erosion of the Safety Net- Critics argue that repealing MGNREGA—a rights-based statute—dilutes the legal guarantee of work.

Political Optics- There is apprehension that this may weaken the safety net for marginalized groups (SC/ST/Women) who rely heavily on this scheme for survival.

Way Forward

To ensure VB-GRAMG succeeds without compromising social security, the following measures are recommended-

Flexible Funding Model- The Centre should consider retaining full or majority funding (beyond 60%) for economically backward states to prevent wage delays that could cripple the scheme's credibility.

Hybrid Planning Approach- Balance the top-down allocation with local demand sensitivity. Mechanisms must be in place for districts and Gram Sabhas to communicate real-time spikes in employment demand to the Centre.

Inclusive Technology- While expanding AI and biometric oversight, safeguards must be introduced to ensure technology does not become an exclusion error for illiterate, elderly, or digitally unskilled workers.

Livelihood Safeguards during Restricted Periods- Careful monitoring is required to ensure the 60-day agricultural restriction does not leave landless laborers (who do not own farms) without income during those months. Complementary skill development and alternative livelihood programs should be introduced to build rural resilience.

Institutionalized Accountability- Establish an independent monitoring body to conduct periodic social audits. Reports on employment generation, fund utilization, and social impact should be made publicly accessible to maintain trust.

Conclusion

The VB-GRAMG Bill represents a bold step towards modernizing India's rural employment framework through technology and increased workdays. However, the shift in fiscal burden to states and the centralization of allocation pose significant risks. For the reform to be truly effective, it must adopt a balanced approach that combines administrative efficiency with the flexibility of local demand, ensuring that the safety net for the most vulnerable remains intact.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/nrega-needs-reform-but-changes-fray-safety-net-10422041/

Editorial of the Day – 17.12.2025

Index

1. The Three Revolutions Reshaping American Power(TH)

General Studies 2- International Relation

Topic- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Introduction- The Architecture of Cruelty

The text argues that the United States is undergoing a fundamental transformation in its statecraft, characterized by a unifying thread called the "Architecture of Cruelty." This framework is defined not as accidental harm, but as a system where harm is foreseen, normalised, and deliberately deployed.

This shift is driven by the alignment of three major developments-

Secretary of State Marco Rubio's Proposal- A suggestion to reshape the G-20 into an exclusive inner caucus, marginalising emerging economies.

The 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS)- A formal document reflecting a shift towards ideological exclusion and security-first logic.

The Heritage Foundation's Blueprint (Restoring America's Promise 2025–26)- A policy roadmap providing the ideological foundation for these changes.

Together, these signal a coordinated restructuring of political morality, foreign policy, and global economic governance.

Revolution I- The Shrinking of Civic Space (Internal Rupture)

This revolution fundamentally alters the domestic moral and bureaucratic landscape of the U.S.

Dismantling Moral Foundations- The political project of Mr. Trump has replaced traditional civic restraint and responsibility. Transgression is now viewed as authenticity, and the erosion of shame is utilised as a political asset.

The New Security Doctrine (2025 NSS)- Cultural cohesion, ideological alignment, and demographic stability are redefined as national security imperatives. Domestic culture is framed through a security lens, treating independent institutions not as correctives but as obstacles to sovereign autonomy.

Bureaucratic Overhaul-The Heritage blueprint advocates for a massive institutional remake. This includes ideological vetting and large-scale personnel turnover to ensure alignment with the new agenda.

Permissive Cruelty- Hardship resulting from administrative purges and punitive regulations is absorbed into governance. Suffering is met with indifference rather than recognised as harm.

Revolution II- Foreign Policy Based on Conditionality (External Shift)

The 2025 NSS marks a sharp departure from the traditional U.S. role of providing institutional stability.

Transactional Alliances-Alliances are no longer assumed permanent; they are treated as conditional contracts. Obligations are constantly reassessed based on immediate utility rather than shared long-term values.

Revival of the Monroe Doctrine- Prioritisation of the Western Hemisphere over traditional focuses like Europe or the Indo-Pacific. Signals a return to regional dominance rather than global management.

Migration as Security- Migration is elevated from a domestic policy issue to a core national security threat, reshaping foreign policy priorities to focus on border control.

Institutional Downgrading- International bodies (e.g., UN, WTO) are recast as constraints on U.S. sovereignty rather than amplifiers of U.S. power. Multilateralism is viewed as a violation of sovereignty; allied cooperation is judged by ideological conformity rather than capability.
Selective Dominance- The strategy is neither pure isolationism nor realism. It is assertion where leverage is high and retreat where costs rise.
Systemic Impact- This leads to fragile alliances, emboldened revisionist powers, and a fragmented global order.

Revolution III- Economic Restructuring (Inequality by Design)

The economic revolution seeks to institutionalise a tiered global economy.
Concentrated Governance- Rubio's G-20 proposal signals a division between "rule-makers" (powerful states) and "rule-takers" (emerging economies). Decision-making on critical issues like debt relief, trade, and climate finance is narrowed to a small, exclusive group.
Hemispheric Economics & Sovereignty- The NSS promotes reshoring and industrial sovereignty, aiming to anchor growth within North America. Tariffs are used as leverage, and globalisation is treated as a strategic risk.
Unequal Burdens- Countries with weak bargaining power face harsher debt terms, politicised supply chains, and restricted capital access. The burden of inflation and export disruption falls disproportionately on workers globally.
Systemic Cruelty- Economic pain is deliberately uneven; it functions as a tool to stabilise a hierarchical global order.

The Return of Imperial Logic

All three revolutions are underpinned by a mindset that echoes colonial logic, though updated for the modern era.
Colonial–Imperial Mindset- A return to a hierarchical worldview where power confers entitlement. The strong impose costs, while the weak are expected to absorb them.
Structural Domination- Unlike territorial colonialism, this is an order built on exclusion and unequal burdens.
Institutional Codification- The 2025 NSS provides the bureaucratic language. The Heritage 2026 blueprint provides the ideological justification.
Cruelty as Logic- Suffering is not accidental; it is designed and embedded within policy execution as an organising principle.
The Emerging Order- The U.S. seeks to protect sovereignty through contraction, project power through hierarchy, and reshape governance through exclusion.

Conclusion

The restructuring of American power creates a global architecture of cruelty. The irony of this transformation is the universality of its harm. The victims of this reordering are not just in distant locations like Maputo or Dhaka, but also within the U.S., in places like Harlan, Kentucky. The effects of this policy shift extend outward across borders but ultimately return home, damaging the very populace the policies claim to protect.
Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-three-revolutions-reshaping-american-power/article70404219.ece

2. Indian Communism is 100 Years Old and It's Too Early to Write its Obituary(IE)

General Studies 1- History
Topic- Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present – significant events, personalities, issues.

Indian Communism at 100- Unfinished Business

Introduction

The year 2025 marks the centenary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), a milestone that stands in sharp contrast to the public fanfare surrounding the centenary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Once a formidable force capable of influencing national policy and ruling key states like West Bengal and Tripura, the Left now faces severe political marginalisation. Despite this decline, the movement leaves behind a complex legacy of land reforms and secularism, while the persistence of inequality suggests its core issues remain relevant.

Historical Trajectory of Indian Communism

Origins & Global Context- Indian communism was born out of the global political and intellectual upheavals following World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the rising tide of anti-colonial nationalist movements.

Key Leaders- The movement was shaped by foundational figures such as M.N. Roy, Singaravelu Chettiar, and S.A. Dange**.**

Early Influence (Pre-Independence)- Despite facing severe repression under British colonial rule, the CPI successfully mobilised diverse sections of society, including workers, peasants, students, and intellectuals. It played a significant role in shaping political and cultural discourse through robust mass organisations.

Peak Electoral Strength (Post-Independence)- The movement reached a zenith in 2004, commanding approximately 60 Lok Sabha seats. It held influential sway over national policy during the UPA government era. It maintained prolonged governance in strongholds like West Bengal and Tripura.

Reasons for Decline

The text attributes the steep decline of the Left to three primary structural and strategic failures-

Political Missteps- The decision to withdraw from the UPA coalition in 2008 is highlighted as a critical error. Tactical alliances, including occasional alignment with the BJP in opposition, weakened its ideological credibility**.**

Factionalism & Rigidity- Internal divisions and ideological rigidity prevented the formation of effective coalitions with other democratic forces, including the Congress.

Failure to Adapt- The Communists struggled to recalibrate their strategy in response to major geopolitical and domestic shifts, including The Sino-Soviet split. The trauma of Partition. The political rise of the BJP. The economic reforms of the liberalisation era.

Enduring Legacy

Despite its political contraction, Indian communism has left an indelible mark on the socio-political fabric of the nation

Land Reforms- The Left pressured governments to implement land redistribution, which fundamentally reshaped rural power structures and empowered the landless.

Secularism & Federalism- It has been a consistent defender of pluralism and decentralisation, offering staunch resistance to communal mobilisation.

Welfare & Social Justice- The movement played a pivotal role in the expansion of social welfare programmes and the codification of labour rights**.**

Cultural Impact- Beyond politics, it fostered a vibrant cultural ecosystem in literature, theatre, and cinema. It promoted rationalist thought and amplified the voices of the marginalised through egalitarian values.

Future Prospects

Persistent Relevance of Core Issues- The systemic conditions that originally gave rise to communism are still acute in 21st-century India- agrarian distress, widening income inequality, precarious labour conditions, and global economic instability.

Global Context- There is a renewed interest in socialist and left-wing ideas globally, offering a potential tailwind for revival.

Path Forward- Revival depends on three strategic pillars

1. Ideological flexibility to adapt to modern realities.
2. Strategic unity among the currently fragmented Left parties.
3. Coalition-building with progressive democratic forces.

Conclusion

Indian communism is currently facing its gravest crisis, battling existential marginalisation. However, its historical contributions to socio-economic reform and secular discourse cannot be erased. If Left parties can pivot from rigid dogma to strategic adaptation, the movement retains the potential to play a meaningful role in India's evolving political landscape**.**

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/c-raja-mohan-writes-indian-communism-is-100-years-old-and-its-too-early-to-write-its-obituary-10424059/

Editorial of the Day – 18.12.2025

Index

1. Rearguard Action- On Weather Change and Consistent Action(TH)

General Studies 3- Environment

Topic- Environmental pollution and degradation.

The Annual Fog–Pollution Crisis- From Seasonal Emergency to Chronic Failure

Introduction

India's winter fog season has ceased to be a mere weather phenomenon; it now heralds the return of an annual air pollution crisis. This recurring emergency exposes deep-rooted failures in urban air quality management. While the fog—driven by low temperatures and moisture—is natural, its toxicity is man-made. The season acts as a magnifier, revealing that the severe pollution spiking after the monsoon is not an isolated event but a symptom of chronic, year-round administrative negligence that affects millions across the Indo-Gangetic plains and beyond.

The Fog–Pollution Nexus

The Seasonal Cycle- The onset of the annual fog cycle triggers chaos across northern India. It is characterized by a sharp surge in Particulate Matter (PM) levels immediately following the monsoon.

Geographical Expansion- The crisis is no longer limited to Delhi-NCR. It encompasses the entire Indo-Gangetic plain and is expanding to coastal urban clusters like Mumbai and Kolkata, indicating a nationwide systemic failure.

The Mechanism- Fog formation is driven by low temperatures combined with high moisture. This moisture acts as a trap for residual emissions (pollutants), preventing them from dispersing. Consequently, AQI levels deteriorate sharply, turning a visibility issue into a toxicity crisis.

Crisis Magnitude and Public Impact

AQI Escalation- Base levels of Air Quality Index (AQI) hover between 300–400 (Very Poor). During fog episodes, these levels frequently escalate to 400+ (Severe and Severe+).

Psychological and Health Impact- While fog itself reduces visibility, its combination with pollutants compounds health risks. This intensifies public panic among citizens who are already suffering from prolonged exposure to chronic toxic air. Daily life and mobility are severely crippled during peak episodes.

The Cost of Inaction- Accidents and Disruptions

The pollution-induced fog has tangible, deadly consequences for transport and safety-

Road Tragedies

Uttar Pradesh- Reported at least 25 deaths and 59 injuries directly linked to fog-related accidents.

Yamuna Expressway- A catastrophic multi-vehicle pile-up in Mathura resulted in a deadly inferno, highlighting the danger of high-speed travel during low-visibility periods.

Aviation Paralysis- Delhi's aviation sector faced a meltdown with 228 flights cancelled (131 departures and 97 arrivals). Hundreds of flights faced delays, leaving thousands of passengers stranded and paralyzing air connectivity.

Policy Response- Governance Gaps and Reactive Measures

The administrative response follows a predictable, reactive pattern rather than a proactive strategy.

Emergency Protocols (GRAP-4)- Implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-4) includes bans on construction/demolition, shifting schools online, and restricting vehicle movement.

Symbolic Enforcement- Measures such as "fuel denial without PUC" and curbs on BS-6 vehicle entry are criticized as symbolic threats rather than effective deterrents.

The Core Failure- Current measures ignore residual emissions trapped by moisture—the primary driver of the AQI collapse. Central high-level meetings often result in repeating unimplemented advisories rather than enforcing strict compliance.

Institutional Role (CAQM)- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) is urged to assert its independence. The goal must be to maintain AQI below 350 through year-round controls, rather than scrambling only when weather conditions worsen.

Conclusion

The recurring fog–pollution emergency is a clear indictment of India's current environmental governance. It underscores those reactive bans and symbolic threats are insufficient against a crisis of this magnitude. To prevent further visibility-related deaths, flight disruptions, and health hazards, there must be a shift towards systemic, year-round action. An empowered and independent CAQM must focus on curbing emissions at the source throughout the year, ensuring that adverse weather does not automatically translate into a public health disaster.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/rearguard-action-on-weather-change-and-consistent-action/article70407515.ece#-~-text=The%20Centre%20announces%20a%20spate,Delhi's%20AQI%20stays%20below%20350.

2. SC Advisory Opinion on Governor's Role is Flawed, let it Stay Advisory(IE)

General Studies 2- Polity & Constitution

Topic- Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.(Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.)

Governor's Role in Granting Assent to Bills (Supreme Court Advisory Opinion 2025)

Introduction

The role of the Governor in granting assent to State Bills has recently come under judicial scrutiny following an Advisory Opinion of the Supreme Court delivered under Article 143. This opinion addresses the "constitutional silence" regarding time limits in Article 200. While the Court maintained judicial restraint by refusing to fix rigid timelines, the decision has sparked a debate on whether it inadvertently legitimises executive inaction, thereby undermining the federal balance and the supremacy of elected legislatures in a parliamentary democracy.

Background to the Dispute

Pattern of Delayed Assent- There has been a recurring trend of Governors delaying assent to Bills for extended, undefined periods. These delays are often perceived as politically selective, disproportionately affecting Opposition-ruled States, which exacerbates Centre-State friction.

The Tamil Nadu Episode- Governor R.N. Ravi withheld assent to multiple Bills for nearly three years. The State government challenged this in the Supreme Court, arguing it violated democratic norms and constitutional morality.

Preceding Judgment (April 2025)- A two-judge Bench ruled that Governors cannot indefinitely withhold Bills. It suggested a "reasonable timeframe" (generally three months) and introduced the principle of "deemed assent" if the Governor remains inactive.

Presidential Reference- Seeking clarity on this judgment, the Union government invoked Article 143, asking if courts have the power to mandate timelines for high constitutional authorities like the Governor or President.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court (Advisory Opinion)

No Fixed Judicial Timelines- The Court ruled that prescribing mandatory, fixed timelines would constitute judicial overreach into the domain of constitutional functionaries.

Constitutional Options Under Article 200- The Governor has three specific courses of action

1. Grant assent to the Bill.
2. Withhold assent and return the Bill to the legislature (with a message), provided it is not a Money Bill.
3. Reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.

Scope for Limited Judicial Intervention- Courts can issue a "limited mandamus" directing the Governor to act only in cases of "prolonged, unexplained, and indefinite inaction." However, the Court cannot examine the merits or wisdom of the Governor's decision itself. *Note-* As an advisory opinion, this is non-binding in nature.

Issues and Concerns Raised

Ambiguity Surrounding 'Reasonable Time'

Lack of Definition- The opinion fails to define objective parameters for what constitutes "prolonged" delay or set an outer limit.

Consequences- This ambiguity perpetuates uncertainty. For instance, Bills have been pending for nine years in West Bengal and three years in Tamil Nadu.

Departure from Constituent Assembly Intent- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Vision (May 31, 1949)- He explicitly stated that the Governor is a "nominal and ornamental head" with no independent discretion.

Executive Subservience- All executive functions must be performed on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

Critique- The advisory opinion seemingly elevates the Governor above this design, diluting legislative primacy.

Democratic and Federal Implications

Legitimacy Deficit- Governors are unelected Centre nominees, whereas State legislatures hold a popular mandate.

Undermining Federalism-** Prolonged delays act as an "informal veto," allowing indirect central influence over State legislation and weakening cooperative federalism**.**

Contradiction of Precedents- Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)- Governor must act on ministerial advice. Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker (2016) - Gubernatorial discretion must be narrowly interpreted.

Analysis of the Opinion

Arguments Supporting the Opinion- Separation of Powers It prevents the judiciary from intruding into the functioning of high constitutional offices.

Respect for Silence- It respects the specific "constitutional silence" left by the framers regarding timelines.

Arguments Critiquing the Opinion

Constitutional Paralysis- It risks enabling paralysis through deliberate inaction.

Lack of Accountability- It weakens the accountability of an unelected office.

Politicisation- It risks converting the Governor's office into a political tool against opposition-ruled states.

Way Forward

Judicial Clarification- A future Constitution Bench needs to establish measurable, objective standards for "reasonable time" to prevent abuse.

Legislative Reform- Parliament could consider codifying timelines for assent within the Constitution to ensure clarity while preserving the federal balance.

Reinforcing Constitutional Morality- Governors must operate as impartial heads, guided by democratic norms rather than political expediency.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's advisory opinion reflects institutional restraint but stops short of resolving the core issue- indefinite gubernatorial inaction. By failing to engage deeply with the Constituent Assembly's intent, the opinion risks normalising executive delay as a legitimate constitutional tool. In a parliamentary democracy, the silence of an unelected authority cannot be permitted to override the will of an elected legislature. Clear guidance—whether constitutional or legislative—is imperative to safeguard federalism and democratic accountability.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/sc-advisory-opinion-on-governors-role-is-flawed-let-it-stay-advisory-10425829/

Editorial of the Day – 19.12.2025

Index

1. Temporary relief- On trade performance, deeper distress ahead(TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Effects of liberalization on the economy; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth (Export-Import Policy).

India's Export Surge and Trade Deficit Dynamics (December 2025)

Introduction- Recent trade data for India presents a paradoxical scenario. While merchandise exports have surged significantly, providing short-term economic relief, this growth rests on fragile foundations. The reduction in the trade deficit, driven partly by a weakening rupee and contracting imports, masks deeper structural vulnerabilities such as unsustainable cost-absorption by exporters and slackening domestic demand.

Strong Headline Numbers vs. Underlying Reality

Significant Export Growth- Merchandise exports witnessed a sharp rise of 19.4% in November 2025, reaching $38.1 billion—the highest figure for this month in a decade.
Resilience in the US Market- Despite steep tariffs, exports to the United States grew by 22.6% year-on-year to $6.98 billion (a 10.7% increase from October).
Cautionary Note- While these figures offer relief to the government, they should not lead to complacency as the underlying drivers are precarious.

The Hidden Cost of Tariff Resilience

Absorbing the Tariff Shock- The surge in US-bound exports is occurring despite 50% tariffs. This is largely because Indian exporters are absorbing the extra costs rather than passing them on to buyers.
Strategic Rationale- Exporters are maintaining this strategy in hopes that the tariffs are temporary; they fear that passing on costs now would lead to a permanent loss of customers.
Sustainability Concerns- This financial buffer is finite. If high tariffs persist, exporters will run out of capacity to absorb losses, threatening future volumes.

Structural Stress on MSMEs and Supply Chains

Vulnerability of Small Players- A significant portion of India's exporters are Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in labour-intensive sectors. They lack the deep pockets required to sustain prolonged losses.
Limited Impact of Currency Depreciation- While the weakening rupee helps export competitiveness, it offers only partial relief. It is insufficient to offset the massive tariff disadvantages India faces compared to global competitors.
Supply Chain Rigidity- Reorienting supply chains to new markets takes time and cannot happen overnight. Early indicators suggest a potential drop in orders for January, signalling upcoming stress.

Import Contraction and Domestic Demand

Narrowing Trade Deficit- The reduction in the trade deficit is primarily due to a 1.9% fall in imports (down to $62.7 billion), rather than a structural improvement in export capabilities.
Sign of Weak Demand- Since India has limited domestic manufacturing capabilities for many goods, a drop in imports typically signals slackening domestic consumption and industrial demand.
Worrying Trend- This contraction is particularly concerning as it follows recent GST rate cuts, which were expected to boost consumption.

Policy Imperatives- Urgency Over Assurances

Need for Action- The government has acknowledged the distress through the Export Promotion Mission, but detailed schemes are still pending.

Specific Recommendations

Credit Guarantee Schemes- Implementation of credit guarantees (similar to those used effectively during COVID-19) is preferred over simple loan repayment moratoriums to provide liquidity.

Contingency Planning- Given the unpredictability of US trade policy, India must prepare for a "worst-case scenario" rather than relying solely on diplomatic resolution.

Conclusion

Sustaining India's export momentum requires moving beyond temporary resilience measures. The convergence of prolonged tariff pressures, weakening domestic import demand, and financial stress on MSMEs demands swift and targeted policy interventions. Prudence lies in balancing the optimism of recent data with rigorous contingency planning to support the export ecosystem.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/temporary-relief-on-trade-performance-deeper-distress-ahead/article70411979.ece#-~-text=India's%20merchandise%20exports%2C%20hit%20by,in%20the%20last%2010%20years.

2. A Bold Step Amid an Ambitious Nuclear Energy Target(TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Infrastructure- Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

The SHANTI Bill, 2025 and India's Nuclear Roadmap

Introduction - Human development has historically tracked closely with energy consumption. As mapped by Earl Cook in his 1971 *Scientific American* paper, energy use has escalated through stages of human progress—from primitive hunting (food energy) to agriculture, industry, and technology. Today, we stand at a new frontier- the digital era, where the digitalization of the economy is creating massive, additional energy demands. The SHANTI Bill, 2025, represents a strategic legislative step to meet these demands through a robust nuclear energy roadmap.

The Correlation- HDI and Energy Consumption

Development Metrics- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of income, education, and health.

Energy-HDI Link- There is a strong correlation between HDI and per capita Final Energy Consumption (FEC). This relationship allows policymakers to estimate the energy required to achieve specific development goals.

India's Aspiration- As a G-20 member, India aims to reach an HDI above 0.9 (comparable to developed nations).

Projected Requirement- To achieve an HDI of 0.9, India needs to generate approximately 24,000 TWh of energy annually.

Breakdown- About 60% of this will be consumed as electricity. The remaining portion will likely be used to produce hydrogen via electrolysers.

Role of Hydrogen- Essential for decarbonising "hard-to-abate" sectors like steel, fertilisers, and plastics. Future electricity needs for hydrogen may decline if alternative low-carbon hydrogen technologies scale up.

Current Status- In 2023–24, India's total electricity generation was ~1,950 TWh with a CAGR of 4.8%. Sustaining this rate would take 4–5 decades to reach the target.

The Dual Challenge- Decarbonisation and Electrification

Transitioning to a high-energy future faces two simultaneous hurdles-

1. Decarbonising the energy mix

2. Expanding end-use electrification- Currently, electricity accounts for only 22% of Final Energy Consumption (FEC); this must rise significantly.

Limitations of Renewables & Need for Nuclear

India's existing energy mix is heavily fossil-fuel dependent. While low-carbon sources like hydro, solar, and wind are vital, they have inherent limitations-

Resource Constraints

Hydro & Wind- Potential is geographically limited.

Solar- High population density restricts the availability of vast land tracts required for solar photovoltaic deployment.

Intermittency & Storage- Solar and wind are intermittent. Managing seasonal variability requires large-scale storage, which is currently too expensive to be a standalone solution.

Baseload Requirement- To ensure affordable and reliable electricity, the grid requires baseload **capacity** (sources that operate independently of weather/time).

Conclusion- Nuclear power is the only low-carbon source capable of providing reliable baseload electricity to support renewable integration.

India's Indigenous Nuclear Capabilities

The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Indian industry have successfully indigenised the nuclear supply chain

Self-Reliance- Uranium is the only major input requiring imports due to insufficient domestic reserves. India has capabilities in fuel fabrication, heavy water production, and reactor equipment manufacturing.

PHWR Mastery- The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has mastered the design and operation of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) up to 700 MW capacity.

Status- 3 units operational, 1 nearing completion, 2 in advanced construction.

Expansion- 10 additional 700 MW units were approved in 2017 and are under progress.

Institutional Strength

Regulation- A dedicated regulatory body (AERB) established in the 1980s ensures safety.

Waste Management- Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed technologies for reprocessing spent fuel and managing nuclear waste safely.

The SHANTI Bill, 2025

To back the ambitious target of 100 GW installed nuclear capacity by mid-century, Parliament passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025.

Consolidation of Laws- It is an overarching legislation that consolidates provisions from The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010

Key Provisions

Legal Continuity- Deems the existing Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) as constituted under this new Act.

Liability- Clearly assigns primary responsibility for safety, security, and safeguards to the licensee operating the nuclear facility.

Significance- The Bill represents a bold policy signal of political commitment, providing the legal stability necessary to transition India into a developed nation.

Conclusion

Achieving high human development requires energy that is reliable, affordable, and clean. Given India's geographical constraints regarding renewables, nuclear power is not just an option but a necessity for deep decarbonisation. The SHANTI Bill, 2025, provides the critical institutional framework and policy confidence required to scale nuclear capacity and realize India's developmental aspirations sustainably.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-bold-step-amid-an-ambitious-nuclear-energy-target/article70412631.ece#google_vignette

3. The Teacher's Red Pen Should Open Minds, Not Shut Doors(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources**.**

Rethinking Teacher Authority for Inclusive Education

Introduction- The changing landscape of education demands a re-evaluation of the teacher's role, shifting from an authoritarian figure to a facilitator of inquiry. The metaphor, *"The teacher's red pen should open minds, not shut doors,"* encapsulates this necessary transition. While the "red pen" traditionally symbolizes evaluative power, discipline, and control, its rigid application can stifle curiosity and critical thought. This transformation is pivotal as India implements systemic reforms to make education more inclusive and inquiry-based.

Knowledge, Power, and Social Hierarchies

Historical Context- Thinkers like Francis Bacon and Michel Foucault have long established the link between knowledge and power. Historically, education has often served as a tool to reinforce power dynamics rather than dismantle them**.**

Inequality in Access- Unequal access to knowledge has entrenched social hierarchies, limiting social mobility for marginalized groups. In India, these disparities are visibly evident across lines of caste, gender, language, and region.

Assessment as Exclusion- Rigid assessment practices that focus binary "right or wrong" outcomes tend to reproduce existing hierarchies. When teachers function solely as evaluators, education risks becoming a mechanism of exclusion rather than a means of empowerment.

Pedagogical Shift- From Instructor to Facilitator

Alternative Tradition- The text advocates for a pedagogical approach where teachers act as facilitators, fostering an environment of inquiry, dialogue, and independent thinking.

Alignment with NEP 2020- This shift is in direct consonance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which prioritizes Development of critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Significant reduction of rote learning. Adoption of formative and competency-based assessments. Establishment of a learner-centric education model.

Assessment for Learning- NEP 2020 explicitly mandates using assessment as a tool for learning improvement rather than mere judgment or gatekeeping.

The Ethical Dimension of Teaching

Core Values- From an ethical standpoint, the profession of teaching is rooted in responsibility, empathy, and fairness.

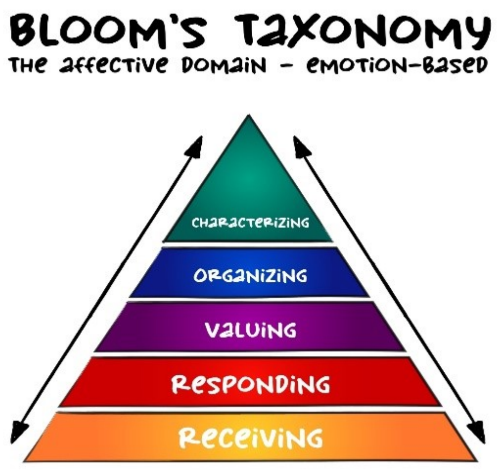
Dangers of Authoritarianism- Excessive reliance on authority figures discourages moral courage and intellectual autonomy in students.

Democratic Values- A respectful and balanced teacher–student relationship is essential for enhancing student dignity and confidence. This aligns with UNESCO's advocacy for education that promotes freedom of thought, scientific temper, and social responsibility—pillars essential for a pluralistic democracy like India.

Relevance in Contemporary Times

Combating Misinformation- In an era defined by information overload, misinformation, and conformity, the teacher's role is more critical than ever.

Breaking Conditioning- If learners are conditioned "not to question or disrupt," education loses its transformative potential.



Nurturing Key Traits- To prepare citizens who can uphold constitutional values (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), teachers must actively nurture Curiosity and a questioning attitude. Social awareness. The confidence to challenge unjust norms.

Conclusion

The discourse serves as a timely reminder that the ultimate goal of education is to liberate, not to discipline blindly. The "red pen" of authority must evolve into a tool for guidance rather than a mechanism for gatekeeping. As envisioned by the NEP 2020 and global frameworks, fostering a humane, inclusive, and dialogic education system is indispensable for India's continued social and democratic progress.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-teachers-red-pen-should-open-minds-not-shut-doors-10427737/lite/

Editorial of the Day – 20.12.2025

Index

1. The Significance of a Strong Defence Industrial Base(TH)

General Studies 3- Security/Economy

Topic- Security challenges and their management in border areas; Effects of liberalization on the economy.

The Significance of a Strong Defence Industrial Base

Introduction- India's vision to emerge as a developed nation by 2047 rests on two pillars- socio-economic transformation and robust strategic capabilities. At the heart of this strategic framework lies the Defence Industrial Base (DIB). Historically, India's defence sector suffered from a "policy imbalance" where domestic private participation was restricted while foreign imports were freely permitted, creating structural vulnerabilities. Today, a decisive shift is underway to reverse this trend, ensuring both economic growth and national security.

A Shift After Reforms- From Dependence to Resilience

Historical Context- For decades, restrictive policies curtailed the domestic private sector, fostering an overdependence on imports. This undermined national security and economic self-reliance.

Key Policy Reforms- Opening of the defence sector to private participation. Easing of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) norms. Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB). Expansion of procurement under the 'Make' procedure. Active promotion of innovation within the sector.

Visible Outcomes- Steady rise in domestic defence production. Exponential expansion of exports to over 80 countries. Emergence of a maturing ecosystem capable of integrating into global supply chains.

The Strategic Imperative- Why Self-Reliance is Non-Negotiable

Global Instability- Ongoing conflicts in Europe, West Asia, and Asia highlight the severe risks associated with global supply-chain disruptions.

Security Challenges- Facing persistent border and maritime challenges, self-reliance (Aatmanirbharta) in defence has become indispensable, not optional.

Emerging Opportunities

Geopolitical Shifts- Increased defence spending in Europe creates new demand.

Cost-Efficiency- There is a growing global demand for cost-effective defence platforms.

Strategic Location- India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and its growing diplomatic footprint enhance its credibility as a global supplier.

Simplifying Procedures- The Path to ₹50,000 Crore Exports

To achieve the export target of ₹50,000 crore by 2029, reform momentum must be sustained.

Addressing Regulatory Complexities- Current regulations constrain private sector participation, particularly for MSMEs and Startups. Processes for export licensing, Joint Ventures (JVs), and Technology-Transfer (ToT) approvals need to be faster and clearer.

Building Investor Confidence- Long-term demand projections are essential to enable large-scale private investments.

Redefining DRDO's Role

DRDO Focus- Should shift exclusively to frontier research.

Industry Role- Production, scaling, and commercialization should be handed over to the industry. Significance- This aligns with global best practices and enhances competitiveness.

Dedicated Facilitation Agency- Need for a dedicated defence export facilitation agency staffed with professionals.

Function- Provide a single-window interface for global partners, addressing inter-ministerial coordination gaps.

Key Steps to Strengthen the Ecosystem

Comprehensive reforms are needed in financial, testing, and certification frameworks to support manufacturing.

Financial Reforms

Issue- Indian firms face constraints due to limited access to competitive credit.

Solution- Introduce specialised export financing instruments to ease capital constraints.

Strategic Financing- Greater use of Lines of Credit (LoC) and Government-to-Government (G2G) agreements to build buyer confidence.

Testing and Certification

Infrastructure- Expanding integrated testing facilities will reduce delays and lower compliance costs for private players.

Standards- Overly stringent domestic standards should be rationalized. Adopting international certification protocols is crucial for global acceptability.

Service Commitments- Offering long-term service commitments alongside hardware sales strengthens India's reputation as a reliable partner.

Conclusion

A strong defence industrial base does more than ensure security; it reduces import dependence, creates high-skilled employment, and enhances India's geopolitical leverage. While recent progress is encouraging, the moment demands consistent efforts to deepen reforms. Building an ecosystem that actively promotes innovation and investment is a defining stride in India's journey toward becoming a confident and influential global power.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-significance-of-a-strong-defence-industrial-base/article70416769.ece#-~-text=The%20pursuit%20of%20a%20strong,capable%20and%20influential%20global%20power.

2. Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAMG)(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

Before criticising VB-G RAM G, Punjab gave only 26 days' work this year under MGNREGS, says BJP's Sunil Jakhar

Introduction

The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), abbreviated as VB-GRAMG, represents a significant reform in India's rural employment landscape. It aims to modernize and strengthen social protection by addressing the structural limitations of the existing MGNREGA framework. By providing statutory guarantees for wage employment and explicitly linking work to the creation of productive assets, the mission seeks to balance immediate livelihood security with long-term rural resilience.

Key Features and Reforms

Legal Guarantee of Employment

Enhanced Mandate- The Bill statutorily guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household annually (an increase from the traditional 100 days).

Unemployment Allowance- It introduces a mandatory unemployment allowance if work is not provided within 15 days of application.

Removal of Disentitlement- The Bill actively removes earlier disentitlement clauses present during the MGNREGA era, ensuring that rights are enforceable rather than discretionary.

Integration with Rural Asset Creation

Productive Focus- Employment generation is strictly linked to the creation of productive public assets.

Target Areas-Water security (water conservation and harvesting). Core rural infrastructure (roads, connectivity). Livelihood-related infrastructure. Climate resilience works.

Dual Benefit- This approach ensures that expenditure leads to both immediate income support for workers and long-term developmental capital for the village.

Addressing Structural Weaknesses

Governance Reform- The framework focuses heavily on transparency, grievance redressal, and accountability.

Global Best Practices- It aligns with recommendations from the World Bank (2022) and NITI Aayog by institutionalizing timely grievance resolution mechanisms and robust monitoring systems.

Local Planning and Cooperative Federalism

Decentralized Planning- Gram Panchayats retain the primary authority over planning works based on local needs, supported by state and district administration.

National Stack- Works are aggregated into the Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack. This digital infrastructure enhances visibility and coordination without centralizing the decision-making power.

Synergy with Agriculture- States are empowered to notify peak agricultural periods. During these times, public works can be adjusted to avoid labor shortages for farming activities, ensuring harmony with the local agrarian economy.

Technology and Accountability

Digital Enforcers- The Bill mandates the use of- Biometric authentication for workers. Geo-tagging of assets. Real-time monitoring dashboards.

Ghost Worker Prevention- Public disclosure serves as a check against "ghost workers" and leakages.

Participatory Oversight- Social audits conducted by Gram Sabhas are strengthened to ensure community oversight, balancing high-tech monitoring with grassroots democracy.

Fiscal and Policy Flexibility

Objective Allocation- Normative allocations are determined through objective criteria rather than arbitrary decisions.

State Flexibility- States are allowed to operationalize schemes within the statutory framework, promoting equitable resource distribution and the spirit of cooperative federalism.

Critical Analysis

Strengthening Social Protection

Enforceable Rights- Contrary to fears of dilution, VB-GRAMG enhances worker rights by making entitlements legally enforceable and closing existing loopholes.

Poverty Alleviation- By enhancing livelihood security, it contributes directly to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth, aligning with findings from the ILO (2023) and Economic Survey 2025.

Balancing Employment and Productivity

Resilience over Relief- By linking wages to asset creation, the scheme shifts from mere relief work to building rural resilience.

Labor Harmony- The provision to pause works during peak agricultural seasons addresses the long-standing complaint of farmers regarding labor unavailability during sowing and harvesting.

Modern Governance and Efficiency

Tech-Enabled Inclusion- It incorporates technology for transparency while maintaining flexibility for exception handling, ensuring legitimate beneficiaries are not excluded due to technical glitches.

Aggregation- The "Stack" approach prevents the fragmentation of works, addressing chronic inefficiencies often observed in rural schemes.

Fiscal Prudence and Decentralization

Rules-Based- The move towards rules-based fiscal allocation ensures financial discipline.

Empowerment- It strikes a pragmatic balance between central oversight (for standards and funding) and decentralized planning (for implementation and relevance).

Conclusion

The VB-GRAMG Bill is not a retreat from the state's responsibility but a renewal and modernization of the rural employment guarantee. By combining a legal mandate for 125 days of work with a focus on productive assets, technology-driven accountability, and cooperative federalism, the Bill seeks to transform rural wage employment into a mechanism that is effective, dignified, and sustainable for the future.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/vb-g-ram-g-punjab-26-days-work-mgnregs-sunil-jakhar-10429064/

Editorial of the Day – 22.12.2025

Index

1. Unlocking the Potential of India-Africa Economic Ties(TH)

General Studies 3- International Relations

Topic- Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. (India-Africa Relations, South-South Cooperation)

Introduction- A Paradigm Shift in Engagement

India's engagement with Africa is undergoing a strategic transformation, moving from historical cultural and political solidarity to a pragmatic, economics-driven partnership. This shift aims to create durable and sustainable long-term collaborations rather than short-term transactional interactions.

Renewed Momentum- The relationship has gained significant traction over the last decade, highlighted by the African Union (AU) becoming a permanent member of the G20 in 2023 under India's presidency.

Diplomatic Outreach- Recent high-level engagements include Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Namibia and Ghana (July 2025) and Ethiopia (December 2025). Note- The July itinerary also included Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, and Brazil, signaling a broader "Global South" outreach.

The Strategic Necessity- Diversifying beyond the West

Dependence on traditional Western markets poses economic risks, necessitating a pivot toward Africa.

Over-reliance on the West- In FY24, nearly 40% of India's exports were directed to the United States and the European Union.

Rising Volatility- Reliance on these markets exposes India to slowdown risks, demand fluctuations, trade protectionism, and policy uncertainty in the West.

Africa as an Alternative- African economies offer a vital avenue for export diversification due to their expanding markets and potential for sustained long-term demand.

Current Trade Dynamics and the Chinese Challenge

While India is a significant player, there is a substantial gap compared to China's dominance.

India's Position- India is Africa's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade approaching $100 billion.

1. Export Volume- $38.17 billion in FY24.
2. Top Markets- Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania.
3. Key Exports- Petroleum products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, rice, and textiles (constituting ~6% of Africa's total imports).

China's Dominance- China controls over $200 billion in bilateral commerce, supplying 21% of Africa's imports.

Key Chinese Sectors- Dominance in HSN 84 and 85 categories (machinery, electrical equipment, semiconductors).

Strategic Imperatives for 2030

To bridge the trade gap and deepen ties, India has set specific strategic goals.

Trade Targets- A clear goal to double trade with Africa by 2030.

Policy Measures- Reduction of trade barriers. Negotiating Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) and Comprehensive Economic Partnerships with African regional blocs.

Value Addition- A critical shift is required from low-value exports to value-added manufacturing, joint ventures, and cross-border production.

Leveraging AfCFTA- Utilizing the African Continental Free Trade Area platform to access a larger, integrated market rather than fragmented national markets.

Opportunities for MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises)

The African market presents a lower barrier to entry for Indian MSMEs compared to hyper-competitive Western markets, but specific support is needed.

Financial Support- Prioritize expanding Lines of Credit. Improve access to affordable trade finance to enable MSMEs to enter and scale.

Risk Mitigation- Implementation of local currency trade mechanisms to bypass dollar volatility. Creation of a joint insurance pool to mitigate political and commercial risks, encouraging participation from banks and smaller firms.

Logistics- Reducing freight costs through port modernization, better hinterland connectivity, and robust India–Africa maritime corridors.

Services Sector- Leveraging India's strengths in IT, healthcare, professional services, and skill development to generate high-value exports and catalyze digital commerce.

The Role of the Indian Public Sector (PSUs)

Private sector investment faces hurdles such as bureaucratic delays, political instability, and high financing costs. The public sector must act as a catalyst.

Current Investment Flaws- Existing investment footprints are often distorted by flows via Mauritius, driven more by tax avoidance than by genuine productive investment on the continent.

PSU Leadership- Public Sector Units must lead in high-risk, capital-intensive sectors, specifically mining and mineral exploration.

The "Crowding-In" Effect- PSUs can secure critical resources and reduce risk perceptions, effectively paving the way for subsequent private sector investment.

Conclusion

India's strategy must evolve from transactional trade to a multipolar economic partnership. As global supply chains reconfigure, Africa is central to India's global ambitions. The focus must be on recalibrating strategies to include investment in manufacturing, agro-processing, and critical technologies to ensure a "Long-term, Durable, and Sustainable" partnership.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/unlocking-the-potential-of-india-africa-economic-ties/article70423170.ece

2. New Job Law is Not a Retreat from Social Protection. It Aims to Reform(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance / Polity

Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Introduction

The passing of the VB-GRAMG Bill in December 2025 marks a significant pivot in India's rural welfare landscape, replacing the historic Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). While the original act was a lifeline for millions, providing demand-based wage employment, the new legislation introduces fundamental structural changes. However, the bill has sparked intense debate not just for its content, but for the hasty manner of its parliamentary passage, raising questions about legislative scrutiny, fiscal federalism, and democratic accountability.

Procedural and Democratic Concerns

The legislative process adopted for the bill has drawn criticism for undermining deliberative democracy.

Lack of Scrutiny- The Bill was passed via voice vote without being referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee. This bypassed the critical stage of detailed study, expert consultation, and clause-by-clause analysis.

Absence of Leadership- The debate saw the absence of key parliamentary figures, including the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, signaling a lack of high-level bipartisan engagement on a crucial issue.

Historical Parallels- The expedited nature of the passage mirrors the enactment of the controversial Farm Laws, highlighting a recurring trend where legislation is fast-tracked at the expense of transparency and consensus building.

Major Policy Shifts & Implementation Challenges

The Bill fundamentally alters the operating model of rural employment guarantee.

From Demand-Driven to Supply-Driven- *Old Model (MGNREGA)*- Legally guaranteed work based on rural household demand ("Right to Work"). *New Model (VB-GRAMG)*- Introduces "normative allocation", where funds are allocated top-down based on set norms rather than actual local demand.

Centre-State Fiscal Strain- The new framework mandates a 60-40 funding split (Centre covers 60%, States cover 40%). This marks a shift from the previous structure (where the Centre bore 100% of unskilled wage costs), potentially straining fiscally weaker states and leading to uneven implementation across the country.

Politicization of Funds- A centralized, normative allocation model risks political bias, where fund distribution could be influenced by political considerations rather than objective necessity.

Socio-Economic Implications

The reforms threaten the stability of the rural safety net that supports nearly 6 crore households.

Livelihood Security- MGNREGA acted as a shock absorber during crises (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) by generating hundreds of crores of person-days of employment.

Distress Migration- By guaranteeing local work, the scheme curbed distress migration to cities. A supply-constrained model may reverse this gain.

Rural Economy- Wage payments support rural purchasing power and asset creation. Abrupt policy shifts without safeguards could disrupt the fragile rural economic ecosystem.

Governance, Efficiency, and Technology

While the need for reform is acknowledged, the approach is contested.

Technological Legacy- The previous administration successfully integrated Aadhaar-linked payments and geo-tagging of assets to streamline the scheme and reduce leakages.

The Reform Dilemma- While streamlining and ensuring fiscal sustainability are valid goals, a consultative approach would have preserved these operational efficiencies while addressing the new fiscal targets.

Political Context and the Path Forward

Bipartisan Erosion- Rural employment guarantees have historically enjoyed bipartisan support. The lack of dialogue with opposition parties has fueled political polarization.

Risk of Policy Reversal- Rushing legislation without public feedback risks repeating the Farm Laws scenario, where lack of consensus eventually forced a policy rollback.

Conclusion

The VB-GRAMG Bill represents an ambitious attempt to restructure rural employment but is marred by "procedural haste" and potential threats to fiscal federalism. By shifting from a demand-based right to a supply-based allocation, the state risks weakening the safety net for the rural poor. For the reform to be successful and sustainable, it requires a balanced approach that restores the demand-driven character of employment, ensures adequate funding support for states, and respects the democratic process of parliamentary scrutiny.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/new-job-law-is-not-a-retreat-from-social-protection-it-aims-to-reform-10429491/

Editorial of the Day – 23.12.2025

Index

1. Himachal Pradesh Needs a Financial Boost(TH)

General Studies 3- Governance

Topic- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Himachal Pradesh Needs a Financial Boost- Valuing Ecosystem Services

Introduction

The State of Himachal Pradesh (HP) acts as a critical ecological custodian for India, preserving vast forest covers that provide benefits far beyond its borders. However, this stewardship comes at a significant financial cost to the state. This analysis explores the imbalance where mountain states bear high environmental costs while delivering national benefits, arguing for a fiscal correction that recognizes and compensates for these "Ecosystem Services."

The Core Argument- National Benefits vs. State Burden

The "Free Rider" Problem- Mountain states like HP protect forests that regulate climate, water flow, and biodiversity for the entire nation (especially the plains).

Disproportionate Burden- While the benefits are national (positive externalities), the costs—such as restricted land use, maintenance of slopes, and higher infrastructure costs—are borne almost exclusively by the state exchequer.

Early Insights- The narrative draws from the long-standing local sentiment that building infrastructure in fragile hills is cost-intensive and that the state is effectively subsidizing the nation's ecological security without adequate reimbursement.

Quantifying Forest Wealth- The Economic Case

Recent data supports the argument that HP's ecological contribution is massive and undervalued.

Total Forest Wealth- A 2025 report by the Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, estimates HP's total forest wealth at ₹9.95 lakh crore.

Annual Economic Value- The annual flow of benefits is pegged at ₹3.20 lakh crore.

Key Services Valued- Carbon Sequestration (mitigating climate change). Water Provisioning (critical for downstream states). Biodiversity Conservation. Regulatory functions like flood control and soil stabilization.

Policy Gaps and Fiscal Constraints

Despite the obvious value, current policies fail to translate ecological value into financial capital for the state.

Recognition without Compensation- India's regulatory framework acknowledges the importance of forests but lacks instruments to comprehensively compensate states for the "opportunity cost" of conservation.

Eco-centric Development Paradox- HP is expected to follow an eco-friendly model, but this restricts industrial revenue generation, leaving the state financially constrained.

FRBM Act Constraints- The FRBM Act, 2005, limits the state's borrowing capacity (fiscal flexibility) without accounting for the unique high-cost, low-revenue nature of an agrarian, mountainous economy.

The Loss of Special Category Status

A historical shift in fiscal federalism has exacerbated HP's financial woes.

Historical Context- HP was granted Special Category State status in 1971 due to its difficult terrain and strategic location. This ensured preferential financial assistance (higher grant-to-loan ratio).

The 2015 Shift- Following the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission in 2015, this special status was effectively withdrawn/diluted, reducing the flow of central funds.
Impact- Although some later adjustments were made, the core financial gap persists, leaving the state unable to fund development while maintaining ecological safeguards.

Evolution of Finance Commission Criteria

The criteria for tax devolution have evolved but remain insufficient for mountain states.
Green Bonus & Incentives- Previous commissions introduced concepts like "Green Bonuses" and incentive-based grants.
15th Finance Commission- It introduced a specific criterion for "Forest and Ecology" with a 10% weightage in the devolution formula.
The Gap- This calculation often relies on "dense forest cover," ignoring other vital ecological assets common in HP, such as Glaciers and Snowfields. Cold Deserts. Alpine Pastures. Rivers and Water Bodies.

Recommendations for the 16th Finance Commission

To ensure sustainable development and equity, the 16th Finance Commission must correct these historical limitations.
Enhance Weightage- Increase the weightage assigned to "Forest and Ecology" in the tax devolution formula beyond the current 10%.
Inclusive Methodology- Revise the definition of "forest" or "ecology" to include non-forest ecological assets (glaciers, alpine meadows) that contribute to national ecological security.
Compensate for Stewardship- Explicitly view financial transfers not as "aid" but as "compensation" for the ecosystem services provided to the rest of India.

Conclusion

Himachal Pradesh's forests are a national asset, but their preservation should not be a state liability. The path forward requires a shift from narrow fiscal formulas to a holistic valuation of natural capital. By empowering the 16th Finance Commission to recognize and pay for these ecosystem services, India can ensure a "Green Federalism" that rewards ecological stewardship and secures the environmental future of the nation.
Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/himachal-pradesh-needs-a-financial-boost/article70425669.ece

2. New Job Law is Not a Retreat from Social Protection. It Aims to Reform(IE)

General Studies 3- Environment
Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

Environmental Governance Failure- Symbolism vs. Substance

Introduction- The Paradox of Priorities

The current parliamentary session highlights a disturbing disconnect in Indian democracy- a fervent focus on the historical and cultural symbolism of *Vande Mataram* contrasted against a deafening silence on the substantive issue of India's toxic air. While the House debates a song that celebrates India's clean air and fertile soil, the reality outside involves a hazardous "Airpocalypse," particularly in Delhi. This raises critical questions about legislative priorities, accountability, and the gap between performative nationalism and actual governance.

The Disconnect- Cultural Symbolism vs. Environmental Action

Hollow Nationalism- *Vande Mataram* conceptualizes India as a nurturing motherland rich in nature (Sujalam, Suphalam). However, limiting the debate to historical interpretation without addressing the contemporary degradation of that very "motherland" renders the nationalism symbolic rather than substantive.

Missed Opportunity- Parliament failed to leverage India's cultural heritage as a moral foundation to drive modern environmental policy. The ideal of the "sacred geography" is being eroded by policy inaction.

Public Health- A Chronic Emergency

Air pollution has transitioned from a seasonal nuisance to a perennial public health catastrophe.

Grim Statistics- Citing *The Lancet*, the analysis notes that air pollution causes over 1.6 million premature deaths annually in India.

Global Warnings- The World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly flagged that India's pollution levels far exceed safe limits.

Legislative Apathy- Despite these figures, parliamentary discussions remain sporadic, indicating that public health is not yet a top-tier political priority.

Institutional and Governance Failures

The crisis is not due to a lack of laws, but a failure of implementation and institutional capacity.

Weak Regulators- State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) suffer from chronic understaffing and a lack of technical expertise.

Data Gaps- Air quality monitoring infrastructure is unevenly distributed, leading to data blind spots in rural and semi-urban areas.

Regulatory Non-Compliance- Major polluters, specifically thermal power plants, continue to violate emission norms with impunity, exposing the lack of teeth in regulatory enforcement.

Debunking the Economy–Ecology Trade-off

The editorial challenges the traditional view that environmental protection hampers development.

False Dichotomy- Narratives suggesting that job creation and infrastructure must come at the cost of the environment are flawed.

Economic Cost of Pollution- Poor air quality directly degrades labour productivity, increases the national healthcare burden, and reduces the quality of life, ultimately hurting the economy. Environmental protection is, therefore, an economic investment.

Constitutional Obligations and Rights

The state's inaction is a violation of the social contract and the Constitution.

Article 21- The Supreme Court has interpreted the Right to Life to explicitly include the right to a clean and healthy environment. Legislative inaction thus amounts to a constitutional failure.

Intergenerational Equity- By destroying the ecological base today, the state is violating the rights of future generations to inherit a livable country.

Flaws in Current Policy Approaches

Short-Termism- Reliance on emergency measures like the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), temporary bans, or AQI-based school closures are merely "band-aids."

Need for Structural Reform- Real solutions require long-term continuity Urban planning reforms. Energy transition to renewables. Massive expansion of public transport.

Democratic Feedback- Citizen protests (e.g., "Save Aravalli" or Delhi clean air protests) are democratic signals. Parliament must view these not as dissent but as feedback for policy correction.

Way Forward

Parliamentary Ownership- Establish regular, structured debates on climate and pollution, moving beyond the "Question Hour" formalities.

Institutional Autonomy- Empower Pollution Control Boards with financial independence, adequate staffing, and legal authority.

Airshed Management- Move beyond city-centric plans to an Airshed approach (managing pollution across regional geographic boundaries, e.g., the Indo-Gangetic Plain).

Clean Mobility- Accelerate Electric Vehicle (EV) adoption and public transport infrastructure.

Strict Enforcement- Implement time-bound, non-negotiable compliance for industrial emissions.

Conclusion

India's environmental crisis represents a governance failure as much as an ecological one. For India to be truly "Viksit" (Developed), Parliament must transition from symbolic debates to substantive leadership. True national pride is not found in rhetorical defense of the past, but in securing a healthy, breathable, and sustainable future for the citizens of the present.

Source- https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/new-job-law-is-not-a-retreat-from-social-protection-it-aims-to-reform-10429491/

Editorial of the Day – 24.12.2025

Index

1. End the exploitation - On the Supreme Court judgment, child trafficking(TH)

General Studies 1 - Indian Society **Topic -** Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism (specifically issues relating to women and children).

1. Introduction

Child trafficking stands as one of the most brutal manifestations of modern slavery, revealing a stark chasm between legal protections and the lived reality of vulnerable children. A recent December 19 judgment by the Supreme Court of India has brought this issue to the forefront, labeling it a "deeply disturbing reality." The Court's observations highlight the persistence of organized crime, sexual exploitation, and systemic enforcement failures, calling for urgent, coordinated action from both the State and civil society.

2. The Judicial Perspective - A "Deeply Disturbing Reality"

Context of the Judgment - The Supreme Court's observations arose from a case involving a minor who was sexually exploited by a trafficking gang in Bengaluru.

The Verdict - The Court upheld convictions under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, reinforcing that such crimes are not just legal violations but assaults on human dignity, bodily integrity, and constitutional rights.

Organized Nature of Crime - The Bench explicitly recognized the complex, layered structure of trafficking syndicates. These networks operate through distinct phases—recruitment, transport, harbouring, and exploitation—making detection difficult and prosecution complex.

3. Critical Guidelines on Child Testimony

The Supreme Court laid down significant directives regarding how courts should handle the testimony of trafficked minors to ensure justice is not derailed by technicalities.

Judicial Sensitivity - Courts must exercise extreme sensitivity and latitude when recording a child's statement.

Understanding Trauma - Minor inconsistencies in a child's narrative should *not* undermine their credibility. The Court recognized that children often struggle to narrate traumatic events with precise chronological accuracy.

Status of the Victim - A trafficked minor must never be viewed as an accomplice. Her testimony should be accorded the same evidentiary value and credence as that of an injured witness.

4. Systemic Failures - Data and Enforcement

Despite the existence of laws, the gap between legislation and implementation remains a primary hurdle.

Conviction Deficit - Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs reveals a glaring "deterrence gap." Between 2018–2022, while 10,659 trafficking cases were recorded, the conviction rate stood at a dismal 4.8%.

Need for Reform - Strengthening of Anti-Trafficking Units. Urgent need to pass a comprehensive Anti-Trafficking Bill to close legal loopholes.

5. Rehabilitation and Prevention

The response to trafficking must extend beyond the courtroom.

Holistic Rehabilitation - Post-rescue efforts must go beyond monetary compensation. True rehabilitation involves long-term psychological care, social reintegration, and skill development.

Education as a Shield - Prevention is the first line of defense. Ensuring children remain in school until age 14, as mandated by the Right to Education (RTE) Act, is critical to reducing vulnerability to traffickers.

6. New Age Challenges - The Digital Threat

Adaptive Crime - Trafficking is no longer limited to physical kidnapping; it has become "shape-shifting" and adaptive in the digital era.

Cyber-Exploitation - The internet is increasingly used for recruitment and exploitation. Authorities and social organizations must upgrade their capabilities to counter these evolving forms of cyber-enabled trafficking and forced child labour.

7. Conclusion

The Supreme Court's judgment serves as a wake-up call for systemic reform. To dismantle these entrenched networks, India needs stronger investigations, significantly higher conviction rates, and a judicial process that is sensitive to the trauma of victims. However, the ultimate solution lies in a societal shift—prioritizing prevention through education and protection. Only through the sustained resolve of the government and the active engagement of civil society can the dignity of children be truly safeguarded.

Source - [https -//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/end-the-exploitation-on-the-supreme-court-judgment-child-trafficking/article70429918.ece#google_vignette](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/end-the-exploitation-on-the-supreme-court-judgment-child-trafficking/article70429918.ece#google_vignette)

2. OTPs, FASTag, food orders - How digital breadcrumbs are reshaping policing in India(IE)

General Studies 3 - Internal Security **Topic -** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

Digital Residue and Crime Investigation in India

1. Introduction - The Era of Electronic Evidence

The rapid proliferation of digital platforms has fundamentally altered crime detection in India. Every online interaction creates a "digital footprint" or residue, creating a vast trail of electronic evidence. High-profile cases like the BlueChip scam and massive GST frauds have demonstrated that traditional policing is evolving into technology-enabled policing. Law enforcement now relies heavily on digital identifiers—from OTPs to food delivery logs—to trace suspects who are otherwise elusive.

2. Digital Footprints as Investigative Tools

Triangulation via Data - Criminals often switch phones, SIM cards, or locations to evade capture. However, they leave unavoidable traces through everyday transactions.

Sources of Evidence - Police utilize OTPs, ride-hailing app logs, food delivery history, and telecommunication tower data to triangulate movements.

Breaking Anonymity - Even if a suspect discards a SIM card, their login on a delivery app or a digital payment on a new device acts as a beacon for investigators.

International Parallels - The shift is global. For instance, in the 2025 Palisades fire case (USA), interactions with AI models like ChatGPT were utilized as admissible evidence, setting a precedent for AI-generated digital footprints in court.

3. The Rise of Sophisticated Cyber-Financial Crime

Scale of Frauds -

BlueChip Scam - A massive ₹1,000 crore fraud.

GST Frauds - Large-scale tax evasion schemes amounting to ₹5,300 crore.

Modus Operandi - These crimes leverage digital anonymity to move funds and coordinate logistics. The interconnectedness of cybercrime and traditional crime means that digital tools are now central to both the commission of the crime and its subsequent detection.

4. Regulatory and Legal Evolution (2025)

The government is proactively adapting the legal framework to close surveillance gaps.

SIM-to-Device Binding - The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has mandated that messaging platforms and banking apps bind the SIM card to the specific device, making it harder for fraudsters to clone accounts or use stolen SIMs on different phones.

Telecommunication Cybersecurity Amendment Rules, 2025 -

TIUE Framework - Introduces the concept of Telecommunication Identifier User Entity (TIUE).

Scope Expansion - This potentially brings app-based platforms (like Zomato, Swiggy, Amazon) under stricter regulatory oversight, recognizing them as critical data points for crime investigation.

5. The Privacy vs. Security Dilemma

The Trade-off - While digital evidence improves detection efficiency (high conviction potential), it raises significant concerns regarding Article 21 (Right to Privacy).

Data Access - Most platforms have privacy policies that allow data sharing with law enforcement. However, the lack of a "data protection law" specific to surveillance raises fears of -

1. Arbitrary access by police.
2. Lack of judicial oversight in data retrieval.
3. Potential misuse of personal data for profiling.

6. Way Forward

Robust Legal Framework - Establish clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the admissibility of electronic evidence in courts (under the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam) to prevent technical acquittals.

Specialised Cybercrime Units - Create dedicated units focused on blockchain tracing (for crypto frauds) and cyber threat intelligence, equipped with AI tools to analyze massive datasets.

Privacy Safeguards - Introduce checks and balances to ensure data access is lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Transparency in how digital evidence is accessed is vital for public trust.

Regulatory Compliance - Strictly enforce the TIUE framework and SIM-to-device binding across all digital service providers, including e-commerce.

Preventive Policing - Move from reactive investigation to preventive policing using AI and predictive analytics to flag suspicious transaction patterns in real-time.

Public Awareness - Educate citizens on Cyber Hygiene—the risks of digital footprints and secure online practices.

7. Conclusion

The digital age demands a paradigm shift in policing. The BlueChip and GST fraud cases serve as case studies for the necessity of data-driven investigation. However, as the state expands its surveillance capabilities through mechanisms like TIUE, it must simultaneously strengthen privacy safeguards. The goal is a balanced ecosystem where technology enhances justice without compromising civil liberties.

Source - [https -//indianexpress.com/article/explained/digital-breadcrumbs-reshaping-policing-10434859/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/digital-breadcrumbs-reshaping-policing-10434859/)

Editorial of the Day – 25.12.2025

Index

1. New Labour Codes, The Threats to Informal Workers(TH)

General Studies 2- Governance

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

New Labour Codes- Threats to Informal Workers (Summary & Analysis)

Introduction

The enactment of the four new labour codes in 2019 and 2020—covering Industrial Relations, Wages, Social Security, and Occupational Health & Safety—has drawn consistent opposition from trade unions. These codes were passed without the traditional tripartite consultation (Workers, Employers, Government) at the Indian Labour Conference (ILC). While the impact on the organised sector is widely debated, the unorganised sector, which constitutes 90% of India's workforce and contributes nearly 65% to the GDP, faces grave existential threats. This analysis highlights the specific dangers posed to informal workers, particularly in the context of Tamil Nadu.

The Myth of Universalisation and Consolidation

Misleading Claims- The Union Government claims the codes aim to consolidate laws and universalise social security. However, unorganised workers are largely excluded from all codes except the Social Security Code.
Repeal of Protections- "Consolidation" has led to the repeal or weakening of sector-specific laws that previously offered targeted safeguards.
BOCW Dilution- The Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996, a critical safeguard for construction workers, has been undermined, increasing vulnerability in the informal sector.

Erosion of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Protections

Removal of Safety Rules- Approximately 180 safety rules under the BOCW Act have been omitted from the new Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHWC) Code.
Weakened Enforcement- The shift from mandatory physical inspections to a web-based inspection system weakens the enforcement of safety standards and minimum wage laws, violating international labour standards.
Neglect of Occupational Diseases- The OSHWC Code ignores specific occupational diseases prevalent among informal workers, such as Silicosis (Construction workers). Cancer from pesticide exposure (Agricultural workers). Chronic ailments (Salt workers).
Lack of Policy- There is no comprehensive occupational health policy for the identification, treatment, and rehabilitation of work-related illnesses.
No ESI Coverage- With sector-specific laws repealed, unorganised workers lose access to Employees' State Insurance (ESI) coverage, leaving them without state-backed health mechanisms.

Unequal Social Security Framework

Disparity in Benefits- Organised Workers Receive clearly defined social security benefits. Informal Workers Relegated to vaguely worded "welfare schemes" without concrete legal guarantees.
Dismantling of Funding Sources- Post-GST reforms led to the abolition of sector-specific cesses (taxes dedicated to welfare). This has cut off funding for workers in beedi, salt, and mining sectors without any effective replacement.

Lack of Assured Funds- There is no longer a mandate for employer contributions or specific Union government support dedicated to informal worker welfare.

Centralisation and Threat to State-Level Welfare Boards

One-Size-Fits-All Approach- The Social Security (SS) Code proposes a single welfare board for all unorganised workers (excluding construction and gig workers), ignoring the unique needs of diverse sectors.

Central Control of Funds- The centralised e-Shram registration system raises fears that the Union Government aims to take control of accumulated welfare funds, estimated at ₹1 lakh crore.

Threat to Existing Boards- In Tamil Nadu, 39 sector-specific welfare boards face dissolution.

Absence of Saving Clauses- The new codes lack "saving clauses" to legally preserve existing State-level boards or benefits like old-age pensions, maternity support, and educational assistance.

The Tamil Nadu Context- A Model Under Threat

Robust Framework- Tamil Nadu has a pioneering welfare architecture under the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Act, 1982, built through decades of union struggle.

Coverage- The state has approximately 3 crore informal workers, with nearly 2 crores already registered across various welfare boards.

Contrast with Other States- While states like Andhra Pradesh have shut down welfare boards following the introduction of the new codes, Tamil Nadu has remained cautious and delayed framing rules to protect its system.

Conclusion & Way Forward

Preserve State Autonomy- To protect informal workers, State governments must safeguard their specific welfare boards and labour laws.

The Kerala Model- Tamil Nadu should emulate Kerala's approach by refraining from notifying rules under the new codes.

Demand for Saving Clauses- States must insist on legal provisions (saving clauses) that explicitly protect the existing, functional state-level welfare architecture from being dismantled by the central codes.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/new-labour-codes-the-threats-to-informal-workers/article70434603.ece

2. Aravallis Need the Supreme Court's Shield(IE)

General Studies 3- Internal Security

Topic- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

The Aravalli Verdict- Implications of the New "100-Metre" Definition

Introduction- The Aravalli Significance

The Aravalli Mountain range is one of the oldest geological formations in the world, stretching approximately 692 km across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. It is not merely a physical feature but a critical ecological backbone for Northwest India.

Ecological Functions- It acts as a natural "Green Wall," preventing the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert into the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Hydrology- It is a vital recharge zone for groundwater in the water-stressed North Indian belt.

Climate Regulation- Acts as the "green lungs" for the Delhi-NCR region, mitigating pollution and regulating local climate.

Judicial History- The Supreme Court has historically played a proactive role in protecting this region from illegal mining and encroachments.

The Core Controversy- The 100-Metre Criterion

The Supreme Court recently accepted a new definition of the Aravalli hills, restricting the classification to only those landforms above 100 metres in elevation. This shift has generated significant concern among environmentalists and scientists.

Critical Issues Highlighted in the Verdict

Massive Exclusion of Hill Areas (Data by Forest Survey of India - FSI)- The 20-Metre Baseline- Traditionally, hills above 20 metres were considered part of the ecological landscape.

Drastic Reduction- Under the new 100-metre rule, 91.3% of the 12,081 surveyed hills (above 20m) are excluded from protection.

Near Total Loss- If the total 1,18,575 identified hill structures are considered, over 99% fail to meet the new definition.

Result- The continuous mountain range is legally reduced to a few "scattered hills," stripping the vast majority of the range of its legal forest status.

Environmental & Ecological Implications

Accelerated Desertification- By losing protected status, the hills can no longer effectively serve as a barrier against the Thar Desert, threatening the fertile plains of North India.

Biodiversity Loss- The fragmentation of the range disrupts wildlife corridors and destroys habitats.
Groundwater Crisis- The Aravallis function as a watershed; opening these areas to development or mining will severely impact the water table in Haryana and Delhi.

Health Hazards- Ignoring occupational diseases (like silicosis) and pollution impacts contradicts the role of the hills in mitigating air pollution in the NCR.

Contradiction with Expert Opinions

Internal Disagreement- The verdict contradicts the warnings raised by the Court's own Amicus Curiae and the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

Ignoring Past Damage- The CEC's 2018 survey highlighted that the Aravallis have already lost 25% of their hills due to illegal mining. The new definition validates further destruction rather than arresting it.

Broader Legal and Policy Context

Constitutional & Legal Principles- Article 21- The right to a healthy environment is a fundamental right. Allowing the degradation of the Aravallis potentially violates this constitutional guarantee.

'Polluter Pays' Principle- The verdict risks diluting the strict accountability established in landmark cases like *MC Mehta v. Union of India (1996)*.

Weakening Statutory Protections- Environment Protection Act (1986) & Forest Conservation Act (1980) Limiting the geographical definition of "Aravalli" shrinks the area where these strict laws apply.

Open Season for Encroachment- The redefinition effectively regularises existing illegal encroachments and incentivizes new mining and real estate projects in ecologically fragile zones.

Way Forward

Judicial Review- The Supreme Court must reconsider the 100-metre criterion, prioritizing scientific evidence and Ecological Impact Assessments (EIA) over administrative convenience.

Holistic Definition- A definition based on ecological function (vegetation, hydrology, geology) is needed, rather than an arbitrary height limit.

Integrated Conservation- Afforestation- Aggressive greening projects along the Aravalli stretch.

Community Involvement- Strengthening community-based monitoring to check illegal mining.

Coordinated Urban Planning- A unified approach between Rajasthan, Haryana, and NCR authorities to prevent urbanization from consuming the hill range.

Conclusion

The Aravalli range is a hydrological and ecological lifeline for Northwest India. The acceptance of the "100-metre criterion" is a retrograde step that threatens to undo decades of environmental jurisprudence. To prevent inevitable desertification and ecological imbalance, the state and judiciary must adopt a science-based, holistic approach to conservation, rather than reducing nature to arbitrary numerical definitions**.**

Source- https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/aravallis-need-the-supreme-courts-shield-10437688/

Editorial of the Day – 26.12.2025

Index

1. Doping Menace- On Indian Sport and Dope Positive Cases(TH)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.(Sports Governance, Statutory Bodies (NADA), Health and Integrity in Sports.)

Doping Menace- A Credibility Crisis for Indian Sports

Introduction- The Paradox of Indian Sports

India aspires to become a global sporting powerhouse, aiming to host prestigious events like the 2036 Olympics. However, this ambition is severely compromised by a persistent doping crisis. India has repeatedly topped global charts for dope-positive cases, undermining its credibility. This issue is not merely about individual athletes erring but reflects deeper structural weaknesses in incentives, enforcement, and awareness within the country's sports ecosystem.

Doping as a Strategic Barrier

Credibility Crisis- India has been ranked as the country with the highest number of dope-positive cases for the third consecutive year.

Threat to Hosting Aspirations- India is preparing to host the 2029 World Police and Fire Games and the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games. High doping rates weaken the geopolitical leverage required for a successful 2036 Olympics bid. Reputational Damage- Persistent doping scandals erode international trust and cast doubt on the legitimacy of Indian athletes' achievements.

Statistical Reality- What the Data Reveals

WADA Report (2024)- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) data presents a grim picture

India- Recorded 260 Adverse Analytical Findings (AAFs) out of 7,113 tests, resulting in a 3.6% positivity rate.

Global Comparison- India far exceeded other nations like France (91 cases) and Italy (85 cases).

Testing Volume- Despite the high number of positive cases, India ranked only seventh in total testing volume, suggesting the problem might be even more widespread if testing were scaled up further.

Post-COVID Trends- The positivity rate has remained stubbornly high 2022- 3.2%, 2023- 3.8%

Official Response vs. Ground Realities

NADA's Stance- The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) defends the numbers, arguing that higher positivity is a result of expanded targeted testing. They highlight a dip to 1.5% positivity in 2025 (up to Dec 16) as a sign of improvement.

Initiatives Taken- Launch of the 'Know Your Medicine' app to help athletes check banned substances. Increased awareness drives across sporting camps.

Systemic Failures- Despite these measures, ground realities indicate a "systemic malaise" Frequent incident of athletes literally evading tests (running away from collection officers). Suspensions of support staff, indicating an organized culture of doping rather than isolated incidents.

Structural Incentives & The Root Cause

Perverse Incentives- The current reward system encourages "win at all costs"

Sports Quota Jobs- Guaranteed government employment for medal winners.

Cash Rewards- Massive financial incentives for podium finishes. These benefits often push athletes to take health risks and shortcuts via doping.

Legal Framework- The National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025 aims to strengthen the legal framework. However, laws are ineffective without strict enforcement.

Way Forward- Necessary Reforms

Institutional Independence- India must ensure NADA operates with institutional independence, free from political or administrative interference, a key requirement under International Olympic Committee (IOC) scrutiny.

Adequate Funding- Increased budget allocation for NADA to upgrade testing facilities and expand the testing pool.

Scientific Advancement- Investment in scientifically advanced controls and forensic intelligence to detect sophisticated doping methods.

Realigning Incentives- The sports ecosystem needs to value long-term athlete health and ethics over immediate medal tallies.

Conclusion

To secure its status as a sporting nation and protect its Olympic aspirations, India must treat doping as a systemic challenge rather than a peripheral lapse. A combination of a truly independent NADA, robust funding, and scientific capacity is non-negotiable. Ultimately, aligning athlete incentives with ethics and health is essential to sustain trust, performance, and legitimacy on the global stage.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/doping-menace-on-indian-sport-and-dope-positive-cases/article70437025.ece

2. After Year of Successes, ISRO Set for Big Leaps(IE)

General Studies 3- Internal Security

Topic- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

ISRO Set for Big Leaps- Technological Milestones & Future Outlook

Introduction- A Year of Strategic Evolution

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has concluded the year with landmark successes that underscore India's transition into a major global space power. Moving beyond isolated successes, ISRO has demonstrated a system engineering approach with incremental yet strategic advancements. From the LVM3-M6 heavy-lift launch to the collaborative NISAR mission, these achievements reflect a long-term vision focused on commercial dominance, international partnership, and the ambitious goal of independent human spaceflight through the Gaganyaan programme.

Key Technological Achievements

Heavy-lift Launch Capability (LVM3)

Record Payload- The successful LVM3-M6 mission deployed a 6,100 kg commercial satellite, marking ISRO's highest payload delivery to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

Dual-Orbit Mastery- Consecutive successes (LVM3-M5 and M6) prove ISRO's ability to launch heavy satellites to both LEO and Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO)—a capability previously limited to a few elite space agencies.

Technological Maturity- This signifies self-reliance in launching heavy communication and observation satellites, reducing dependence on foreign launch providers like Arianespace.

Commercial Space Leadership

Global Provider- ISRO has successfully launched 434 foreign satellites from 34 countries, establishing itself as a reliable, cost-effective global launch hub.

Policy Synergy- These milestones align with reforms under IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre) and NSIL (NewSpace India Limited), which aim to commercialise space activities and boost private sector participation.

Strategic Innovation & Scientific Missions

SpaDeX (Satellite Docking Experiment)

Capability- Tests autonomous docking and undocking of spacecraft**.**

Significance- This technology is the foundational building block for the future Bharatiya Antariksha Station (Indian Space Station), on-orbit satellite servicing, and interplanetary sample return missions.

NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar)

Collaboration- A high-end joint mission with NASA using dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar.

Applications- Critical for disaster management, monitoring climate change, agriculture, and water resource management.

Stature- Elevates India from a "beneficiary" of space data to an equal partner in high-end global space science**.**

The Gaganyaan Programme

Objective- To demonstrate independent human spaceflight capability.

Upcoming Focus- Uncrewed missions will validate the Crew Module safety, Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS), and human-rated launch vehicles.

Broader Policy & Economic Context

National Space Policy 2023- Recent achievements validate the policy's focus on capacity building and global competitiveness.

Strategic Autonomy- Enhanced launch capabilities reduce reliance on foreign systems for critical communication, navigation, and security needs.

Economic Potential- With the global space economy projected to exceed $1 trillion by 2040, India aims to capture a larger share through downstream applications (data usage) and space startups.

Challenges Ahead

Safety vs. Frequency- Balancing the high operational tempo of commercial launches with the zero-error tolerance required for human missions (Gaganyaan) is a significant operational challenge.

Space Debris & Sustainability- Increased launch frequency exacerbates orbital congestion. India must strictly adhere to UN COPUOS guidelines and debris mitigation policies.

Private Sector Integration- While frameworks exist, effectively managing regulatory oversight, intellectual property (IP) rights, and national security concerns within the private sector remains complex.

Resource Constraints- Deep-space and heavy-lift missions require continuous massive investment in cryogenic technology and ground infrastructure.

Way Forward

Human Spaceflight Readiness- Prioritize rigorous testing of crew escape systems and life support to ensure astronaut safety for Gaganyaan.

Reusable Technology- Accelerate development of reusable launch vehicles (RLV) and high-thrust propulsion to drastically reduce launch costs.

Space Diplomacy- Leverage the success of NISAR to forge further high-value partnerships for earth observation and climate monitoring**.**

Sustainability- Formulate national guidelines for active debris removal and end-of-life satellite disposal to ensure long-term orbital sustainability.

Talent Pipeline- Invest in academic collaborations to train the next generation of mission specialists and scientists to sustain this growth.

Conclusion

ISRO's recent trajectory is not just a series of launches but a calculated rise in technological depth. By mastering heavy-lift capabilities, entering the domain of space docking, and preparing for human spaceflight, India is firmly positioning itself as a dominant space power for the coming decade.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/after-year-of-successes-isro-set-for-big-leaps-10439210/lite/

Editorial of the Day – 27.12.2025

Index

1. Social scourge- On India and child marriages(TH)

General Studies 1- Society

Topic- Role of women and women's organizations, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.

Child Marriage in India- A Social Scourge

Introduction

Child marriage remains a critical barrier to development in India, undermining health, disrupting education, and perpetuating intergenerational poverty. While India has aligned its goals with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eliminate child marriage by 2030, the gap between policy intent and ground reality persists. Despite a decline in national figures, regional disparities and socio-economic vulnerabilities continue to challenge the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

India's Commitment and Policy Framework

Global Alignment- India is a signatory to the UN SDGs, explicitly committing to ending child marriage by 2030.

National Campaigns- The Union government recently marked the one-year anniversary of the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (Child Marriage Free India Campaign) with a focused 100-day nationwide awareness drive.

Intent vs. Reality- While there is strong policy intent backed by multiple schemes, achieving the zero-marriage target is still a "work in progress" due to implementation bottlenecks.

Trends and Progress

Statistical Decline- According to data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS**)**, the prevalence of child marriage has seen a significant steady decline

1. 2005–06- 47.4%
2. 2019–21- 23.3%

Uneven Progress- While national averages have improved, the progress is not uniform across all regions or social groups, masking deep-rooted issues in specific pockets of the country.

Regional Disparities

High Prevalence Zones- The practice remains alarmingly high among women aged 18–29 in specific eastern and northern states.

Critical States- West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura.

States of Concern- Significant numbers are also reported in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Root Causes- These geographical patterns are indicative of entrenched regional inequalities, cultural norms, and local socio-economic realities that differ vastly from better-performing states.

Poverty and Education Linkages

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has established a strong correlation between socio-economic deprivation and early marriage.

The Wealth Gap

1. Poorest Quintile- 40% of girls from the poorest families marry before age 18.
2. Richest Quintile**-** Only 8% of girls from the wealthiest families face the same fate.

The Education Shield

1. No Education- 48% of uneducated girls are married early.
2. Higher Education**-** The figure drops drastically to 4% for those with higher education, proving that schooling is a potent deterrent.

Legal Framework and Gaps

Primary Legislation- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 is the central law governing this issue.

Enforcement Issues- Low Conviction- Enforcement remains weak, with crime records data indicating infrequent application of the law and low conviction rates.

The POCSO Conflict- The strict application of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has led to unintended consequences, often criminalizing consensual relationships among adolescents rather than targeting forced child marriages.

Health and Social Consequences

Maternal & Child Health- Child marriage is directly linked to poor health outcomes for both the young mother and her child, including higher risks of stunting and maternal mortality.

Unsafe Healthcare- Fear of criminal prosecution (under POCSO or PCMA) often pushes underage girls toward unsafe, unregulated, and clandestine health services for reproductive needs.

Cycle of Vulnerability- These health risks compound existing social vulnerabilities, trapping families in a cycle of poor health and poverty.

Schemes and Implementation Challenges

Incentive Limitations- Cash-transfer schemes aimed at encouraging girls' education exist, yet states like West Bengal (which has such schemes) still report high incidence rates, suggesting financial incentives alone are insufficient.

Central Schemes- The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign needs to be recalibrated to better reach the most marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Infrastructure Deficit- Retaining girls in school requires more than just fees; it demands supportive infrastructure, including Clean and functional toilets. Safe transport options. Secure school environments.

Global and Developmental Implications

SDG Interdependence- According to the organization *Girls Not Brides*, 9 out of the 17 Sustainable **Development Goals** cannot be achieved without ending child marriage.

Holistic Approach Required- The policy-practice divide will persist unless India addresses the interconnected issues of poverty, education gaps, health risks, and gender inequality simultaneously.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Ending child marriage requires moving beyond legislation and singular schemes.

Multi-Pronged Strategy- Success depends on simultaneously addressing poverty, strengthening educational retention, and improving health access.

Infrastructure- Ensuring safe infrastructure for girls is non-negotiable.

Governance- Stronger implementation of existing laws, deep community engagement, and gender-sensitive governance are essential.

Final Goal- Only by aligning policy intent with ground-level practice can India protect the rights of the girl child and sustainably achieve its SDG commitments.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/social-scourge-on-india-and-child-marriages/article70440466.ece

2. Rebuilding Trust in Police, in Shadow of Doubt, Under Scrutiny(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Governance, Transparency, and Accountability; Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.(Police Reforms, Institutional Trust, and Accountability Mechanisms.)

Rebuilding Trust in Police- A Democratic Necessity

Introduction

Public trust is the cornerstone of democratic policing, essential for internal security and law enforcement legitimacy. Currently, Indian policing stands at a crossroads, striving to balance coercive authority with public engagement. The decline in public confidence, exacerbated by allegations of internal discrimination—highlighted by incidents like the suicide of a senior officer in Haryana—underscores deep systemic challenges. Rebuilding this trust requires a dual approach- addressing citizen expectations for service delivery and ensuring internal organizational fairness.

Policing and Democratic Accountability

Source of Authority- In a democracy, police authority is derived from public trust and consent, not merely from the power of the uniform or state coercion.

Citizen Expectations- Modern citizenry demands high standards of transparency, fairness, and responsiveness from law enforcement agencies.

Internal Accountability- Accountability is not just external; it also involves ensuring that officers within the force feel protected, valued, and judged solely on performance and merit, rather than identity or caste.

Operational Measures and Significance

Targeted Operations- Initiatives such as "Operation Trackdown" and "Hotspot Domination" are critical for curbing crime.

Focus- These target habitual offenders, illegal arms suppliers, and high-crime zones.

Symbolism of Action- Such operations serve a dual purpose- they demonstrate the state's presence and effectiveness while signaling a strong commitment to public safety.

Role of Technology- While technology is a force multiplier in policing, it cannot substitute ethical leadership and sound human judgment.

Structural and Cultural Challenges

Internal Discrimination- Allegations of bias within the force highlight the urgent need for fairness in administrative decisions, including postings, promotions, and performance evaluations.

Balancing Hierarchy- The traditional, rigid command structure must be balanced with mechanisms that allow for open feedback and effective grievance redressal for junior officers.

Institutional Reform- Sustainable reform requires embedding transparency, consistency, and accountability into the organizational culture to prevent alienation within the ranks.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

Key Mandates- Reforms must be guided by historical recommendations

National Police Commission (1979)- Emphasized the need to insulate police from political interference. Supreme Court Directives (Prakash Singh vs. Union of India, 2006) Mandated structural reforms, citizen oversight bodies, and merit-based tenures. Constitutional Alignment- Operational policing must align with constitutional values of equality, dignity, and impartiality to strengthen its legitimacy.

Global and Developmental Implications

Global Best Practices- Following UNODC (2023) guidelines, successful models worldwide rely on community policing and citizen engagement.

Key Pillars- Visibility, clear communication, and ethical conduct.

Developmental Impact- Internal reforms and fair practices lead to reduced corruption, improved law enforcement legitimacy, and enhanced social cohesion, which are vital for economic and social development.

Conclusion

Restoring trust in India's police force is not merely an administrative task but a democratic imperative. It demands a shift beyond traditional law enforcement to ethical leadership and citizen-centric policing. By combining operational success (like cracking down on crime) with internal fairness and external accountability, the police can rebuild their institutional credibility. Ultimately, the police must align their values and actions with public expectations to uphold democratic ideals and earn the "consent of the governed."

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/rebuilding-trust-in-police-in-shadow-of-doubt-under-scrutiny-10440773/

Editorial of the Day – 29.12.2025

Index

1. Linked civilisations, a modern strategic partnership(TH)

General Studies 1- Society

Topic- Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. (India–Iran Relations (Historical ties, Energy Security, Connectivity Projects, and Strategic Partnership).

Introduction

The relationship between India and Iran is unique in international relations; it goes beyond standard diplomatic statecraft, rooting itself in a "living civilisational relationship." While ancient ties provide the foundation, modern engagement is increasingly driven by hard economic realities, energy security, and the need for regional stability in West Asia.

The Civilisational & Literary Continuum

The historical bond between the two nations is defined by shared ancestry and deep cultural osmosis.

Common Ancestry- Both civilisations trace their roots to the Aryan peoples before they branched out one settling in the Iranian plateau and the other in the Indus–Ganga plains.

Linguistic & Spiritual Roots- There are deep parallels between the Avesta (Zoroastrian scripture) and the Rigveda, confirming a shared spiritual imagination and civilisational origin. This shared linguistic and mythological background has fostered a resilience in the relationship that has survived centuries of political flux.

Persian Influence in India- Persian endured for centuries as the language of art, diplomacy, and poetry in India.

Sabk-e-Hendi (Indian Style)- The cross-cultural milieu gave birth to a specific style of Persian literature known as the "Indian Style."

Cultural Icon- The text highlights Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil Dehlavi, a poet whose philosophical depth represents the creative brilliance of this shared heritage.

Pillars of Contemporary Strategic & Economic Convergence

In the current geopolitical landscape, historical sentiment is insufficient; the partnership is now anchored in tangible strategic and economic interests.

Energy Security

Natural Alignment- Iran possesses vast hydrocarbon reserves, while India has rapidly growing energy demands. This creates a natural, symbiotic supplier-consumer relationship.

Connectivity and Trade

Chabahar Port- India's involvement in the development of the Chabahar Port is a strategic anchor, allowing India to bypass Pakistan to access Afghanistan and Central Asia.

INSTC (International North–South Transport Corridor)- Iran holds a central geographical position in this corridor. The INSTC offers a shorter, cheaper, and more efficient route for Eurasian commerce compared to traditional routes (like the Suez Canal).

Security Cooperation & Geopolitics

As the world shifts toward a multipolar order, India and Iran are positioning themselves to influence regional stability.

Counter-Terrorism- Both nations face threats from the spread of extremism and terrorism across West and South Asia.

Intelligence Sharing- Consequently, intelligence cooperation has become a "quiet but vital pillar" of the relationship.

Strategic Autonomy- Despite external pressures (often implying Western sanctions), India has managed its ties with Iran by prioritizing Strategic Autonomy and national interest.

Financial Resilience- To insulate the partnership from external constraints (sanctions), there is a push for flexible financial arrangements, specifically local-currency trade.

Future-Oriented Engagement- Beyond Transactional Ties

The article suggests moving from a buyer-seller relationship to an innovation-driven alliance.

Knowledge-Based Diversification- The future of the partnership lies in diversifying into high-tech sectors, including Information Technology (IT), Nanotechnology, Medical Sciences

Diplomatic Milestone- As the nation's commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations, the goal is to convert historical goodwill into a modern, forward-looking partnership.

Conclusion

India and Iran are described as "one soul in two bodies," bound by history and aligned by geography. A revitalised alliance offers mutual prosperity and contributes significantly to long-term stability in West Asia. The moment is ripe to shape a collaborative, resilient, and autonomous future that resonates with their ancient harmony.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/linked-civilisations-a-modern-strategic-partnership/article70446666.ece

2. SC has role in clean-up, not in GST on purifiers(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary. Separation of Powers between various organs (Legislature, Executive, Judiciary). Judicial Activism vs. Judicial Overreach.

Judicial Overreach Limits- The Debate on Fiscal Intervention

Introduction

The Indian Constitution relies on a delicate balance of power between the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. While the Judiciary is the guardian of Fundamental Rights and the environment, its recent intervention in fiscal matters—specifically the Delhi High Court's suggestion to reduce GST on air purifiers—has reignited the debate on Judicial Overreach. This incident highlights the tension between judicial activism in public interest and the exclusive domain of the Executive in economic governance.

Judicial Activism vs. Constitutional Boundaries

Role of Courts- Courts often step in to correct "executive inaction," particularly when public interest is at stake (e.g., environmental protection).

Risk of Overreach- Intervention becomes problematic when courts enter policy domains strictly reserved for elected representatives.

Legislative Prerogative- Fiscal decisions, such as taxation, require detailed legislative deliberation, balancing of budgets, and political consensus, which are beyond the court's expertise and mandate.

The Constitutional Role of the GST Council

The power to determine tax rates is constitutionally codified and federal in nature.

Article 279A- The GST Council is a constitutional body established under Article 279A to govern Goods and Services Tax.

Composition & Consensus- It includes representatives from both the Centre and States. Decisions require a three-fourths majority, ensuring a federal consensus.

Unilateral Limits- Because of this federal structure, neither the Judiciary nor any single government authority has the power to unilaterally alter GST rates.

Public Health vs. Fiscal Policy

The context of the court's intervention is the severe air pollution crisis, but the text argues that the *method* of intervention (tax cuts) is misplaced.

Valid Judicial Mandate- Monitoring and enforcing environmental laws to protect public health is well within the court's constitutional power**.**

Invalid Policy Prescription- lowering GST is a specific policy choice, not a matter of legal right. Tax cuts on devices (air purifiers) shift the burden of clean air to individuals (buying machines) rather than forcing the state to fix structural causes.

The Need for Structural Solutions

Beyond Band-Aids- Reducing taxes is a short-term, superficial measure. Real solutions require structural reforms in

1. Emission controls.
2. Urban planning.
3. Energy policy.
4. Transport reforms**.**

Constructive Engagement- The text cites the Aravalli region cases as examples of *constructive* judicial engagement, where courts focused on protecting natural resources rather than dictating fiscal terms.

Conclusion

The Judiciary remains indispensable for enforcing environmental compliance and holding the government accountable. However, Constitutional Discipline mandates that fiscal decisions (like GST rates) remain with the GST Council. Effective governance is achieved when institutions respect their defined roles while working toward long-term solutions**.**

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/sc-has-role-in-clean-up-not-in-fixing-gst-rates-on-purifiers-10443690/