

Editorial of the Day – 14.03.2026**Index**

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Duty of care- On vaccine injury compensation programmes (TH) | -01 |
| 2. An ancient temple caught in the heart of a modern conflict (IE) | -03 |
| 3. Geopolitics & India's Fragile Energy Dependence (TT) | -05 |
| 4. The Paradox of Experience (TS) | -07 |

1. Duty of care- On vaccine injury compensation programmes (TH)

General Studies Paper- GS III (Economic Development)

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

Sub-Topic- Inflation Dynamics, Monetary Policy, CPI Revision, and Global Geopolitics.

1. Introduction

In February 2026, India's Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation witnessed a moderate uptick to 3.21%, up from 2.74% in January. While inflation has remained below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) medium-term target of 4% for over a year, new challenges have emerged. Escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia, particularly involving Iran and the strategic Strait of Hormuz, pose a significant risk to global energy prices, which could soon spill over into India's domestic inflation trajectory.

2. Understanding Inflation & the New CPI Framework

Core Definition- Inflation is the sustained rise in the general price level, which erodes purchasing power and impacts economic stability.

Primary Indicator- The CPI is the retail inflation index used by the RBI to steer its monetary policy decisions.

The 2024 Base Year Revision- India recently updated the CPI series with 2024 as the base year. This revision incorporates updated consumption patterns from the *2023-24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey*, making the index more representative of modern Indian spending.

3. Analysis of Current Inflation Trends (Feb 2026)

India's current price stability is characterized by "localized" spikes rather than generalized inflation-

The Food Basket- Food inflation rose to 3.47%. Specific vegetables like Tomato (45%) and Cauliflower (44%) saw sharp spikes, while Onion (-28%) and Potato (-18%) prices cooled, providing a balancing effect.

Precious Metals Surge- A major contributor to the headline rise was the inflation in Gold (48%) and silver jewellery (161%), driven by global market volatility.

Core Inflation Stability- Core inflation (excluding food and fuel) remained stable at 3.4%. Notably, if precious metals are excluded, the "adjusted core inflation" drops to a low 2%, suggesting very limited underlying price pressure across most sectors.

4. Global Geopolitics and Energy Risks

The primary threat to future stability is external-

The Strait of Hormuz Crisis- Nearly 20% of global oil supply passes through this channel. Tensions involving Iran have pushed crude oil prices toward \$120 per barrel.

Transmission Mechanism- High crude prices lead to increased costs for fuel, transport, and fertilizers, eventually causing "cost-push" inflation in the domestic market.

Lagged Effect- Since these tensions intensified in late February, the full impact is expected to manifest in the March and April 2026 inflation data.



5. Monetary Policy and Management Framework

Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT)– The RBI is mandated to keep CPI inflation at 4% with a tolerance band of $\pm 2\%$.

Policy Tools– Management is achieved through repo rate adjustments, liquidity control, and open market operations.

Fiscal Coordination– The government supports the RBI through supply-side measures, such as food subsidies, export restrictions on essentials, and strategic petroleum reserve management.

6. The Way Forward

To maintain price stability amidst global volatility, India must focus on–

Supply-Side Infrastructure– Enhancing agricultural cold chains and logistics to reduce the volatility of food items.

Energy Diversification– Expanding renewables and securing long-term import contracts to reduce "crude-dependence."

Data-Driven Policy– Utilizing real-time price monitoring and the revised CPI basket for quick policy responses.

Diplomatic Engagement– Strengthening trade ties with energy-producing regions to mitigate the economic fallout of West Asian conflicts.

7. Conclusion

India's inflation dynamics in early 2026 reflect a resilient domestic economy that has successfully managed internal pressures. However, the shadow of global geoeconomic rivalry and energy price shocks looms large. Sustaining the current stability will require a delicate balance between prudent monetary policy and aggressive supply-side management to ensure that external shocks do not derail India's growth momentum.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/duty-of-care-on-vaccine-injury-compensation-programmes/article70739990.ece>

"India's transition to a revised CPI base year in 2024 reflects an attempt to capture modern consumption patterns. Analyse the current drivers of retail inflation in India and evaluate the risks posed by 'imported inflation' due to West Asian geopolitical volatility." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

In February 2026, India's retail inflation stood at 3.21%, well within the RBI's target band. This stability is supported by the 2024 CPI revision, which better aligns policy with actual household expenditure. However, the rise of "geopolitical risk premiums" in the oil market presents a new challenge for the inflation-targeting framework.

2. Current Drivers of Retail Inflation

Localised Food Volatility– Current spikes are primarily "item-specific" (e.g., Tomatoes and Cauliflower) rather than a general surge in the food basket.

The 'Precious Metal' Factor– A significant portion of the core inflation uptick is due to the global surge in gold and silver, reflecting global safe-haven buying.

Low Underlying Momentum– Adjusted for precious metals, core inflation remains at a low 2%, indicating that domestic demand is not yet causing "overheating" of the economy.

3. Risks of Imported Inflation

Energy Price Pass-Through– As a net oil importer, a spike to \$120/barrel (due to the Strait of Hormuz tensions) directly raises the transport and logistics costs for all commodities.

Fertiliser and Input Costs– High energy prices increase the cost of natural gas—a key input for urea—potentially raising the government's subsidy burden or food prices.

Currency Depreciation– Global uncertainty often leads to capital flight to the US Dollar, weakening the Rupee and making all imports (electronic components, edible oils) more expensive.



4. Conclusion

While India's internal inflation dynamics are currently stable, the "imported" component remains the Achilles' heel. To counter this, the RBI must remain vigilant in its "higher-for-longer" interest rate stance, while the government accelerates energy diversification and strategic reserve building to buffer against West Asian shocks.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/duty-of-care-on-vaccine-injury-compensation-programmes/article70739990.ece>

2. An ancient temple caught in the heart of a modern conflict (IE)

General Studies Paper- GS II (International Relations) & GS I (History & Culture)

Topic- India and its neighbourhood-relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Sub-Topic- Southeast Asian Geopolitics, Khmer Architecture, ICJ Rulings, and UNESCO Heritage Protection.

1. Introduction

The Preah Vihear Temple, a crowning jewel of Khmer architecture, has once again become a flashpoint of geopolitical tension. Situated atop a cliff in the Dangrek Mountains, the temple marks the contested border between Cambodia and Thailand. Despite its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2008), recent military clashes in March 2026 have caused structural damage and civilian displacement, highlighting the fragile intersection of national sovereignty and global heritage conservation.

2. Historical and Architectural Significance

Khmer Empire Masterpiece- Built between the 9th and 12th centuries, it is a premier example of the Khmer Empire's architectural prowess, predating and rivalling many monuments at Angkor Wat.

Unique Topography- Unlike traditional Khmer "temple-mountains" built on plains, Preah Vihear is a mountain temple perched on a 525-meter cliff, designed as a symbolic "stairway to heaven."

Religious Evolution- Originally dedicated to Lord Shiva (Hinduism), the sanctuary later transitioned into a Buddhist site, reflecting the broader religious shifts across Southeast Asia.

Artistic Grandeur- The complex features an 800-meter-long axis consisting of ornate stone causeways, pavilions (*Gopuras*), and intricate carvings that showcase the advanced aesthetic traditions of the Khmer civilization.

3. The Cambodia-Thailand Border Dispute

The conflict is rooted in colonial history and map-making discrepancies-

Colonial Legacy- The dispute stems from a 1907 French colonial map of Indochina. While the natural watershed line favoured Thailand, the French map placed the temple in Cambodia.

1962 ICJ Ruling- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the temple belonged to Cambodia. However, the surrounding 4.6 sq. km of scrubland remained a "grey zone" of dispute.

2008 UNESCO Spark- Tensions flared when Cambodia successfully applied for UNESCO World Heritage status, a move Thailand perceived as an infringement on the disputed territory.

Military Confrontations- Periodic artillery fire and skirmishes have plagued the region, leading to casualties, the mining of the perimeter, and damage to ancient stone structures.

4. Strategic and Geopolitical Dimensions

Military High Ground- The temple's position on a steep cliff overlooking the Thai plains gives it significant tactical military value.

Symbol of Nationalism- For both Phnom Penh and Bangkok, Preah Vihear is an emotive symbol of national identity and pride, making any diplomatic compromise politically difficult.

Internal Security History- The rugged terrain served as a final stronghold for the Khmer Rouge in the late 20th century, complicating demining and safety efforts.



ASEAN Stability- Continued bilateral friction between two key members challenges the ASEAN principle of peaceful dispute resolution and regional cooperation.

5. Threats to Cultural Heritage

Direct Combat Damage- Artillery impacts and small arms fire have damaged original carvings, structural pillars, and ancient causeways.

Landmine Contamination- The site and its surroundings are heavily infested with landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), hindering both conservationists and tourists.

Interruption of Restoration- International projects—including those involving India, China, and the USA—have been stalled or slowed due to the unpredictable security environment.

Irreparable Loss- Unlike modern buildings, these 1,000-year-old structures cannot be authentically replaced; their destruction constitutes a permanent loss to human history.

6. Global Protection Frameworks

1954 Hague Convention- This international treaty seeks to protect cultural property during armed conflicts, prohibiting the use of such sites for military purposes.

UNESCO's Monitoring- UNESCO acts as a watchdog, providing technical expertise and mobilizing global support for the stabilization and repair of the site.

Precedent of Loss- The destruction of heritage in Syria (Palmyra) and Afghanistan (Bamiyan Buddhas) serves as a cautionary tale for the international community regarding Preah Vihear.

7. Conclusion

The Preah Vihear tragedy illustrates how ancient heritage can become a casualty of modern nationalism. While the ICJ has provided legal clarity, true peace requires bilateral diplomatic dialogue, joint demining initiatives, and a commitment to demilitarize the heritage zone. Protecting this "stairway to heaven" is not just a regional obligation but a global mandate to preserve the shared legacy of the Khmer civilization for future generations.

Source- <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260314/page/12>

Question

"The Preah Vihear Temple is not merely a site of territorial dispute but a masterpiece of Khmer architecture that reflects the profound religious and cultural synthesis of Southeast Asia. Elucidate." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

Constructed primarily between the 9th and 12th centuries during the Khmer Empire, the Preah Vihear Temple is a quintessential example of the "Indianized" kingdoms of Southeast Asia. Perched atop a 525-metre cliff in the Dangrek Mountains, it stands as a testament to the architectural ambition and religious devotion of the Khmer monarchs, bridging the gap between earthly governance and divine symbolism.

2. Architectural Grandeur- The "Stairway to Heaven"

Linear Axis Design- Unlike the concentric, flat-plane layout of Angkor Wat, Preah Vihear is built along an 800-metre-long north-south axis. This linear progression through five successive pavilions (Gopuras) signifies the spiritual ascent to the heavens.

Adaptation to Topography- The temple utilizes the natural cliff edge to enhance its majesty, a deviation from the traditional "temple-mountain" structures found in the plains of Cambodia.

Artistic Mastery- The stone carvings, lintels, and pediments showcase the peak of Khmer artistic expression, featuring intricate depictions of Hindu mythology, such as the *Churning of the Ocean of Milk*.

3. Religious Synthesis and Evolution

Shaivite Origins- The temple was originally dedicated to Lord Shiva (known locally as Shikhareshvara). Its location on a mountain peak mimics the abode of Shiva, Mount Kailash.



Buddhist Transition– Reflecting the broader religious shift in the Khmer Empire toward the 12th and 13th centuries, the temple gradually integrated Buddhist elements. This synthesis demonstrates the fluid nature of Southeast Asian spirituality, where Vedic traditions and Buddhist philosophy coexisted.

4. Colonial Legacy and the Modern Historical Context

Cartographic Conflict– The historical integrity of the site was complicated by the 1907 French–Siamese Treaty. The map created by French geographers diverted from the natural watershed line, placing the temple in Cambodian territory—a move that planted the seeds of the modern-day conflict between Thailand and Cambodia.

Symbol of National Identity– In the 20th century, the temple became a potent symbol of post-colonial identity for Cambodia, leading to the landmark 1962 ICJ ruling that utilized historical maps to affirm Cambodian ownership.

5. Conclusion

The Preah Vihear Temple is a bridge between the ancient and the modern. While its history is currently overshadowed by border tensions, its architectural and religious depth highlights the shared cultural heritage of the Mekong region. Recognizing its value as a masterpiece of human creativity is essential to shifting the narrative from a "zone of conflict" to a "monument of shared history."

Source- <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260314/page/12>

3. Geopolitics & India's Fragile Energy Dependence (TT)

General Studies Paper– General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy & Agriculture

Topic– Impact of geopolitical developments on India's economy.

Sub-Topic– Sustainable development and renewable energy

Introduction

Energy security is a critical component of India's economic growth and national security. However, India remains heavily dependent on imported crude oil and natural gas, making it vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions. Events in regions such as West Asia highlight the risks associated with dependence on strategic chokepoints and external suppliers.

1. India's Energy Import Dependence

1. India imports a large share of its crude oil and natural gas requirements.
2. A significant portion of these imports comes from West Asian countries.
3. High import dependence exposes India to price volatility and supply disruptions.

2. Role of Strategic Chokepoints

1. Critical maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz handle a major share of India's energy imports.
2. Disruptions due to geopolitical conflicts can increase transportation risks and energy prices.
3. Overdependence on specific routes creates strategic vulnerabilities.

3. Impact of Geopolitical Tensions

Energy Price Volatility

1. Conflicts in oil-producing regions can lead to sharp increases in global crude prices.

Supply Disruptions

1. Blockades or conflicts may interrupt energy supply chains and logistics.

Economic Consequences

1. Rising energy costs contribute to inflation, fiscal pressure, and trade imbalances.

4. Strategic and Policy Challenges

1. India must balance energy security with diplomatic relations in geopolitically sensitive regions.
2. Dependence on a limited number of suppliers reduces bargaining power in global energy markets.



3. Transition to cleaner energy sources requires significant investment and technological capacity.

5. Measures for Enhancing Energy Security

Diversification of Energy Sources

1. Expanding imports from multiple regions to reduce geopolitical concentration risk.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves

1. Maintaining reserves to cushion against short-term supply disruptions.

Renewable Energy Expansion

1. Investing in solar, wind, and green hydrogen to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Domestic Production and Infrastructure

1. Enhancing domestic energy production and improving refining and storage capacity.

6. Role of Strategic Autonomy

1. India's policy of multi-alignment allows it to engage with various energy suppliers without overdependence on any single country.

2. Maintaining diplomatic flexibility helps ensure stable energy partnerships and supply continuity.

Conclusion

India's heavy dependence on imported energy and strategic chokepoints underscores the need for a comprehensive energy security strategy. Diversification, renewable energy expansion, and strategic autonomy in foreign policy are essential for ensuring long-term economic stability and resilience.

Source- <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/geopolitics-indias-fragile-energy-dependence/>

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. India's heavy dependence on energy imports exposes it to geopolitical risks. Examine the challenges posed by this dependence and suggest measures to ensure long-term energy security. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

Energy security is vital for sustaining economic growth and ensuring national stability. India's dependence on imported crude oil and natural gas makes it vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions, especially in regions such as West Asia.

Challenges of Energy Dependence

Vulnerability to Geopolitical Conflicts

1. Conflicts in oil-producing regions can disrupt supply chains and increase prices.

Dependence on Strategic Chokepoints

1. Routes such as the Strait of Hormuz are critical for energy imports.

Economic Impact

1. Rising energy prices contribute to inflation and fiscal pressures.

Measures for Energy Security

Diversification of Imports

1. Sourcing energy from multiple countries reduces supply risk.

Renewable Energy Development

1. Expanding solar and wind energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels.

Strategic Reserves

1. Maintaining petroleum reserves helps manage short-term disruptions.



Conclusion

Ensuring energy security requires a balanced approach involving diversification, renewable energy expansion, and strategic diplomacy. These measures are essential for safeguarding India's economic stability and long-term growth.

Source- <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/geopolitics-indias-fragile-energy-dependence/>

4. The Paradox of Experience (TS)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper II – Governance & Social Sector

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of education.

Sub-Topic- Institutional governance and reforms

Introduction

Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping a country's human capital, innovation capacity, and knowledge economy. However, governance practices within universities often face structural challenges. One such issue is the "experience paradox," where reliance on temporary or ad hoc faculty affects academic quality, institutional stability, and long-term educational outcomes.

1. Understanding the "Experience Paradox"

1. Universities increasingly depend on temporary or contractual faculty instead of permanent appointments.
2. While such faculty may gain teaching experience, they often lack job security, institutional integration, and research opportunities.
3. This creates a paradox where experience is accumulated without institutional continuity or career progression.

2. Structural Issues in Higher Education Governance

Over-Reliance on Ad Hoc Faculty

1. Many institutions prefer contractual appointments due to financial constraints and administrative flexibility.
2. This reduces the proportion of permanent, experienced faculty.

Weak Institutional Planning

1. Lack of long-term recruitment strategies leads to staff shortages and instability.

Administrative Constraints

1. Centralised decision-making and bureaucratic processes delay faculty recruitment and promotions.

3. Impact on Academic Quality

Teaching Quality

1. Temporary faculty may face uncertain tenure and limited incentives, affecting teaching effectiveness.

Research Output

1. Lack of institutional support and job security discourages long-term research and innovation.

Student Outcomes

1. Frequent faculty turnover disrupts continuity in learning and mentorship.

4. Broader Implications

Institutional Instability

1. Universities struggle to build academic culture and intellectual leadership.

Brain Drain



1. Talented academics may prefer opportunities abroad or in private institutions.

Inequality in Education

1. Public universities may lag behind private institutions in faculty quality and resources.

5. Policy Measures and Way Forward

Strengthening Permanent Faculty Recruitment

1. Regular and transparent recruitment to ensure institutional stability.

Improving Working Conditions

1. Provide better job security, research funding, and career progression opportunities.

Decentralised Governance

1. Empower institutions to make timely academic and administrative decisions.

Implementation of NEP 2020

1. Promote multidisciplinary education, faculty development, and institutional autonomy.

Conclusion

Addressing the experience paradox in higher education requires strengthening institutional governance and ensuring stable faculty structures. By investing in permanent faculty, improving working conditions, and enhancing institutional autonomy, India can build a robust and high-quality higher education system that supports long-term academic excellence and innovation.

Source- <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/the-paradox-of-experience-1503570036.html>

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. The increasing reliance on temporary faculty in higher education institutions has led to an “experience paradox.” Examine its impact on academic quality and suggest reforms to address this issue. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

Higher education institutions play a vital role in developing human capital and fostering innovation. However, increasing reliance on temporary and contractual faculty has created an “experience paradox,” where experience is accumulated without institutional stability or long-term academic growth.

Impact on Academic Quality

1. Decline in Teaching Effectiveness

1. Job insecurity and limited institutional support affect teaching quality and continuity.

2. Weak Research Ecosystem

1. Temporary faculty have fewer opportunities for long-term research and innovation.

3. Disruption in Student Learning

1. High faculty turnover affects mentorship and academic consistency.

Reforms Needed

1. Regular Faculty Recruitment

1. Increase permanent appointments to ensure stability and quality.

2. Better Working Conditions

1. Provide job security, research funding, and career progression.

3. Institutional Autonomy

1. Enable universities to make timely recruitment and academic decisions.

Conclusion

Addressing the experience paradox requires strengthening faculty structures and institutional governance. Ensuring stable and well-supported academic staff is essential for improving the quality and effectiveness of higher education in India.

Source- <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/the-paradox-of-experience-1503570036.html>

