

AS ITS CHANGING

Typical Viewpoint May 2026



IMPULSE

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N.B:

- ⊗ A detailed comprehensive discussion has been projected in this study material from the viewpoint of **INTEGRATED UPSC CSE (PrIm+Mains)** preparation.
- ⊗ If any topic has been skipped here from the events of this respective month, it had been already duly discussed in the previous editions. So, please check the previous editions.
- ⊗ We are indebted to the different authenticated published news sources for the compilation of this study material

01.05.2026

What is **brain death** and why is Supreme Court reviewing the way it's certified?

The Supreme Court is hearing a plea **alleging malpractices** in brain death certification to **facilitate 'organ harvesting'**. Here's a look at how doctors declare a person brain dead and why the certification process faces a challenge in India

Intro

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that it will seek expert opinion from AIIMS doctors on whether there is a **need to conduct tests such as electroencephalogram (EEG) and angiogram** to declare someone brain dead.
- Ganapathy alleged that
 - patients who may not be brain dead are declared so to facilitate organ donation.
 - He added that the current apnea test done to certify brain death can be subjective and the legal mandate requiring that the test be videographed is not followed often.

Apnea Test
To certify brain death

What is brain death?

□

Brain death, also referred to as **brain stem death**,

-is an **irreversible condition**
-where all activities of the brain, including automatic functions such as breathing controlled by the brain stem, cease.
-cut off oxygen supply to the brain, are for all intents dead and cannot be revived.
- The patient continues to survive — and breathe —

	with the help of life support systems such as ventilators.
Organ Donation	○ These patients, most of whom have suffered severe injuries in road accidents.....are good candidates for organ donation.....can even donate heart and lungs. ○ Although donation of organs and tissue is now promoted even in patients who have <u>circulatory death</u> — where the heart-beat and breathing stop completely — it is less common than donation from brain dead patients.

Brain Death	vs	Circulatory Death
Brain death is the <u>irreversible loss of all brain function</u> .		➤ while circulatory death is 1) the stop of the heart, 2) which then causes the brain to stop functioning ➤ Unlike brain death, it occurs when the heart stops, and it is officially declared after a sustained, pulseless period, usually 2-5 minutes.

	➤ Organs (<u>kidneys, liver, lungs</u>) can be transplanted if retrieved shortly after death.
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Coma – A Person in a coma may recover because some brain activity remains. There may be spontaneous breathing, Recovery is possible.	Brain Death – There is no activity, no reflexes, no breathing without machines, and no chance of coming back.
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Why do we need to declare and certify people brain dead?

-is essential for deceased organ donation, where organs and tissues such as **kidney, liver, heart, and eyes** are donated to undisclosed, unrelated recipients.
- While **India is a global leader** when it comes to the **absolute number** of transplant surgeries, most of these are conducted using organs donated by living relatives.

Traumatic brain injuries and Stroke patients as brain dead donor Only 1,100/ 2 lakh = 0.55%	Despite the fact that nearly 1.5 lakh people die due to traumatic brain injuries and another 50,000 due to stroke every year — both categories of patients who qualify as brain dead donors — only 1,100 persons actually donate their organs.
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Deceased donors India .77 / million	India's rate of deceased donation, while on the rise, continues to be very low at 0.77 per million population. This is below the rates reported by neighbouring countries such as Thailand (6.21), China (4.5), Sri Lanka (3.38), and Japan (1.18). Spain → Highest → 49 per million USA → 2nd 48 per. Million Other top rankings: 3) Portugal 4) Belgium 5) Slovenia 6) Italy 7) Croatia
Living Donors India 10.80 / million	1) Turkey 2) South Korea 3) Saudi Arabia 4) Mongolia 5) Israel 6) Netherlands

What is the protocol followed for declaring brain death?

- ...has to follow the current guidelines by the apex regulator National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (**NOTTO**).
- The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (**THOTA**), 1994
- requires a **four-member board** — comprising of

- 1) The hospital in-charge,
 - 2) an authorised specialist,
 - 3) a neurologist or neurosurgeon, and
 - 4) the treating physician
- **Two Examinations:** The tests must be performed twice, with a minimum gap of **12 hours** between them.
 - **Core Tests Performed:**
 - ï **Coma Check:** No responsiveness, eye movements, or motor responses to pain.
 - ï **Brainstem Reflexes:** Absent pupillary, corneal, vestibulo-ocular (doll's head), gag, and cough reflexes.
 - ï **Apnea Test:** Confirms the absence of spontaneous breathing when disconnected from a ventilator.

✂ This board has to determine and note in writing what was the illness or accident that led to the condition, and whether there could possibly be any reversible causes such as alcohol consumption, drug use, hypothermia, and metabolic imbalances, among others.

Doll's eyes →eye moves to the opposite side when their head is turned.

Challenges:

- One of the challenges is the lack of knowledge even among physicians.....concerned doctors don't receive training on brain death during graduation or even post-graduation.....merely 10% of doctors are trained for brain death certification.

04.05.2026

On abortion, Supreme Court places the woman at the centre

*In urging Parliament to **revisit the statutory framework** — particularly to **remove gestational limits in cases involving minor survivors of rape** — and in emphasising that the law must evolve to prioritise dignity, the CJI-led bench has given the issue its most consequential turn.*

30 week pregnancy

- The Supreme Court's insistence that an unwanted pregnancy cannot be imposed — least of all upon a minor — and its dismissal of a curative plea filed by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences contesting the Court's decision to

allow a 15-year-old rape survivor to terminate her 30-week pregnancy.

is a welcome reaffirmation of **reproductive autonomy as a fundamental right grounded in dignity and bodily integrity.** The apex court's framing of the issue — “**unwanted pregnancies cannot be burdened on the woman**”, and the state must “respect a **citizen's autonomy of choice**” — comes at a time when abortion is increasingly being framed as a choice between competing lives, not just in India but globally. It signals that constitutional guarantees cannot be diluted by medical paternalism.

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (**MTP) Act of 1971**

was, for its time, a forward-looking statute that recognised the perils of unsafe, clandestine abortions, even if it remained contingent on the consent of doctors, partners and family members.

- Its 2021 amendment expanded gestational limits for certain categories of vulnerable women and gave greater primacy to privacy and choice.

- The landmark *X v. Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Dept* (2022) verdict broadened the categories of women who fall within the Act's ambit.
 - Yet, in recent years, this trajectory has been complicated by an increasing contestation over foetal viability, exposing tensions within a law that is still structured as an exception to criminality and still framed as conditional permission rather than an enforceable right.
- In October 2023, a Supreme Court bench declined to permit the termination of a 26-week pregnancy, **effectively privileging foetal viability over the woman's choice.**
 - Since then, several high courts have moved in the same direction.
 - In February 2024, a 32-week pregnant widow's plea for an abortion was also denied by the apex court on similar grounds despite compelling claims of mental distress.
- In urging Parliament to revisit the statutory framework — particularly to remove gestational limits in cases involving minor survivors of rape — and in emphasising that the **law must evolve to prioritise dignity**, the CJI-led bench has given the issue a consequential turn.
 - A rights-based legislative framework — one in which reproductive autonomy is the presumption and medical oversight serves as a safeguard — will not resolve every complexity.
 - But clear statutory standards can guide doctors without displacing the primacy of the patient's informed decision, while time-bound procedures can prevent the delays that turn choices into crises.
 - None of this will eliminate the ethical difficulty of late-term terminations, nor should it pretend to. But it would ensure that the weight of such decisions is not made heavier by the law itself.

The MTP Act 1971 and The MTP Act Amendments 2021

	MTP Act 1971	The MTP Amendment Act 2021
Indications (Contraceptive failure)	Only applies to married women	Unmarried women are also covered
Gestational Age Limit	20 weeks for all indications	24 weeks for rape survivors Beyond 24 weeks for substantial fetal abnormalities
Medical practitioner opinions required before termination	One RMP till 12 weeks Two RMPs till 20 weeks	One RMP till 20 weeks Two RMPs 20-24 weeks Medical Board approval after 24 weeks
Breach of the woman's confidentiality	Fine up to Rs 1000	Fine and/or Imprisonment of 1 year

WHAT MTP ACT SAYS

➤ **24 weeks** is upper gestation limit for abortion under **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act**

➤ If **foetus found abnormal**, abortion allowed beyond limit of 24 weeks with approval of **state-appointed medical board**

➤ Board considers whether continuing the pregnancy **risks the woman's life** or **causes physical or mental harm to the woman or the foetus**

X v. Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Dept (2022)

is a landmark Supreme Court of India judgment that **affirmed unmarried women** have the right to safe and legal abortion up to 24 weeks,.....**reproductive autonomy and equality**

Reproductive Autonomy:	The Court held that the right to reproductive autonomy is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution, which includes the <u>right to choose whether to carry a pregnancy to term</u> , independent of marital status.
Expansion of Rule 3B:	The ruling expanded the definition of "change of marital status" in Rule 3B of the MTP Rules to include the separation of unmarried couples , thus enabling them to access abortion between 20-24 weeks .
Inclusion of Unmarried Women:	The judgment stated that the distinction between married and unmarried women for abortion access is arbitrary , striking down the notion that only married women can access abortion services between 20 and 24 weeks .
Marital Rape Recognition:	The Court noted that for the purpose of the MTP Act, the term "rape" includes marital rape , enabling married women to seek abortion if the pregnancy is a result of non-consensual sexual act by the husband.
Scope of the Act:	The ruling reiterated that the MTP Act should be interpreted to protect the physical and mental health of women, rejecting a "restrictive view" that limits access.

The next fuel shift: More ethanol in Indians' gas tank

Ethanol derived from sugarcane, maize and rice is today cheaper than petrol refined from crude oil. It strengthens the case to incentivise the rollout of flex-fuel vehicles along with separate dispensing units in fuel stations for higher ethanol blends. That said, global crude prices may not sustain at \$110-per-barrel levels beyond a time

- The ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a **draft notification** proposing the recognition of 85 per cent ethanol-blended petrol (E85) and even 100 per cent ethanol (E100) as automotive fuels.

E20 : already achieved
E85, E100 : proposal

↘ This is as against the 20 per cent blend (E20) that has already been achieved and made mandatory for all petrol sold in India from April 2026.

- The draft amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, once approved, will pave the way for the introduction of flex-fuel vehicles that can run on E85, if not 100 per cent ethanol.
- While the vehicles manufactured since April 2023 are E20-compliant,

compatibility with higher blends will require

major overhaul of internal combustion engines and auto parts

to withstand any potential corrosion from the **hygroscopic** (moisture-absorbing) property of ethanol.

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- **The timing of the move is significant**, coming amid the unprecedented **energy supply shock** caused by the **conflict in West Asia** and closure of the **Strait of Hormuz**.

↘ Oil marketing companies (OMCs) are now realising around **Rs 75 for every litre of petrol**, net of dealer commission and taxes.

- At this price, they are **reportedly losing roughly Rs 14 per litre.**
- The **ex-refinery price of petrol**, thus, has to be at least **Rs 89 per litre for them** to absorb the higher cost of imported crude.
- Compare this to the Rs 60.73-71.86 per litre that distilleries are fetching for the ethanol they are supplying to OMCs.
- **Simply put, ethanol derived from sugarcane, maize and rice is today cheaper than petrol refined from crude oil.** It strengthens the case to incentivise the rollout of flex-fuel vehicles along with separate dispensing units in fuel stations for higher ethanol blends.

- That said, global crude prices may not sustain at \$110-per-barrel levels beyond a time. **The ethanol industry must prioritise long-term cost competitiveness**, which means **raising cane and grain yields per acre and breeding varieties with higher sugar and starch recoveries**. Nor should it expect the government to make available subsidised rice from the Food Corporation of India's godowns. Also, it's not desirable to produce ethanol from water-guzzling rice. More effort is required to promote **sweet sorghum, bajra and other millets** as sustainable feedstocks for ethanol production, offering fermentation efficiencies comparable to maize or sugarcane. There's no doubt, however, that the current oil shock is an inflection point for

biofuels — and for Indian policymakers to think beyond incremental ethanol blending. The time for flex fuels has, indeed, arrived.

06.05.2026

GS (Mains)

For the first time in 50 years, India doesn't have a communist government: How the Left got left behind

*The decline is not merely electoral; it is also reflected in the **depletion of ideas and organisation**. Take the changing nature of work and how workers' rights can be undermined in the "gig economy". Parties and movements that claim to stand for those left behind by the system should be at the forefront of articulating their concerns*

- The CPI(M)'s current **political nadir** — in fact, the seemingly interminable decline of all of India's communist parties — is evidence, among other things, of a prolonged "incorrect estimation".
- This decline was not one foretold by "historical forces". It is, rather, a function of a series of interconnected failures and complicities.
- **For the first time since 1977**, the Left finds itself without a single state government to call its own. A party that, at its height, was the third-largest in Parliament with a government in three states, is now a contender in one.
- The decline is not merely electoral; it is also reflected in the **depletion of ideas and organisation**. Take the changing nature of work and the ways in which workers' rights can be undermined in the **"gig economy"**.
 - **New forms of work**—from platform labour to services-led employment—have thrown up fresh vulnerabilities. These

demand new frameworks of analysis and new instruments of policy.

- Work is increasingly informal, fragmented, and mediated by technology.
 - In such a setting, the **familiar binaries of class and capital, and the old instruments of mobilisation**, have lost traction.
 - Trade unionism of a conventional kind speaks to a shrinking segment; state-led redistribution, while still necessary, is no longer sufficient as a political message.
- There is also a **fundamental organisational question**. For a long time, the tension between the popular leader and the party — as with Jyoti Basu in Bengal and VS Achuthanandan in Kerala — has deepened factional faultlines.
 - If the left is to recover, **it must decide who is best placed to lead that recovery**: Those with their ears to the ground or those who fear “revisionism” more than political extinction.
- Over the last four decades — beginning with the fall of the Soviet Union — the obituary of the Indian left has been written many times.
 - The difference in the last decade is the rise of a political force that, like the communists, is cadre-based and ideologically driven. The left, unless it comes up with fresh ideas, is bound to be left behind.

Left's relevance : the legacy

- ī Land reforms, investments in education and health, and a durable commitment to welfare have left their imprint, most visibly in states like Kerala.
- ī At its best, the Left compelled the political mainstream to confront inequality and labour rights.
- ī That contribution retains value, and the issues themselves have not disappeared.

Reason for declined legacy

- ☞ The result is a gap between its inherited vocabulary and contemporary realities.
- ☞ Organisational problem
- ☞ Slow leadership renewal
- ☞ Party's inability to connect the younger voters
(less ideological, more impatient, more attuned to opportunity than to grievances)

Way forward

Neither nostalgia nor alliances stitched for arithmetic gain.	intellectual openness as much as organisational change.
☞ to rethink its economic arguments in the context of a services economy, ☞ to engage with technology-driven changes in labour markets, and ☞ to reconcile its commitment to equity with a language that acknowledges aspiration.	☞ Internal democracy for free discussion ☞ New leadership, new social coalitions, and new sites of engagement—campuses, start-ups, informal workplaces—will matter.

Relevance will not return quickly;
it will have to be rebuilt.

Politics, like markets, does not tolerate stasis for long.

07.05.2026

What to know about the **Hantavirus outbreak** aboard Canary Islands-bound ship

According to the World Health Organization, seven cases of hantavirus, including three confirmed and five suspected, have been identified among the people aboard the MV Hondius, which departed from Argentina on April 1.

Backdrop

- The MV Hondius vessel, which has passengers and crew from 23 countries on board, is currently stationed in Cape Verde off West Africa.

Hantavirus : about

- Named after the **Hantan River in South Korea**, hantavirus is a family of **rodent-borne viruses** that can cause serious illness and death in humans.
 - However, **the virus-carrying rats and other rodents do not fall ill to the virus.**
- Human infection primarily occurs through **contact with the urine, faeces, or saliva of infected rodents or by touching contaminated surfaces.**
 - It is **also possible to get the infection by breathing air** that contains viral particles stirred up from these droppings
- These viruses are **generally** not known to spread between people.
 - However, **some human transmission was recorded for the Andes strain**, found in Argentina and Chile.
 - The people on the ship are suspected to have been infected by the Andes hantavirus.
- The type of virus varies

depending on the region , and
each hantavirus is specific to a different rodent host .

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS)	Haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS)
☞ is endemic to the Western Hemisphere and ☞ caused by New World hantaviruses. ☞ These are the deadlier of the two variants, killing a third of those who develop respiratory symptoms. ☞ The disease progresses from flu symptoms and fatigue to diarrhoea, vomiting and severe respiratory issues.	☞ is another group of illnesses caused by so-called Old World hantaviruses, ☞ found primarily in Europe, Africa and Asia. ☞ HFRS is known to affect around 150,000 people annually, <u>killing between 1 and 15% of the infected</u>. ☞ Among these, the Hantaan and the Dobrava strains cause the most severe impact, ○ while the impacts of Seoul, Saaremaa, and Puumala virus infections are comparatively moderate.

Key Differences Between Hantavirus and COVID-19

While both can cause severe respiratory issues,

COVID-19 is a highly contagious respiratory virus, whereas

Hantavirus is primarily a **zoonotic disease** transmitted from rodents to humans

Source and Transmission:	Hantavirus ➤ is transmitted to humans primarily through contact with infected rodents (urine, saliva, or droppings), particularly when cleaning, or in closed spaces.
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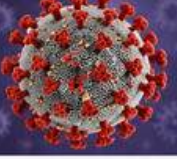
	➤ <u>Person-to-person spread is extremely rare.</u> COVID-19 - i spreads efficiently from person-to-person through respiratory aerosols and droplets.
Contagiousness:	Hantavirus, ➤ specifically the Andes strain that caused a 2026 cruise ship outbreak, <u>can spread between people, but only through very close, prolonged contact.</u> COVID-19 - i <u>It does not spread easily like COVID-19,</u> which caused a global pandemic.
Incubation Period:	Hantavirus has a much longer incubation period than COVID-19, with symptoms taking two to six weeks to appear after exposure.
Mortality Rate:	Hantavirus is generally far more lethal than COVID-19. Some strains of hantavirus, such as those in the Americas, have a <u>mortality rate that can exceed 40%.</u>
Symptoms:	<i>Deeper respiratory focus</i> ➤ Early symptoms of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) include fever, fatigue, and muscle aches, which can be difficult to distinguish from influenza. ➤ However, it progresses rapidly into severe respiratory failure, often causing symptoms in deeper lung tissues <i>Upper respiratory focus</i> ➤ compared to the upper respiratory focus of early COVID-19.

Treatment:	There are no specific vaccines or approved antiviral treatments for hantavirus, and treatment is mainly supportive.
Diagnostic Methods:	Hantavirus is diagnosed through blood tests for IgM/IgG antibodies , while COVID-19 is commonly diagnosed via PCR or rapid antigen nasal/throat swabs .

HOW THE THREE VIRUSES COMPARE

ON SYMPTOMS, DEATH RATES AND VACCINES

While all three viruses can make people seriously ill, they differ sharply in how they spread, the symptoms they cause, how deadly they are and whether vaccines exist.

	NOROVIRUS	HANTAVIRUS	COVID-19
	A highly contagious stomach virus that spreads through contaminated food, water, surfaces and close contact. Often called the "winter vomiting bug."	 A rodent-borne virus spread mainly through exposure to infected rodent urine, saliva or droppings. Widespread human-to-human transmission is uncommon.	 Caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It spreads primarily through airborne respiratory droplets and particles.
 COMMON SYMPTOMS	• Vomiting • Diarrhoea • Stomach cramps	• Nausea • Mild fever and body aches	• Headache • Nausea and vomiting
 SEVERITY & DEATHS	Usually mild for healthy adults, but can be dangerous for infants, elderly and immunocompromised people due to severe dehydration. Fatalities are rare.	Can cause severe illness such as respiratory failure or kidney failure. Some strains in the Americas have fatality rates reaching up to 50% , while other strains are lower. Infections remain relatively rare.	Has caused more than 7.1 million reported deaths worldwide since 2019. Most infections are now mild due to widespread immunity, but older adults and people with chronic illnesses remain at risk of severe disease.
 VACCINE STATUS	No approved vaccine available. Several candidates are under development.	No globally licensed vaccine or specific antiviral cure. Treatment focuses on intensive supportive care.	Multiple vaccines are widely available globally. More than 13.6 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide.
 MAIN SPREAD	Contaminated food, water, surfaces and close contact with infected people.	Exposure to infected rodent urine, saliva or droppings. Human-to-human spread is rare.	Airborne respiratory droplets and particles, close contact, indoor ventilation.
 WHICH VIRUS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS?	 Norovirus spreads extremely easily but usually causes mild illness.	 Hantavirus is much deadlier but spreads far less efficiently between humans.	 COVID-19 sits in the middle—less deadly than hantavirus but vastly more transmissible, which allowed it to trigger a global pandemic.

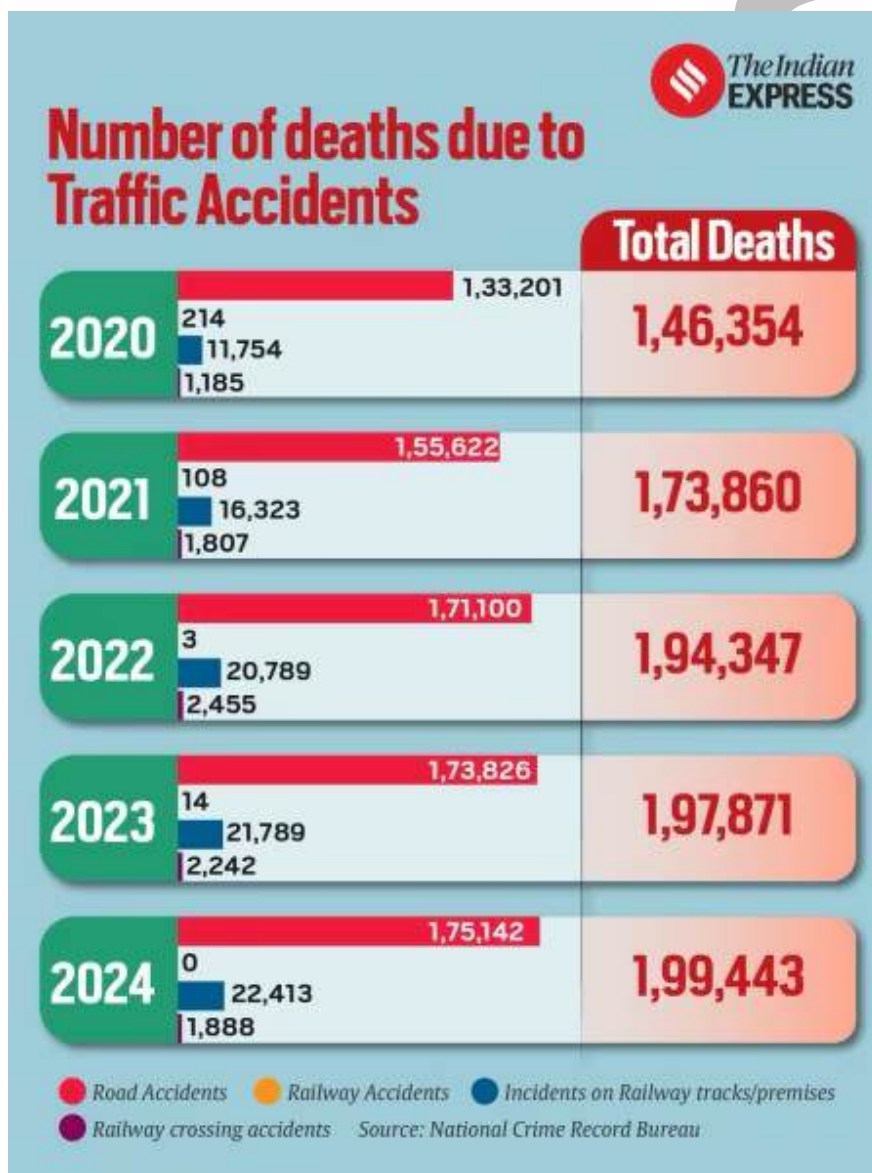
Health experts say hantavirus is unlikely to become "the next COVID" because its transmission patterns are very different and sustained human-to-human spread remains rare.

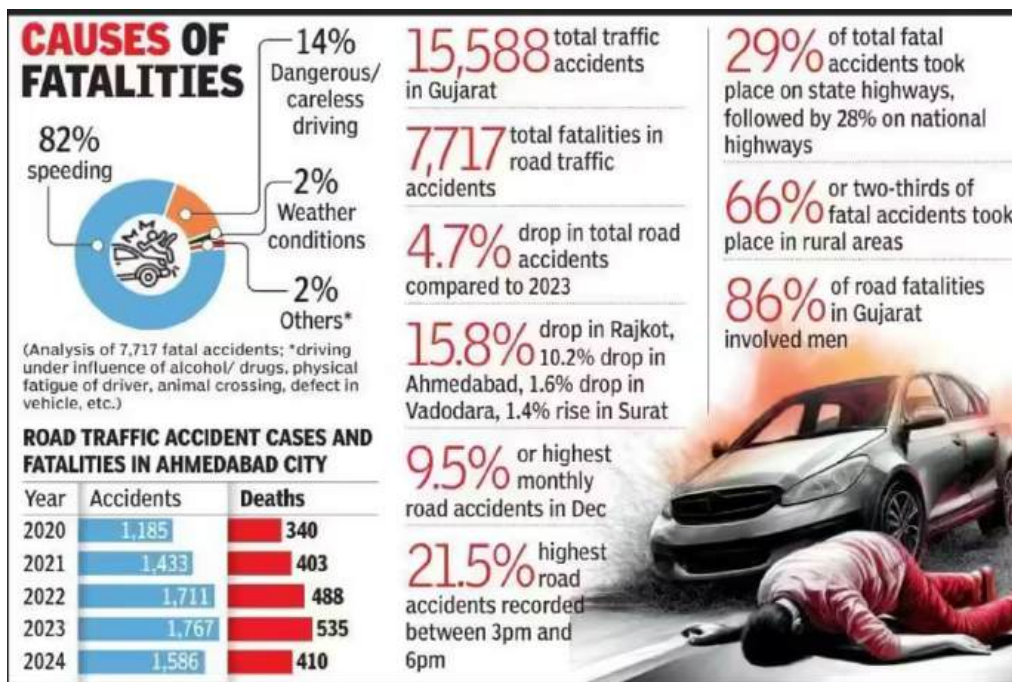
08.05.2026

546 die every day in **traffic accidents**; speeding remains biggest killer: NCRB data

- While the top three states in fatalities were **UP, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra**,
- most of the deaths in **railway crossing accidents** were reported from **UP, West Bengal, and Kerala**.

All the discussion herebelow are based on 2024 data





Traffic accidents include

road accidents,
railway accidents,
incidents on railway tracks or railway premises, and
accidents at railway crossings.

Effect

- Serious repercussions on the **victims' families**
- **derail** India's gross domestic product (**GDP**) **growth** as they affect smooth traffic flow

The **socio-economic costs** of road crashes alone amount to around **3.14% of India's GDP**.

■

The top three states in terms of fatalities (traffic accidents) are collectively account for 33.6% of all traffic deaths in 2024.	Uttar Pradesh (27,071)	13.6%
	Tamil Nadu (20,390) and	10.2%
	Maharashtra (19,475)	9.8%

- In the **NCRB**, traffic deaths are counted as part of the larger umbrella of accidental deaths.

1) Traffic deaths	42.6%
2) Sudden deaths	16.2%
3) Miscellaneous causes	15.9%
4) Drowning	8.6%
5) Falls	5.7%
6) Poisoning	4.6%
7) Electrocution	3.4%
8) Accidental fire	1.3%
9) Forces of Nature	1.7%

Preventable

- The report reveals that of the **1.99 lakh traffic-related deaths** recorded in **2024**,

road accidents,	88%
railway accidents,	0%
incidents on railway tracks	8.5%
railway premises, and	2.5%
accidents at railway crossings.	1%

- **Two-wheelers** involved in **most fatal** accidents (84,599 deaths)
 - followed by **pedestrians** (25,769 deaths) and **cars** (23,739 deaths).
 - Most of the deaths due to two-wheeler accidents :
 - 1) **Tamil Nadu** (11,786 deaths) and
 - 2) **Uttar Pradesh** (8,575 deaths).

- A large number of deaths due to **SUV, car, or jeep accidents** :
Uttar Pradesh (4,575 deaths).

- **Cause-wise** road accident data shows that

- 1) Speeding (58%)
- 2) Dangerous or careless driving (26.3%)
- 3) Weather conditions (2.9%)
- 4) Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (1.9%)
- 5) Animal crossing (1.5%)
- 6) Other causes (9.4%)

✂ Most of the road accidents were reported between **6 pm and 9 pm**, accounting for **20.8% of the total road accidents**.

- The **road-wise classification** of accident data shows

- that while **national highways** have a share of only 2.1 per cent of the total road length in India (1.32 lakh km out of 63.3 lakh km roads), they account for **29.8%** of total road accidents.
- **State highways** reported **22%** of road accidents,
- with **other roads** accounting for **48.2%** of the total road accidents.



- **Suburban rail network and accidents**
Maharashtra accounted for the **highest share at 28.9%** of the total.
- The **month-wise** distribution of this data shows that most of the accidents were reported in **October (8.8%)**.
 - A lot of passengers **return to their homes** from cities for **festivals** during this month.

- In **railway crossing** accidents,
 - 1) Uttar Pradesh (32.3%)
 - 2) West Bengal (29.1%)
 - 3) Kerala (14.1%)

Who counts India's road accident deaths, why data see discrepancies

- The data on road accidents and fatalities are released every year by two central agencies-

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)	National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).
1.77 lakh	1.81 lakh

- While the difference may not appear large, the gap rises to nearly 4,000 deaths over the period under analysis. Since it involves human lives, each disparity should be treated seriously and with concern, say analysts tracking the numbers.
- The **policeman**, who is typically the **first responder**, is regarded as the best source of primary data.
 - The **Transport Research Wing (TRW)**, a division of **MoRTH**, collects accident data from the state police departments in the given format consisting of 21 types of data from the police.
 - However, the report often gets delayed due to **delays in data sharing by the states**, with the 2023 report being the latest available report. Thus, the ministry has shifted to **eDAR/iRAD** data for its decisions.
- The **NCRB**, on the other hand, collects the data from → State Crime Record Bureaus (**SCRBs**). → The SCRBs collect data from District Crime Record Bureaus (**DCRBs**), →

which in turn get the data from the **police stations**. The source of both departments' data is the same.

Cause of the differences

- ☞ While the source of road accident data is the police, **the difference is in the proactiveness in supplying the data.**

Since the police are under the Home Ministry , they have to give them (NCRB) the data in any case.	For MoRTH , ○ they have to use multiple channel to procure data as they are a different authority. ○ Police doesn't share any add on data.
--	--

Internationally, around

- 50% of reporting countries relied on **police data**,
- 7% on the **health departments** and
- another 11% from **transport departments**.

● **eDAR SYSTEM**

- In the eDAR system, police personnel enter details about the accident and geotag them with photos in the app.
- However, there is a possibility of under-reporting fatalities by the police if deaths take place after 30 days and go unreported.

Delhi's pollution level has dipped. But that doesn't mean policymakers can rest easy

Ozone does not produce the haze associated with PM pollution.

However, its public-health implications should not be downplayed. Short-term exposure can cause chest pain, cough and throat irritation, while in the long-term, it can exacerbate chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma.

- Delhi's air quality index shows that pollution levels have dipped with the onset of summer. That shouldn't be a cause for complacency for policymakers.
 - The need to continually monitor interactions between pollutants and meteorological conditions.

Vehicular exhaust,	incidents do not change with the seasons.
construction dust,	
coal-based power generation, and	
waste-burning	

- What changes, instead, is how these emissions behave once released into the atmosphere.

In winter , <u>temperature inversions and stagnant atmospheric conditions</u> mean	<u>pollutants are trapped close to the ground,</u>	<u>leading to high concentrations of particulate matter (PM).</u>
--	--	---

In summer ,	emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs)	<u>interact with the sun's strong rays</u>
		to produce ozone.

- The Central Pollution Control Board data since 2015 shows that the **concentration of the pollutant is the highest in May.**

- **Ozone does not produce the haze associated with PM pollution.**
- **Public-health implications:**
 - Short-term exposure can cause chest pain, cough and throat irritation.
 - In the long-term, it can exacerbate chronic respiratory diseases.
- **Environmental implication:**
 - Ozone is **primarily an outdoor pollutant** but can infiltrate indoor spaces.
 - It is also known to affect vegetation, damaging ecosystems.

PM affects both indoor and outdoor

The country's air-quality standards and emergency response mechanisms —	such as Delhi's GRAP —	are largely built around PM thresholds.
---	-------------------------------	--

- Regulatory frameworks often operate in silos, **targeting specific pollutants** without accounting for how they behave in different seasons.
 - For example, measures to reduce vehicular emissions focus largely on particulate filters but overlook NOX emissions, which are critical precursors for ozone formation.
 - VOC emissions are difficult to monitor because they originate from multiple sources.
- Fundamentally, however, the approach to **reduce ozone pollution** should not be very different from curbing PM emissions — it requires
 - **long-term shifts towards cleaner commuting modes,**
 - **improving public transport,**
 - **tighter fuel standards, and**
 - **reduced dependence on coal-based energy generation.**
- The study shows that **poor air is becoming an all-weather problem in Delhi.** It underlines the need for widening the lens through which pollution is understood.

Operational silos are departments, teams, or systems within an organization that operate independently, restricting the sharing of information, resources, and goals with others.

UPSC's hardcore

- **Ozone layer** (15-40 km above earth) depletion

is the gradual thinning of Earth's stratospheric ozone layer,	caused by the release of man-made chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
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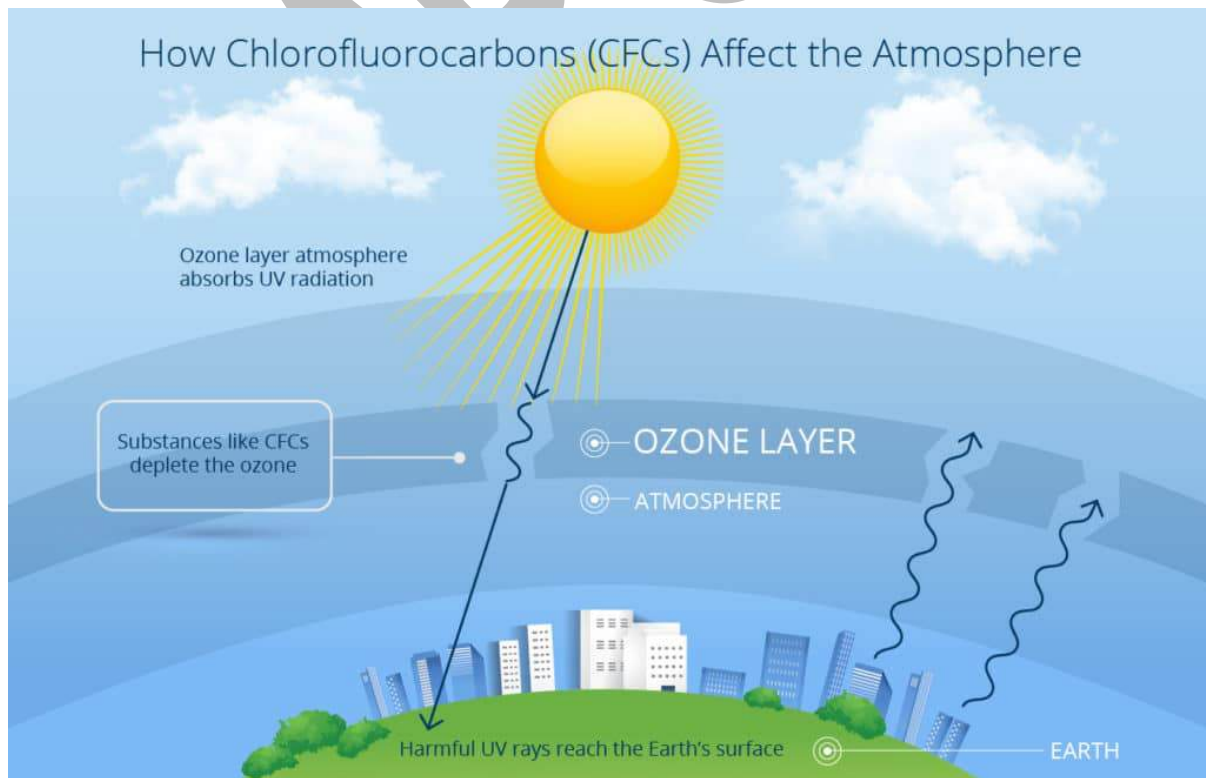
- This depletion allows harmful ultraviolet (**UV-B**) radiation to reach the surface, increasing risks of **skin cancer and cataracts**.

- **Ozone-depleting substances (ODS)** such as
 - CFCs,
 - halons, and
 - carbon tetrachloride, which are used in refrigeration, air conditioning, and aerosols

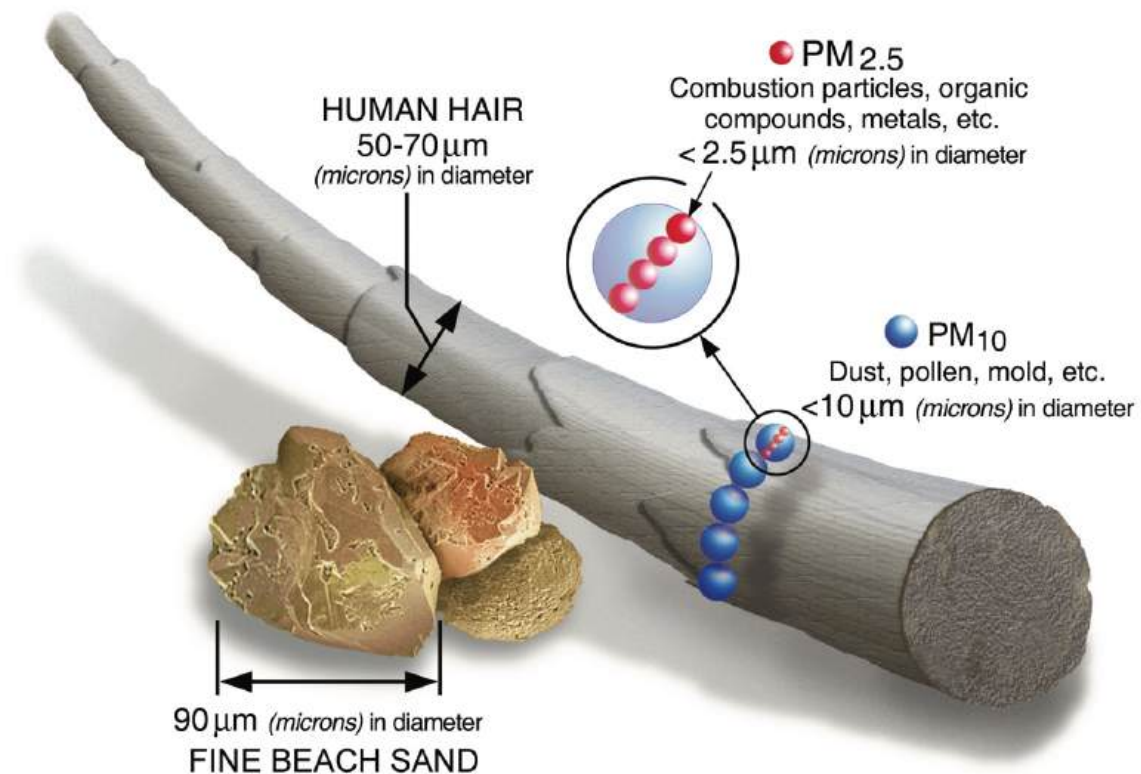
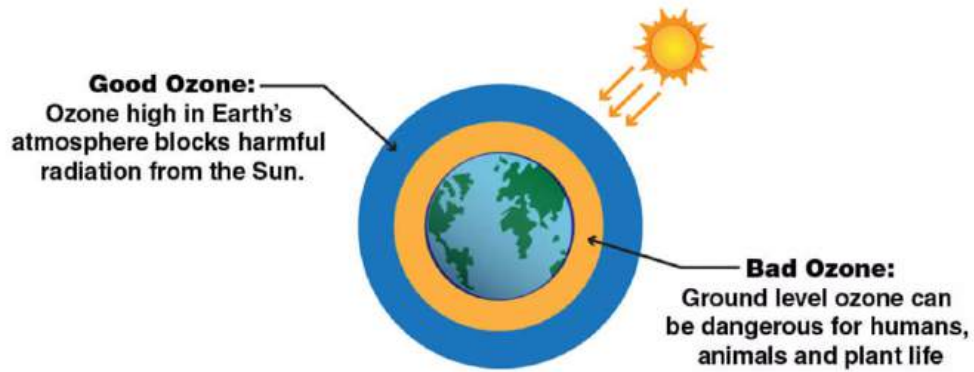
- **The "Ozone Hole":** This refers to the severe depletion observed over Antarctica during the springtime, which began in the late 1970s.

- **Effects on Health and Environment:** Increased UV radiation
 - raises rates of skin cancer and cataracts,
 - suppresses the immune system,
 - reduces agricultural productivity, and
 - harms marine ecosystems (especially phytoplankton).

- **Recovery and Regulation:**
 The **Montreal Protocol of 1987**, along with subsequent amendments, has successfully phased out over 99% of controlled ozone-depleting substances. As a result, the ozone layer is showing signs of recovery and is expected to return to 1980 levels around 2066



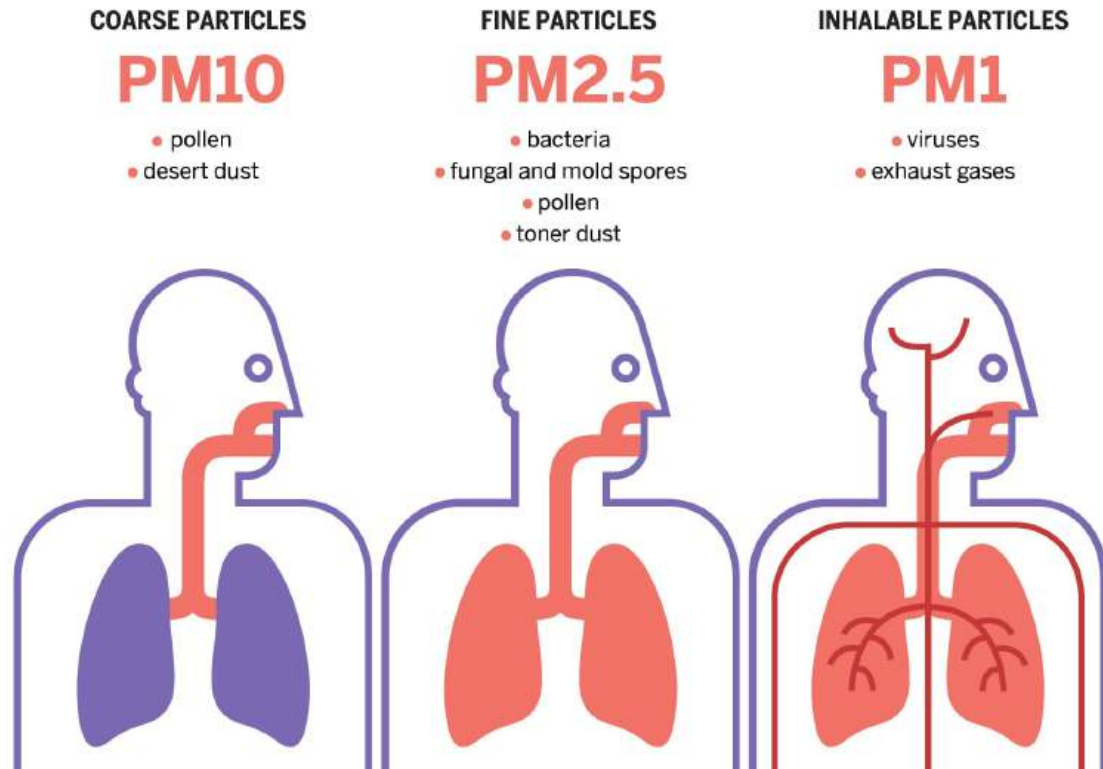
Ozone: Good and Bad



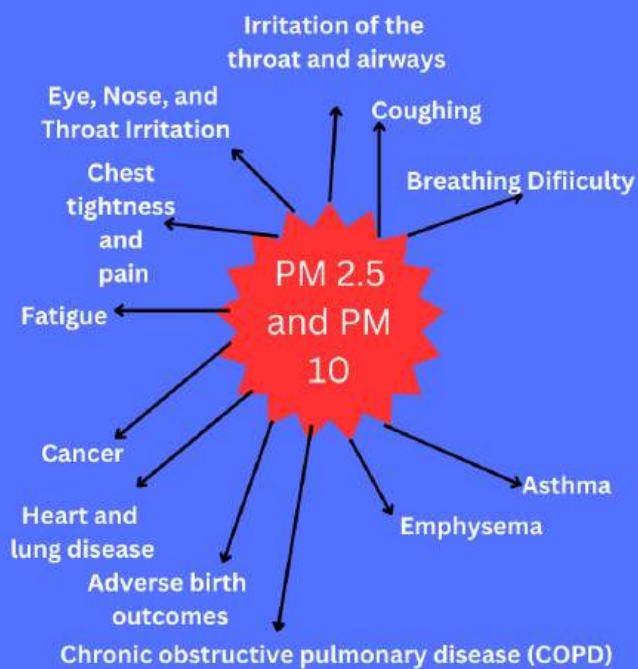
- ✂ PM_{2.5} refers to fine particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter – roughly 30 times smaller than a human hair.

PENETRATION OF PARTICLES INTO THE BODY

The smaller the particles, the more dangerous they are



Adverse Health Effects Of PM 2.5 & PM 10 On Workers



Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

A key ocean current is collapsing. This could be devastating for the world and India

The findings have particular significance for India, where hundreds of millions of people depend on the summer monsoon for their agricultural livelihoods and water supplies.

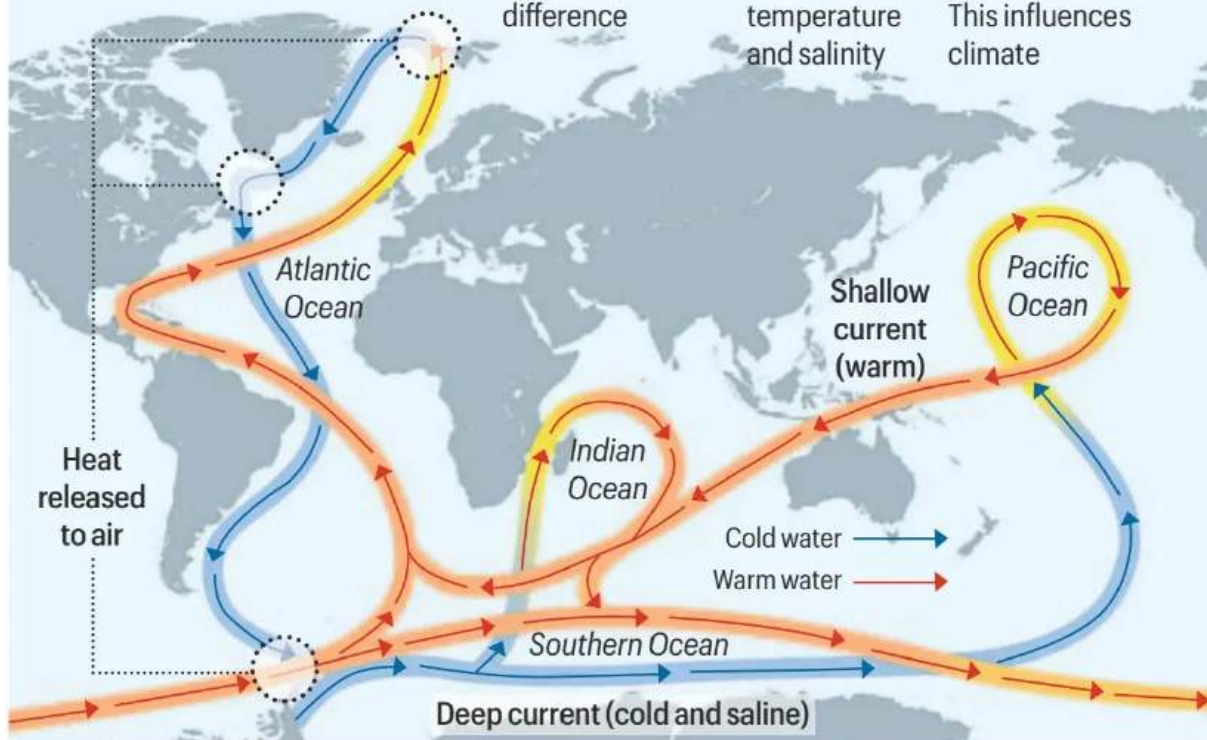
- Scientists are increasingly alarmed about the stability of a vast system of ocean currents in the Atlantic, after new research suggested it could weaken far more severely than previously thought.
- The **Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)**, which regulates climate across much of the globe, may slow by up to 59% by 2100, with potentially devastating consequences for weather systems as far away as the Indian subcontinent.
- AMOC is the reason **Europe has a mild climate**, and it heavily influences rainfall in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

• **How ocean currents warm up, cool down**

OCEAN WATER moves because of density difference

DENSITY DIFFERS because of temperature and salinity

THE MOVEMENT of oceans also moves heat. This influences climate



WHY AMOC COLLAPSE COULD TRIGGER A GLOBAL CRISIS

1



THE OCEAN'S THERMOSTAT:

The AMOC is a massive "conveyor belt" of ocean currents in the Atlantic that moves heat across the globe, heavily influencing worldwide weather patterns.

2



A LOOMING COLLAPSE:

Melting Arctic ice is dumping fresh water into the Atlantic, acting as a brake on these currents. Scientists warn the system is slowing down and could cross a catastrophic "tipping point" of no return.

3



GLOBAL CHAOS:

If the AMOC collapses, it will disrupt weather globally, trapping heat in ways that make phenomena like El Niño far more unpredictable and extreme.

4



THREAT TO INDIA:

For India, a halted Atlantic conveyor belt would pull the tropical rain belt southward, severely destabilising the summer monsoon, triggering longer dry spells, and threatening the nation's agriculture.

09.05.2026

'Tyranny of the elected' : Why Supreme Court has flagged Election Commission appointment procedure

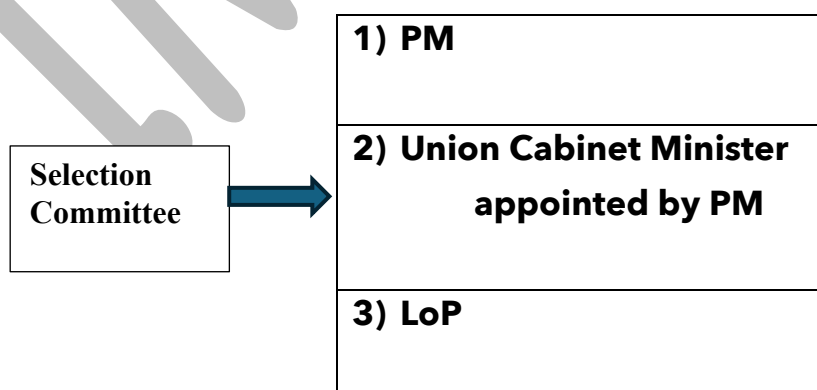
Until 2023, no law detailed the procedure for appointing Election Commissioners. Here is why a law that laid down the process is under legal challenge.

Backdrop

- The Supreme Court on Thursday (May 7) described Parliament's decades-long delay in enacting a law for appointments to the Election Commission, until it was directed to do so in 2023, as "tyranny of the elected".
- Justice Dipankar Datta bench was hearing challenges to the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.**

2023 Law on EC appointments

- This law, introduced to address the legislative gap, came under legal challenge in 2024 as it **removed the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the selection panel** for Election Commissioners, replacing the CJI with a Union Cabinet minister appointed by the Prime Minister.....all executive representation.



▪

A Search Committee to be headed by Union Law minister → to prepare a panel of names for the selection		
Selection committee is not bound by the shortlisted panel	May accept	
	May not	Can consider “any other person” meeting the eligibility criteria.

▪ **Criticism:**

- Independence of the body
- Appointment would be in the choice of the government.

▪ **1991 EC Act didn't cover Appointments:**

While the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, regulated salaries, tenure and the commission's functioning, it did not cover appointments.

Appointment procedure prior to EC law, 2023

- In the absence of such a law, appointments remained under the executive's domain.

○

The Union Law Ministry would prepare a panel,
suggesting names to the PM,
whose recommendation would go to the President.

- Over time, ECs were almost always drawn from the bureaucracy, and the senior-most EC would **usually** become the CEC.

What was the Supreme Court's 2023 Anoop Baranwal ruling?

- In its March 2023 ruling in *Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India*, the Supreme Court **laid down an interim process** for appointing Election Commissioners until Parliament enacted a law on the issue.
- The President shall make CEC and EC appointments
- on the advice of a **three-member committee**

1) PM
2) LoP/ Leader of largest opposition party
3) CJI

- The court held that the EC is like a “guardian of democracy”, and that the individuals overseeing elections must act **impartially and honestly**.
- The court then made what it called a “**fervent appeal**” to Parliament to strengthen the Election Commission institutionally and financially. It asked the government to consider creating an independent secretariat and charging the commission's expenditure to the Consolidated Fund of India, warning against situations where the executive could indirectly influence the poll body by “starving it” of its resources.

The *Anoop Baranwal* judgment also expanded the understanding of voting rights.

The bench held that the **right to vote** flows from the Constitution and that casting a vote is a part of **freedom of expression** guaranteed under **Article 19(1)(a)**.

ECI

Qualification

- ☐ ... who are holding or have held a post equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Govt
- ☐ ... persons of integrity
- ☐having knowledge of and experience in management and conduct of elections.

Terms

- ☐ 6 years/65 years

Reappointment

- ☐ Not eligible

Salary and Status

- ☐ Equivalent to SC judge

11.05.2026

Judicial reform shouldn't stop at SC

Move to increase the number of SC judges must form part of a comprehensive plan to reduce pendency across the judicial system

- The Union Cabinet's decision to approve a Bill increasing the Supreme Court's strength **from 34 to 38 judges (including the Chief Justice of India)** is a welcome step towards easing the backlog of cases before the apex court. However, without structural reforms, the judicial hours that the four new judges may contribute could be absorbed by the ever-expanding docket.
 - According to the National Judicial Data Grid, as of May 7, the Supreme Court is burdened with over 93,000 pending cases — more than a 50 per cent increase since 2019, when the number of SC judges was last raised.

- Pendency before the SC accounts for only about 0.14% of total case pendency across all courts.

Most of the pendencies are with HCs and District courts

- This is negligible compared to around 12% in the high courts and 88% in the district courts.
- The SC mostly functions at or close to its sanctioned strength.
- **SC judges dispose of roughly 90%** of the cases instituted each year.
- **Additional judges or better calendar management** may marginally ease the pressure on individual benches, but they cannot address the underlying reasons for mounting pendency: The Court's expanding jurisdiction and the volume of litigation generated by the **state, the country's biggest litigant.**
 - Last year, Supreme Court Justice B V Nagarathna underscored this concern. She stressed the need for the government to "litigate with restraint and be a model litigator".

- Courts must keep pace with the rising volume of disputes accompanying population growth and expanding economic activity.

Top-down approach is not sustainable

- At the apex court — the court of last resort — it is especially important to ensure that access to justice is given real meaning; prolonged incarceration of undertrials due to delays undermines this right.
- However, given the overwhelming volume of cases in district courts, **a purely top-down approach to reform is unsustainable.**
 - Trial courts account for over 4.92 crore pending cases. Successive Law Commission reports have highlighted that India's **judge-population ratio**, at roughly 19 judges per million people, remains far below that of countries such as the US and China, where the figure is about 150 per million.
 - The move to increase the number of SC judges must therefore form part of a comprehensive plan to reduce pendency across the judicial system.

Quick Prlm:

- Increasing the number of judge from 34 to 38
- Increasing the judges number would not solve the backlog problem....structural reform is required.
- Supreme Court is burdened with over 93,000 pending cases — more than a 50% increase since 2019 (strength increased from 30 to 33)

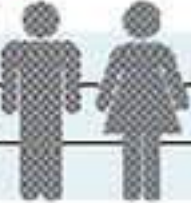
Pendency around 5.58 crore	SC → 0.14%
	HCs → 12%
	District Courts → 88%

CAUSES OF DELAY IN DISPOSAL OF CASES IN LOWER COURTS

Counsel not available	62,03,680
Accused absconding	35,18,310
Missing witnesses	26,67,741
Stayed by lower courts	22,64,721
Awaiting documents	14,18,493
Frequent appeals	4,51,634
Stayed by dist courts	5,725
Stayed by SC	914

Total civil & criminal cases: 1,77,74,583

Source: National Judicial Data Grid; As of Sept 25, 2025

PENDING CASES		SHORTAGE OF JUDGES	
SUBORDINATE COURTS 2.76 CRORE			
HIGH COURTS 43 LAKH			
SUPREME COURT 54,000			
		Sanctioned	Vacant
		SUBORDINATE COURTS	22,444 5,223
		HIGH COURTS	1,079 427
		SUPREME COURT	31 6
NO OF JUDGES			
(per million population)			
US	107		
UK	51		
India	17		

JUSTICE DELAYED States with highest no. of cases pending for 10 years or more				
State/UT	10-20 Years	20-30 Years	Above 30 Years	Above 10 Years
Uttar Pradesh	11,71,384	2,26,482	41,210	14,39,076
Maharashtra	2,56,595	58,404	23,483	3,38,482
West Bengal	4,04,399	52,108	14,345	4,70,852
Bihar	4,79,936	76,860	11,713	5,68,509
Odisha	1,85,791	33,822	4,248	2,23,861
INDIA	28,70,776	4,89,255	1,00,267	34,60,298

Source: National Judicial Data Grid

13.05.2026

CS (Mains)

Latest **NEET** fiasco raises serious questions about **NTA's** capacity to safeguard sanctity of exams

A country that wants to reap its demographic dividend must ensure the credibility of institutions that shape young people's lives. Compromised examinations are unacceptable

- On May 3, more than 22 lakh students sat for one of the most consequential examinations in the country — the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the gateway to roughly 1.3 lakh MBBS seats in India's medical colleges.
 - For them, the brutally competitive test was the culmination of painstaking preparation as well as financial and emotional investment.
 - Less than 10 days later, they suffered a devastating disappointment after the examination was cancelled because

investigators reportedly found extensive overlap between the actual paper and a pre-circulated “guess paper”.

- Multiple suspects have reportedly been detained, and the Centre has handed the case to the CBI. But reducing this episode to a mere law-and-order breach understates the scale of institutional failure.
- It is an indictment of the **National Testing Agency (NTA)**, the body entrusted with conducting some of the country's most high-stakes examinations.
 - **Created in 2017** to professionalise testing, the NTA was mandated to standardise procedures and eliminate the inconsistencies of fragmented state-level systems.
 - *Instead, its record has been steadily marred by paper leaks and recurring allegations of irregularities.*
 - The latest NEET fiasco — **the second major controversy** surrounding the medical entrance examination in two years — has raised serious questions about the agency's capacity to safeguard the sanctity of examinations on which thousands of youngsters stake their futures.
- Conducting an examination of this scale is **undeniably a logistical challenge** — this year's NEET was conducted across nearly 5,500 centres in more than 550 cities.
 - The NTA has highlighted its use of technology-driven safeguards.
 - But the alleged circulation of papers before the examination shows that a foolproof system is elusive.
 - **After the 2024 NEET controversy**, the Centre constituted a committee headed by former ISRO chairperson **K Radhakrishnan** to suggest measures to improve the NTA's working.
 - The agency is yet to completely implement the **digital-first approach** underlined by the committee and has dithered in acting on its most meaningful recommendation — improving

accountability at all steps of the examination process.

- The NTA **depends heavily on private examination centre operators and logistics service providers**, even after several paper leak episodes — including that of the NEET in 2024 in Jharkhand — have underlined the links between these vendors and the coaching industry.

: At the same time, the agency has **evaded institutional responsibility** for failures by directing blame at external operators.

- The latest NEET leak is a warning.
 - To reap the demographic dividend, the state must ensure the credibility of institutions that shape young lives.
 - Compromised examinations are unacceptable. Fixing this will require, first, assigning accountability.

Prlm's pick

- **National Testing Agency (NTA)**
 - has been established in **2017**
 - as a premier, specialist, **autonomous** and self-sustained testing organization under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**
 - to conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in premier higher educational institutions.
 - Comes under the **Ministry of Education**
- **Conducting exams:**
 - NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test)
 - JEE (Main) (Joint Entrance Examination)
 - CUET (Common University Entrance Test)

- UGC-NET (National Eligibility Test)
- NCET (National Common Entrance Test)
- Common Management Admission Test (CMAT)
- JEE (Hotel Management)

□ **Foundation : Backdrop**

- The National Testing Agency (NTA) was formed following the recommendations of a committee comprising **directors of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** in **2010**
- The genesis of a single, autonomous national testing body traces back to the **Programme of Action (1992)** associated with the **National Policy on Education (1986)**.

West Asia crisis opens space for **fertiliser** policy reform

When product availability is itself a problem, how much can one subsidise?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to Indian farmers to cut chemical fertiliser consumption by half and **move towards "natural farming"** may not be practical or desirable.
 - The underlying intent, though, may only be to curtail demand and push farmers to use fertilisers judiciously — which is sensible and necessary.
 - Fertilisers supply **essential nutrients** to crops like **nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K)** and **sulphur (S)** for them to yield harvestable produce.

Unfortunately, India has very little natural gas and hardly any rock phosphate, potash or elemental sulphur reserves to produce fertilisers, forcing heavy reliance on imports.

- That's being tested now by the conflict in West Asia and closure of the **Strait of Hormuz, through which up to 30 per cent of global fertiliser trade passed** till recently.
 - Successive governments have erred by not just subsidising fertilisers — which entails outflow of scarce foreign exchange — but also encouraging the **overuse** of high-analysis products, especially **urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP)**, causing severe soil nutrient imbalances.
 - Farmers were initially applying fertilisers such as ammonium sulphate (containing 20.5 per cent N and 23 per cent S) and single super phosphate (16 per cent P and 11 per cent S).
 - These gave way to **urea and DAP, having very high (46 per cent) content of N and P** respectively, with no other macro or micro nutrients.
 - The nutrient use efficiency of the latter fertilisers is low; **only around a third of the N in urea is absorbed by the plants,** with the rest lost through volatilisation as ammonia gas or leaching underground after conversion into nitrate.
 - Farmers require products that deliver nutrients more efficiently.
 - The government should simply free or raise the retail prices of fertilisers to their import parity levels. → → It can replace the existing product-wise subsidy regime with a per-acre payment of, say, Rs 5,000 for all cultivating farmers. → → The monies from both the fertiliser subsidy savings and PM-Kisan could be redirected towards a direct income support scheme.
- ✂ The West Asia crisis has made the present system of subsidy and price controls on fertilisers unsustainable both fiscally and physically: When product availability is itself a problem, how much can one subsidise? Either way, it opens up space for reform that cannot wait any longer.

Own understanding:

Overuse Issue

- The overuse of Urea and Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) severely degrades soil fertility, causes severe water and atmospheric pollution, and reduces long-term crop yields.
 - Continuous excessive application disrupts the **ideal NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium) ratio of (4:2:1).** triggering a systemic crisis in agricultural ecosystems.

Soil Degradation and Nutrient Imbalance

- 1) **Soil Acidification:** Over-application of urea increases the acidity of the soil. This acidic environment reduces
 - microbial diversity,
 - stunts beneficial soil bacteria, and
 - makes it difficult for plants to absorb vital **micronutrients like iron, zinc, and boron.**
- 2) **Nutrient Imbalance:** Using too much nitrogen (from Urea and DAP) and phosphorus (from DAP) **without adequate potassium** pushes the soil out of balance. This eventually causes plant roots and foliage to "burn" and stops seeds from germinating properly.
- 3) **Environmental Pollution:**
 - **Groundwater Contamination:** Excess nitrogen leaches into the groundwater as nitrates.
 - High nitrate levels in drinking water are linked to serious health hazards such as blue baby syndrome (methemoglobinemia) and various thyroid disorders.
 - **Eutrophication:** Rainwater washes excess phosphorus and nitrogen from fields **into nearby rivers and lakes.**
 - This causes **toxic algal blooms that deplete oxygen,** killing fish and destroying aquatic life.

4) Climate Change

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Soil microorganisms convert the excess nitrogen from fertilizers into **nitrous oxide (N₂O**) which is **a powerful greenhouse gas** with a **global warming** potential nearly 300 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO₂)

5) Economic and Health Impacts

- **Reduced Crop Yields:** Instead of increasing harvests, excessive fertilizer use makes plants highly susceptible to pests and diseases, lowering overall grain yields in the long term.
- **Fiscal Burden:** The heavy use of these subsidized fertilizers inflates the government's subsidy bill, which drains resources away from other sustainable farming initiatives

✂ Sustainable Alternatives:

Agricultural experts highly recommend shifting toward balanced fertilization and adopting alternatives like Nano Urea and Nano DAP. These modern formulations require much smaller quantities, significantly improve nutrient absorption, and reduce environmental damage.

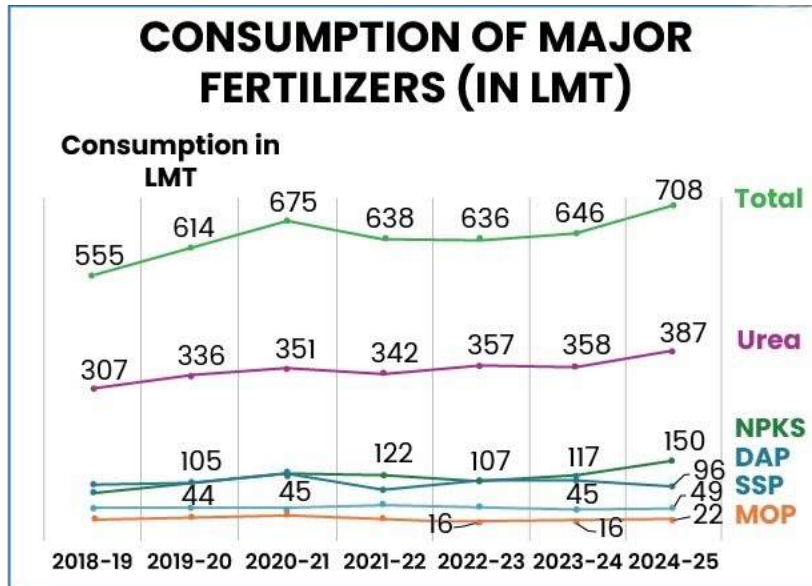
DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate)

- DAP is the second most commonly used fertilizer in India after urea.
- DAP is a preferred fertilizer in India because it contains both Nitrogen and Phosphorus which are primary macro-nutrients and part of 18 essential plant nutrients.
- Fertilizer grade DAP contains **18% Nitrogen and 46% Phosphorus**.
 - It is manufactured by reacting Ammonia with Phosphoric acid under controlled conditions in fertilizer plants.

Urea

- Urea is a white crystalline compound commonly used as a **synthetic fertilizers** in agriculture.
- When applied to the soil or crops, **urea is broken down by enzymes into ammonia and carbon dioxide.**

- The ammonia then gets converted into ammonium ions, which can be taken up by plant roots and used for growth and development.



14.05.2026

AMID PRIME MINISTER'S CALL FOR AUSTERITY MEASURES

Gold, silver import duty now at 15% to secure forex



☞ The government has also increased

import duty on gold and silver findings to **5%** -

the findings are small components such as hooks, clasps, clamps, pins, screws used to hold the whole or a part of a piece of jewellery in place.

☞ The effective import duty on platinum has also been increased to **15.4%** from 6.4%.

☞ Platinum findings will attract a **5.4%** import duty.

✂ Additionally, a **3% Integrated GST (IGST)** will be payable on all imports of precious metals in addition to the BCD (basic customs duty) and AIDC (Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess) @ .

	Gold and Silver	Platinum
BCD	10%	10%
AIDC	5%	5.4%

Backdrop

- State-owned oil marketing companies suffering losses of almost Rs 1,000 crore to Rs 1,200 crore a day.
- PM appeal for austerity measures
 - appeal to citizens to reduce petroleum consumption,
 - avoid nonessential foreign travel and gold purchases for a year

as part of measures to help the country deal with global disruptions and challenges.

✂ Since the onset of the conflict, foreign exchange reserves have been **depleted by almost \$38 billion.**

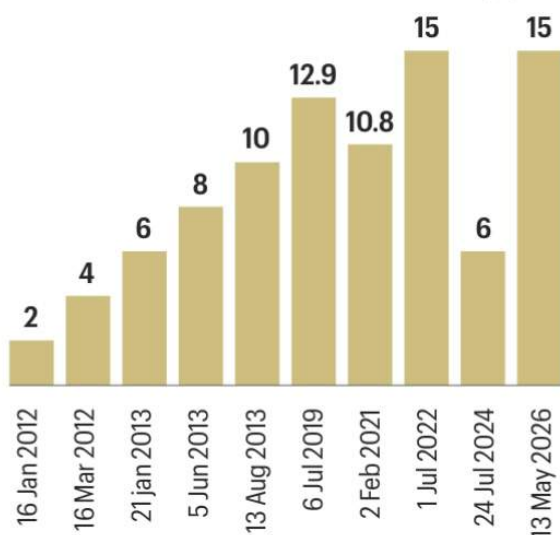
April gold imports surge 82%, goods trade deficit widens to \$28 billion

• WILL GOLD, SILVER DUTY HIKE CURB IMPORTS?

The government has raised import duty on gold and silver to 15% each. While the move is aimed at reducing imports and narrowing the current account deficit amid the challenges posed by the ongoing war in West Asia, Nomura economists say, historically, the effectiveness of increases in duties in controlling

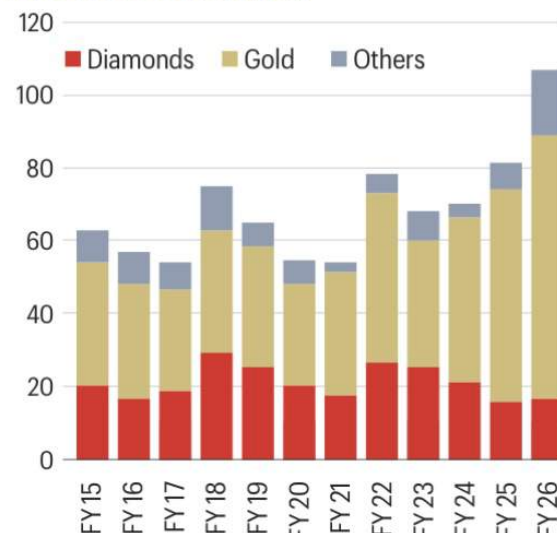
imports has been "mixed". The duty on gold has broadly risen over the last 15 years (chart 1). And while the import bill has fluctuated, the trend has been upward. Meanwhile, imports of gold, silver, platinum, diamonds, and pearls together rose to \$105 billion, or 2.7% of GDP, last year (chart 2).

FIG. 1: INDIA'S CUSTOMS DUTY ON GOLD (%)



NOTE: DATA SOURCED FROM INDIAN GOLD IMPORT DUTIES REDUCED TO THE LOWEST LEVEL IN OVER A DECADE, 26 JULY 2024, WORLD GOLD COUNCIL. SOURCE: WORLD GOLD COUNCIL AND NOMURA GLOBAL ECONOMICS. SOURCE: NOMURA

FIG. 2: INDIA'S ANNUAL IMPORTS OF PRECIOUS METALS (\$ BN)



NOTE: FY26 ARE NOMURA ESTIMATES BASED ON ACTUALS UNTIL FEBRUARY 2026. SOURCE: CEIC, COMMERCE MINISTRY AND NOMURA GLOBAL ECONOMICS. SOURCE: NOMURA

Fuel price hike points to tougher measures ahead

As Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said recently, "managing the current account credibly, financing it, and preventing further currency depreciation are the central macroeconomic imperatives of FY27"

Days after the Prime Minister's appeal to the people to lower the consumption of petroleum products and conserve foreign exchange, steps are being taken to bring the internal adjustments needed to deal with the global energy shock. On 15th May, retail prices of petrol and diesel were

raised by Rs 3 per litre. Earlier, the central government had increased the customs duty on gold and silver. Considering the strain on the country's balance of payments — both current and capital accounts are under pressure due to high oil prices and capital outflows — and the rupee's weakness, more measures may be in the offing. As Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said recently, “managing the current account credibly, financing it, and preventing further currency depreciation are the central macroeconomic imperatives of FY27”.

The fuel price hike will ease only part of the pressure. The price of India's crude oil basket surged to \$114.48 per barrel in April, and stands at \$106.18 in May. The combined under-recoveries of state-owned oil companies have been estimated at around Rs 30,000 crore a month on petrol, diesel and cooking gas. This suggests that larger retail price increases are needed. The strategy, though, seems to be to stagger the hikes, which will ease the price shock to the consumer. Inflation is already edging upwards — the wholesale price index surged to 8.3 per cent in April, driven by fuel prices. This will complicate matters for the monetary policy committee when it meets next. On the other hand, the decision to raise the duty on gold is driven by the government's belief that higher levies will help moderate avoidable import demand, easing the pressure on the external account and the currency. The numbers are staggering — **India's gold imports exceeded \$70 billion during the last financial year.** However, there are concerns that the higher levies could lead to distortions in the market, possibly leading to the diversion of physical supplies.

The current situation calls for tough measures. **Raising the duty is, however, a band-aid solution.** Reducing the investment demand for gold will need to be tackled at multiple levels. More fuel price hikes will also be needed to reflect global realities. Beyond these immediate measures, deeper, far-reaching reforms are called for to address the stress points in the economy.

16.05.2026

Winds plus heat: The triggers for deadly UP storm

Backdrop

- More than **100 people died** due to powerful thunderstorms that hit Uttar Pradesh earlier this week.....wind speed in some places 100 kmph and in some 130 kmph according to IMD.
- The atmospheric phenomenon, called **Andhi** in meteorological literature, **is a common annual phenomenon in the region**, but the devastation this year is more widespread.
 - The worst-hit district was Prayagraj, which reported 21 deaths, followed by Mirzapur (19) and Bhadohi (16).

Mechanism



During the pre-monsoon season (April and May),	sometimes extending into July.
many parts of northern India witness these dust storms,	accompanied by thunder, lightning, rain, and, at times, hail.
Such events occur globally, too, <u>particularly in arid regions.</u>	

- Most such thunderstorms are uneventful.
 - ☞ They involve **gusty winds of speeds up to 40 and 60 kmph.** but more powerful ones can cause **widespread destruction.**
 - ☞ **Wind speeds of over 90 kmph can uproot big trees.**
 - ↪ Walls can collapse, electricity poles and billboards can be toppled, and loose objects can become airborne and turn into dangerous projectiles.
 - ↪ Some deaths are reported due to lightning, as well.

- Pre-monsoon thunderstorms in northern India are usually preceded by **intense surface heating**.



Moisture-laden winds, usually from the Bay of Bengal side, provide the necessary fuel.

- Few other coincided conditions:
 - Temperatures crossed 45°C in many regions, while strong south-easterly winds ensured that moisture from the Bay of Bengal reached even northwestern Uttar Pradesh.
 - As a result, the air near the surface was warm and moist.
- Due to the prevailing western disturbances, which are east-moving rain-bearing wind systems that originate beyond Iran and bring rains to India, the air at the top was cool and dry in comparison to the warm air closer to the surface. “This creates instability in the atmosphere, and is a classic triggering mechanism for strong thunderstorms.

Recent precedents

-mainly happens in May and June.
- Up @ 2018 @ 100 deaths
- Around a dozen deaths are reported every year due to thunderstorm events of varying intensity in north India, but these are generally distributed over time.

Forecast accuracy

- Weather agencies can predict thunderstorms well in advance..... BUT the peak wind speeds predictions are still under-estimated.



Local Winds



- ▶ The winds blowing in particular locations due to **specific pressure conditions** prevailing there are called **local winds**.
- ▶ Their influence is felt in **small areas**.
- ▶ Some local winds are **mountain** and **valley winds**, **fohn**, **chinook**, **loo**, **mistral**, etc.

Types of Local Winds

Fohn

- ▶ A local wind experienced in the **valleys of the Alps**.
- ▶ It is a **warm** and **dry** wind descending on the **leeward** side of the mountain.
- ▶ The high temperature of the air is due to its descent from the mountain top.
- ▶ Fohn can raise the temperature by about 12°C within a few hours.
- ▶ It helps in **melting snow** and ripening fruits in the **Swiss valley** on the northern side of the Alps.



Chinook

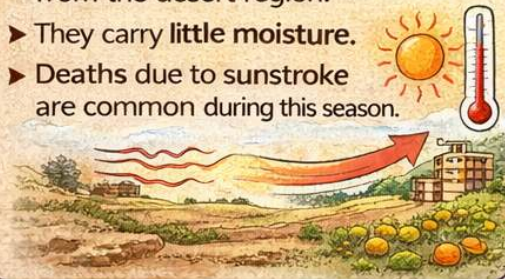
- ▶ A warm local wind descending on the eastern slopes of the **Rocky Mountains** in North America.
- ▶ It melts snow quickly in the spring season.
- ▶ Hence, it is called the **snow eater**.



Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains

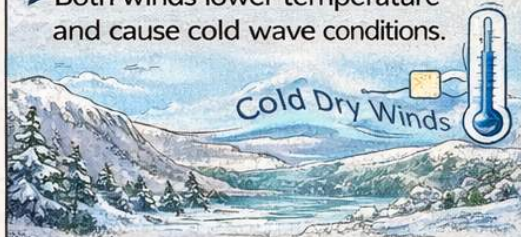
Loo

- ▶ A hot local wind experienced over the **northern plains of India**.
- ▶ These winds blow during **May and June**.
- ▶ They are responsible for **heat waves** in northern India.
- ▶ These are westerly winds originating from the desert region.
- ▶ They carry **little moisture**.
- ▶ Deaths due to **sunstroke** are common during this season.



Mistral and Bora

- ▶ These are cold and dry local winds.
- ▶ **Bora** blows mainly in winter along eastern coast of the **Adriatic Sea** and northern Italy.
- ▶ **Mistral** blows in the **Rhone Valley** of southern France.
- ▶ Both winds lower temperature and cause cold wave conditions.



Rhone Valley of southern France

18.05.2026

WHO declares rare Ebola outbreak in DRC and Uganda a global health emergency

WHO Ebola outbreak declaration raises global concern after the rare Bundibugyo strain spread from DR Congo into Uganda with no approved vaccine available.

For Zaire strain → vaccine available

Backdrop

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda a “**Public Health Emergency of International Concern**” (PHEIC), its highest level of global health alert, after the rare Bundibugyo strain of the virus spread across borders in East Africa.

- According to the WHO, as of May 16,

<u>eastern DRC</u> , mainly in <i>Ituri province</i> .	☐ at least 8 laboratory-confirmed Ebola cases, ☐ 246 suspected cases, and ☐ around 80 suspected deaths
<u>Uganda</u>	☐ 2 cases ☐ 1 death, linked to travellers arriving from Congo.

- More recent reports from leading news agencies said suspected cases had crossed 300, while the death toll was estimated at 88.

What is the Bundibugyo strain?

- The Bundibugyo ebolavirus causes the current outbreak; a rarer strain of Ebola **first identified in Uganda in 2007.**
 - Unlike the more common Zaire strain, there are currently **no approved vaccines or targeted treatments** specifically designed for Bundibugyo Ebola.

- absence of vaccines
- spread into densely populated areashave heightened fears of wider regional transmission.

Why did WHO issue a global alert?

WHO said the outbreak met the threshold for a PHEIC because of:

- cross-border spread between DRC and Uganda,
- rising suspected deaths,
- infections among healthcare workers,
- uncertainty over the true scale of the outbreak, and
- ongoing conflict in eastern Congo that is complicating surveillance gaps containment efforts.

How dangerous is Ebola?

- Ebola spreads through **direct contact** with infected bodily fluids and can cause fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, internal bleeding and organ failure.
- Depending on the strain and medical response, **fatality rates can range between 25% and 90%.**
- The **Bundibugyo** strain → → fatality rate of roughly **25-50%**

Measures to check

- ó emergency response mechanisms
- ó additional medical teams
- ó testing support
- ó contact tracing operations and border surveillance measures

Is this a pandemic like Covid-19?

No. WHO has clarified that the outbreak is not currently considered a pandemic-level global emergency like Covid-19, but it poses a serious regional and international public health threat requiring coordinated action.

• THE VIRUS

WHAT IS EBOLA?

Ebola disease is a severe, often-fatal virus, which causes fever, body aches, vomiting and diarrhoea, and spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected persons.

WHAT IS BUNDIBUGYO STRAIN?

Bundibugyo is a strain of the virus. The outbreak is “extraordinary” as there are no approved Bundibugyo virus-specific therapeutics or vaccines, unlike for Ebola-Zaire strains.

WHICH COUNTRIES HAS IT SPREAD TO?

DRC and Uganda have confirmed cases.

HOW MANY PEOPLE AFFECTED?

The WHO said eight lab-confirmed cases were recorded, 80 suspected deaths and 246 suspected infections.

The Ebola outbreak is a stark reminder that containing infectious disease requires

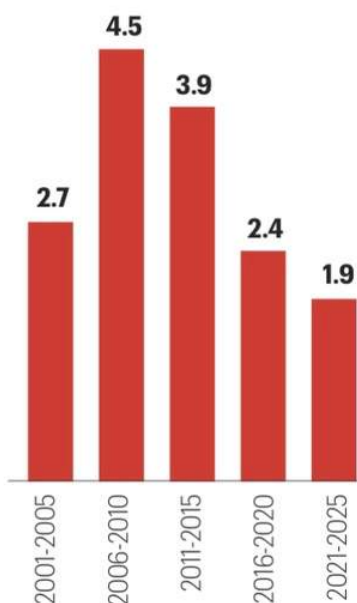
- sustained investment in healthcare,
- scientific cooperation and
- international collaboration.

Indian economy and West Asia war

• CAPITAL ACCOUNT INFLOWS PEAKED 2 DECADES AGO



**CAPITAL AND
FINANCIAL ACCOUNT
(% OF GDP)**



SOURCE: CEIC, BoFA GLOBAL RESEARCH

- The West Asia war has complicated India's external balance, with the import bill widening and the rupee weakening, as the latter accelerates outflows.

- But capital account inflows like foreign direct investment have been falling for years, at least as a percentage of GDP, even if absolute numbers have been rising.

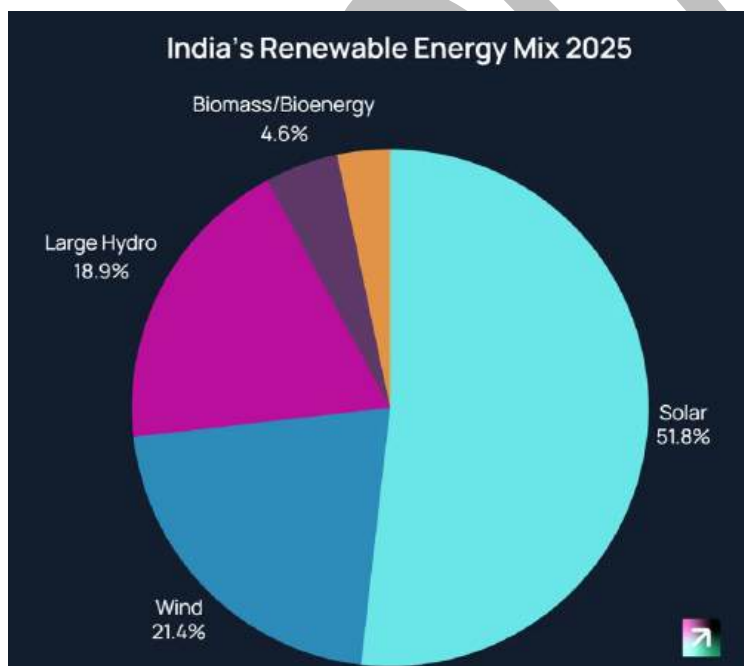
- "This is not to say India is not

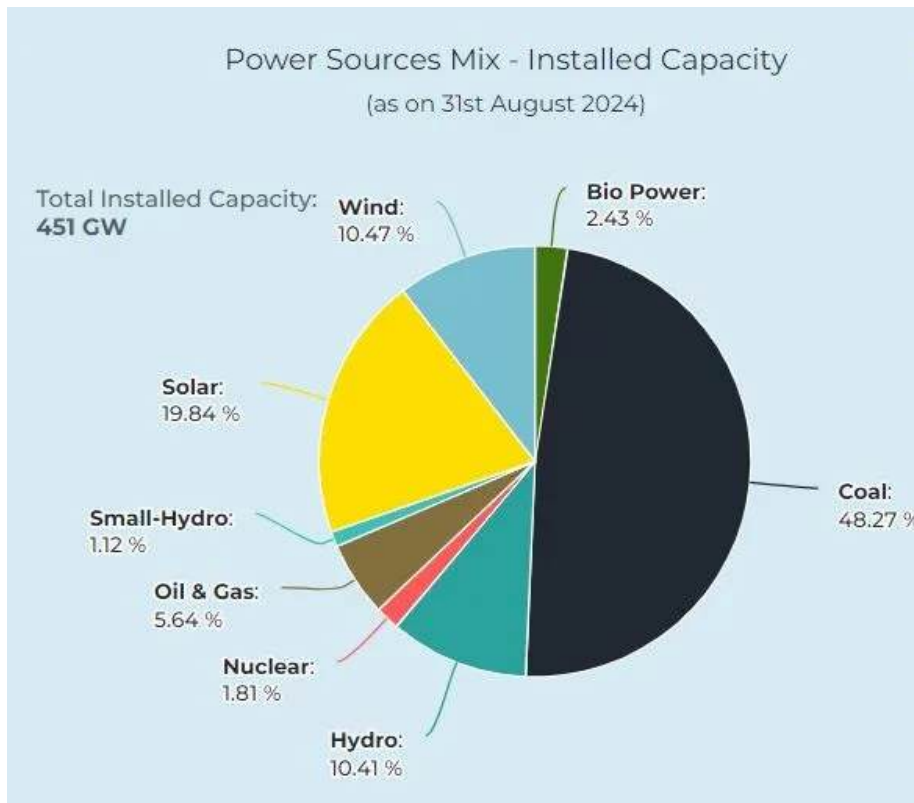
getting inflows, but its relative investment attractiveness appears to have a double-edged problem, especially in a world where the dominant FDI investment flows are shifting feverishly away from sectors where India has a competitive advantage, and more towards which can negatively impact India's services exports," BofA Securities said in a note.

India is rapidly scaling up renewable energy. Now it needs to store it

Solar power generation drops to zero after sunset and wind output fluctuates with changing weather. This is where deploying systems that 'store' energy becomes critical – and where India has fallen short so far.

India's Energy generation	
Total 532 GW	Renewable sources → 53% 1) Solar → 150 GW 2) Wind 3) Hydro 4) Small-hydro 5) Bio

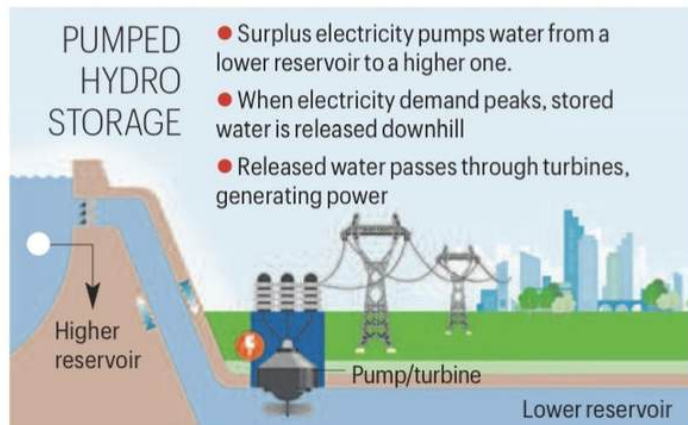




• Storing Power

How is electricity stored?

Energy storage systems store excess renewable electricity and discharge it when demand rises. These are the two most popular types

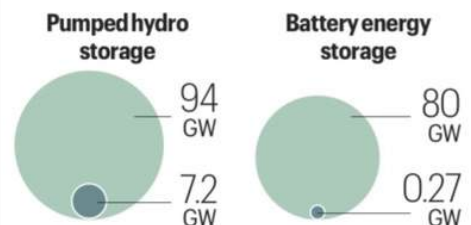


BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE

- Excess electricity is stored in batteries, just like your inverter battery gets charged and stores electricity
- These batteries are mostly made of lithium iron phosphate (LFP), known for their falling cost and reliability
- They discharge this electricity into the grid when needed, just like your inverter battery does when the power goes off

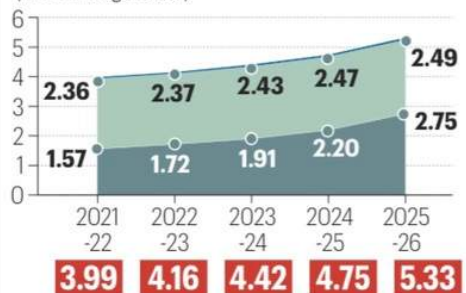
India's storage capacity

Now 2035-36 projection (in gigawatts)



Renewables make up over half of India's power capacity

Renewable Thermal Others Total (in lakh megawatts)



SOURCE: CENTRAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

Types of energy storage

A range of energy storage technologies are being deployed globally. Among them, pumped hydro storage (PHS) and battery energy storage systems (BESS) are currently the most widely used.

A look at these two systems:

PHS	BESS
□ uses surplus electricity to pump water from a lower reservoir to a higher one. □ When electricity demand peaks, it releases the stored water downhill through turbines to generate power.	□ technology stores electricity chemically and discharges it when needed. □ Lithium-ion batteries, particularly lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries, are currently the dominant technology for grid-scale storage because of their - falling costs, - high efficiency and - long operational life. □ Lithium-ion batteries, especially LFP batteries, account for the overwhelming majority of global battery storage deployment. In 2025....almost 90% of total.

Beyond these technologies, several other storage solutions are also being deployed globally, though at a smaller scale.

Concentrating solar-thermal storage systems:	□ This technology uses mirrors that capture and focus sunlight onto a receiver. □ As the receiver gets heated, materials such as molten salt are
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	circulated inside the receiver to store the heat. □ The stored heat can later be used to produce steam. □ This steam is converted into mechanical energy in a turbine, which powers a generator to produce electricity.
Compressed-air energy storage systems:	□ use excess electricity to compress air and store it in underground caverns or tanks. □ When power demand rises, the compressed air is released to drive turbines and generate electricity.
Flywheel energy:	□ storage systems store electricity as rotational energy by spinning a rotor at extremely high speeds. □ Because they can inject power into the grid almost instantly, they are particularly useful for maintaining grid stability and managing short-term fluctuations.
Gravity energy:	□ storage systems use electricity to lift heavy weights to higher elevations. □ When electricity is needed, the weights are lowered, converting gravitational energy back into electricity through generators.

Power trip

Electricity demand can surge at night, when, say, solar output is not available

This mismatch — between when electricity is generated and when it is needed — can stretch the grid and even threaten its stability

19.05.2026

'Bail the rule' : SC questions its own order in Umar Khalid case

On **UAPA and bail**, the Supreme Court must heed the rule it laid down

For Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, the Court said that their prolonged incarceration had not crossed the 'threshold of constitutional impermissibility'.

However, some principles are irrefutable

- The Supreme Court decision granting bail to a person accused in a narco-terrorism case in J&K, in which he had been incarcerated as an undertrial under the UAPA for five years, is significant for more than one reason. The bench comprising Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan has reiterated that even the rigours of stringent bail provisions in terror cases would “melt down” when **prolonged incarceration and delayed trial produce a violation of Article 21** of the Constitution, which guarantees the individual's right to life and personal liberty. It also did something the Court rarely does: It called out its own deviation from the rule.

- In the **2021** ruling in **K A Najeed vs Union of India**, the SC laid down that an undertrial suffering prolonged incarceration with completion of trial not in sight must be granted bail — even under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

- However, the establishment of this rule has been followed by a plurality of judicial approaches, with some benches abiding by the “good law”, and others deviating from it.
- A notable deviation came in the January 2026 order in the bail hearing of the accused in the North-East Delhi riots.

...they stood on a “higher footing in the hierarchy of participation”

- For those who were granted bail in the case, the reason cited was not delay, which the Najeed ruling required, but that they figured lower in a “**hierarchy of offences**” that the Court created.
 - For Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, the Court said that their prolonged incarceration had not crossed the “threshold of constitutional impermissibility”.
- Justice Nagarathna’s bench has now wisely cautioned that if a smaller bench disagrees with a larger one, it must refer the case to the Chief Justice of India, not deviate from it and render the rule meaningless.
 - It is nobody’s case that mechanical consistency must replace judicious interpretation, especially in a polyvocal court with 34 judges. However, some principles are irrefutable. As the bench underlined: “**Ideally, the more serious the accusations are, the speedier the trial should be.**”
- At a time when legislation carves out increasingly sweeping definitions of crimes, even as punishments become harsher, the SC bench’s intervention is much needed.
- The Court cited NCRB data, noting that the countrywide conviction rate under the UAPA for the five years between 2019 and 2023 hovers between 2 and 6% — that is, a 94 to 98% probability of acquittal in such cases nationally.
 - In J&K, the conviction rate has remained below 1%.
- In public speeches, judges often repeat the adage “**bail is the rule, jail is the exception**”, as former CJI D Y Chandrachud did in 2024, days before demitting office. But the judiciary needs to do more than just

that. Especially in cases that involve the protection of fundamental liberties against state abuse, the Court must listen to itself, and abide by its better instincts.

The **doctrine of stare decisis** → → requires courts to follow established legal precedents so as to ensure consistency, fairness and predictability.

Country-wide percentage of conviction under the UAPA for	hovers between 2% to 6% . In other words, there is 94% to 98% possibility of acquittal in such cases	
2019-23	When it comes to the Union Territory of J&K , the percentage of conviction is abysmal, to say the least.	For the aforesaid period, the annual rate of conviction is always less than 1% . It means that at the end of the trial, there is 99% possibility of acquittal in such cases

Syed Iftikhar Andrabi vs NIA, Jammu - 2026

Justice Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan Bench

Andrabi was accused of having links with Pakistan-based handlers of the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen, and involvement in a cross-border narcotics smuggling racket to fund terrorist activities in India.

Andrabi's counsel had contended that though the chargesheet was filed on December 5, 2020, the trial was moving slowly, and over 350 prosecution witnesses were yet to be examined.

No quick-fixes, problem of **weak rupee** runs deep

The central bank has in the past repeatedly intervened in the markets.

The approach should, however, be to allow the currency to move freely

- The Indian currency continues to be under pressure. On Monday, the rupee was hovering around 96.3 against the dollar — since the beginning of this year, it has fallen by around 6.5 per cent. According to a report in this paper, some policymakers view this fall as the market pricing in the depreciation that may have occurred before 2025, a time when the central bank's interventions increased sharply, leading to an “artificial stabilisation” of the rupee. While market interventions designed to keep the currency at a particular level may delay the adjustments required to fix underlying imbalances in the economy, the problems with the rupee run deeper.
- The currency's weakness comes at a time when the Indian economy has been growing at a relatively healthy pace, with both inflation and the current account deficit being low. The rupee has also fallen against the dollar when the greenback has itself weakened — in 2025, the rupee fell by 4.7 per cent against the dollar when the dollar index fell from 109 to 98.
 - The problems have been due to pressure on both the capital and current accounts.

Capital Account	Current account
-----------------	-----------------

□ Capital has been flowing out of the country, with <u>both foreign and domestic investors exploring alternatives.</u> □ Investors seem more exuberant about the prospects of East Asian economies which are benefiting from the China+1 play and the AI boom.	□ And on the current account side, the steep rise in global crude oil prices is exerting pressure, financing which will be challenging.
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- In response, there have been appeals to curb foreign travel and gold purchases in order to conserve forex, with the RBI also intervening in the markets to stem the rupee's slide.
 - Its net short forward position had widened considerably, and it had earlier also restricted activity in the non-deliverable forwards market.
 - The relief to the currency from the central bank's steps was, however, short-lived. But the temptation to intervene in the currency markets through various instruments, when the rupee is facing both depreciation and appreciation pressures, is not new.
 - The central bank has in the past repeatedly intervened in the markets. The approach should, however, be to allow the currency to move freely. The rupee should work as a shock absorber.
 - At the current juncture, the focus should be on addressing the pain points in the economy. **Steps need to be taken to attract foreign capital, raise domestic competitiveness and boost merchandise exports.** The structural impediments to growth need to be tackled urgently.

PROS & CONS OF FALL IN RUPEE'S VALUE



PROS:

- More benefits for exporters
- Beneficial for India's tourism industry

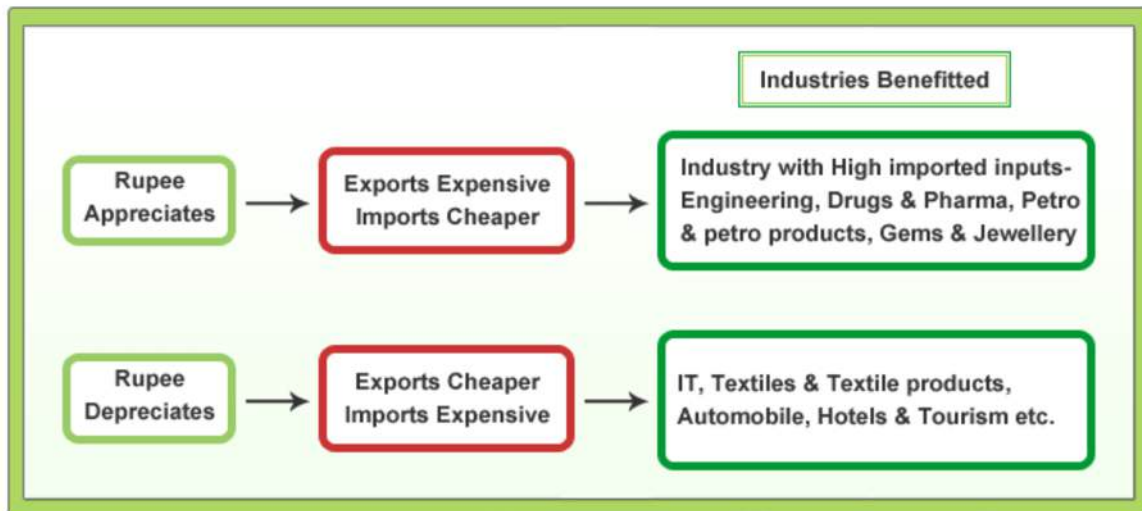


CONS:

- Prices of petroleum and gold will increase
- Resultant commodity price hike to lead to inflation
- Studying, traveling abroad to become expensive
- Foreign investments to take a hit

CAUSES FOR RUPEE DEPRECIATION

- Dollar strength
- Widening trade deficit
- Weakness in domestic equities
- Foreign Institution Investments (FII)
- Persistent Inflation
- Fiscal deficit: (government expenditure > tax revenue)
- Growth slowdown
- Oil Prices
- High Interest Rates
- Lacking Political Will



How does the Rupee Appreciate or Depreciate?

The Rupee appreciates or depreciates on following factors:

1. INTEREST RATE

India with an interest rate of 6-7% attracts greater capital inflow as investors get a higher return than their earnings in the US. (with Interest rates of 2-3%). This results in rupee appreciation.



2. INFLATION RATE

A country with lower inflation would have increased demand for its products by foreign buyers. Higher demand for goods & services would result in currency appreciation.



3. EXPORT-IMPORT

A country exporting more than importing from other countries, would result in higher demand for that currency, causing currency appreciation.



Impact of Rupee Appreciation & Depreciation:

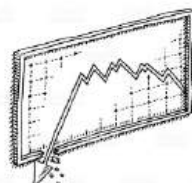


IMPACT ON INDUSTRY

Rupee Appreciation means imports turn cheaper and exports become expensive. Rupee depreciation means exports earn more.

IMPACT ON STOCK MARKET

Foreign investors (FIIs) stand to benefit from a rupee appreciation. Subsequently increased FII inflows could fuel a bull run in the stock market.



FUEL SHOCK



In the case of a Rupee depreciation, the biggest blow to the Indian economy would be the higher outflows due to fuel becoming expensive. This increased fuel costs would result in food inflation as transportation costs become higher..

Iliad, and the art of dying

IF SOCRATES was right when he remarked in the *Phaedo* that “Philosophy is training for death”, it is perhaps not too much of a leap to imagine that literature can be a guide in the afterlife. A group of researchers, including academics from the University of Barcelona and the Free University of Berlin, have found a fragment from the *Iliad* buried with a mummy from Roman-era Egypt. The elaborate tombs of Egyptian royalty and nobility often have texts, but these are usually more practical guides on navigating life after death — the *Book of the Dead*, for example. Homer’s epic, though, is a little more poetic: “Now the wind scatters the old leaves across the earth, now the living timber bursts with the new buds and spring comes round again. And so with men: As one generation comes to life, another dies away.”

There is a sociological explanation for the fragment of the epic interred in the tomb. With the beginning of the Ptolemaic age after Alexander’s invasion of Egypt, religious customs — especially funeral rites and mummification — evolved, and many of Greek origin may have wanted to preserve their Hellenistic roots. The *Iliad*, in such a context, becomes a religious text.

But there is, perhaps, another less concrete message about life and death — and stories and poems — from the fragment and the mummy. The big question about life is how to deal with the mystery at its end. The Socratic way of contemplation and detachment is one path prescribed through the centuries. For those who are fond of living while they are alive, though, there’s always a story and a poem. Who’s to say that isn’t heaven?

20.05.2026



Why SC rapped states on stray dogs issue: 'Children, elderly can't be left to mercy of chance'

The Supreme Court upheld the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, while directing states and civic bodies to ensure its thorough implementation.

Backdrop:

- The Supreme Court on May 19 dismissed all challenges on stray dog management and warned that the state cannot remain a “passive spectator” as citizens face the constant threat of dog attacks in public spaces.
 - ↘the country's stray dog crisis had reached alarming proportions because of years of poor implementation of the ABC framework.
 - ↘ the framework introduced in 2001 had suffered from a “discernible absence of efforts” to build infrastructure that supports the growing stray dog population.

- Sterilisation and vaccination drives remained sporadic and lacked “institutional depth”.
- ↳ Linking the issue directly to **Article 21** of the Constitution, the court held that the right to life includes the right to move freely in public spaces without fear of attack. “**The Constitution does not envisage a society where children and elderly citizens are left to survive on the mercy of physical strength or chance**”.
- ↳ Warning authorities against continued inaction, the court said any failure to comply with its directions and the AWBI framework could invite contempt proceedings and disciplinary action.

What had triggered the case?

- The SC stepped into the stray dogs issue **July, 2025** after taking **suo motu cognizance** of a news report about a 6-year-old girl in New Delhi who died after a dog bite and suspected rabies infection. Calling the incidents and the rise of dog attacks and rabies deaths “**disturbing**”, the court said the stray dog issue had become a serious **public safety concern**.
- The case first came before a bench of Justices JB Paridwala and R Mahadevan, who in **August 2025** → → **directed civic authorities** across Delhi-NCR

to pick up stray dogs from public places and move them to shelters.

It also said the dogs should not be released back onto the streets, observing that people should be able to move around freely without the fear of being attacked.

- The order immediately triggered protests from animal welfare groups and dog feeders who argued that the directions were contrary to the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023.

- The rules require stray dogs to be sterilised and vaccinated before being released back into the same area from where they were picked up.
- Applications were filed in the SC seeking to have this order recalled. The matter was eventually placed before a larger 3-judge bench led by Justice Vikram Nath. The court eventually softened the earlier directions and restored the existing sterilisation and release policy under the ABC rules while allowing authorities to keep rabid or aggressive dogs in shelters. It also barred the feeding of stray dogs in public spaces outside designated feeding zones.

What the Supreme Court directed

- Every district in the country to establish **at least one fully functional ABC centre** States and Union Territories to expand infrastructure depending on population density and local requirements.
- Authorities to ensure **adequate availability of anti-rabies medicines** and improve veterinary and vaccination services.
- The NHAI and States to create a **coordinated mechanism for dealing with stray animals on highways and expressways**, including transport vehicles, shelter facilities and coordination with animal welfare organisations.
- The authorities may take legally permissible measures, including **euthanasia**, in cases involving rabid, incurably ill or demonstrably dangerous and aggressive dogs posing a threat to human life, → strictly in accordance with the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the ABC Rules**.
- All the **High Courts to register *suo motu*** continuing proceedings to monitor the implementation of its directions.

8 SUPREME COURT DIRECTIONS ON STRAY DOGS



What The Supreme Court Ruled

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N V Anjaria ruled that euthanasia may be permitted for rabid, incurably ill, or demonstrably dangerous stray dogs.

The order came in a *suo motu* case initiated in July 2024 after reports of stray dog attacks and rabies cases involving children in Delhi.

The court said the right to life with dignity includes the right to move freely without fear of dog attacks.

Why The Court Intervened

The court said it could not ignore repeated reports of dog attacks involving children, elderly people, and international visitors.

It flagged rising incidents near:

- **Schools.**
- **Hospitals.**
- **Railway stations.**

The bench also dismissed pleas seeking recall of earlier directions related to relocation and sterilisation measures.

Other Directions

The court directed states and Union Territories to:

- **Stop returning sterilised or vaccinated dogs to the same locations in certain cases.**
- **Establish at least one fully functional Animal Birth Control centre in every district.**
- **Ensure trained staff, surgical facilities, and supporting infrastructure.**

When Euthanasia Is Allowed

The ruling is not blanket permission for culling stray dogs.

Euthanasia may be considered only in cases involving:

- **Rabies.**
- **Incurable illness.**
- **Repeated aggression or dangerous behaviour.**
- **Serious threats to public safety.**

Veterinary assessment is mandatory before any action.

The Legal Framework

Any action must comply with:

- **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.**
- **The Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023.**
- **Other applicable statutory protocols.**

Civic authorities cannot act unilaterally. Veterinary certification and procedural safeguards are required.

What do the ABC Rules say?

□

The Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, issued under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960,	
treat sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination as the primary way to control stray dog populations.	
They also require dogs to be released back into the same locality after sterilisation,	recognising that stray dogs are territorial by nature.

The Rules do not permit indiscriminate killing or relocation of dogs.

Euthanasia is allowed only in limited situations involving rabid, terminally ill or fatally injured animals.

✂ The case also raised **constitutional concerns**.

Art 51A(g) vs Art 19 & 21

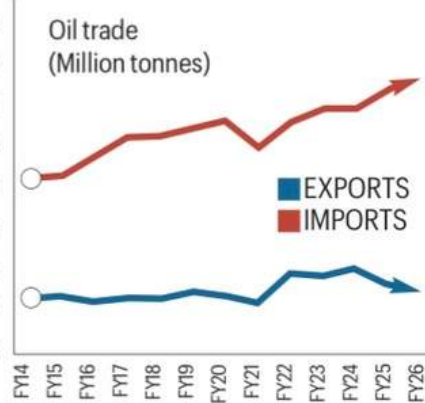
<i>Animal welfare groups</i>	<i>Petitioners representing residents and bite victims argued that</i>
relied on Article 51A(g) , which asks <u>citizens to show compassion towards living creatures.</u>	unchecked stray dog populations affected citizens' rights under Articles 19 and 21 , including the <u>right to move freely and live safely.</u>

• INDIA'S OIL TRADE DEFICIT SET TO BALLOON

The country's oil trade deficit is set to expand in the backdrop of the West Asia conflict, that has led to a surge in global Brent crude prices. According to a report by Crisil, Brent oil prices may average \$90-95 per barrel in FY27.



Volume effect



● While import volumes have trended up, refined petroleum product exports remained flattish barring the post-covid surge

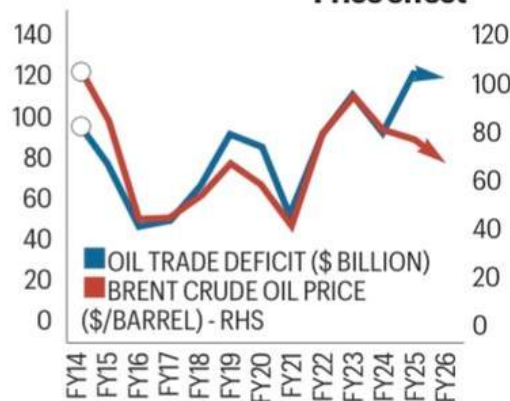
2.2% OF GDP

EXPECTED CURRENT account deficit in FY27 from an estimated 0.8% last fiscal

85%

OF INDIA'S annual crude oil requirement is met through imports

Price effect



● In FY25 and FY26, the oil trade deficit rose, even though prices cooled as exports of refined petroleum products fell

SOURCE: CRISIL

21.05.2026

Nordic Council

- The Nordic Council is the **official inter-parliamentary cooperation body** for the Nordic countries and autonomous territories.
 - ó Founded in **1952**,
 - ó it brings together 87 elected representatives **to propose regional initiatives** that enhance citizens' everyday lives and address shared geopolitical and environmental challenges.

Member States

Sovereign States:	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden
Autonomous Territories:	Åland, Faroe Islands, and Greenland

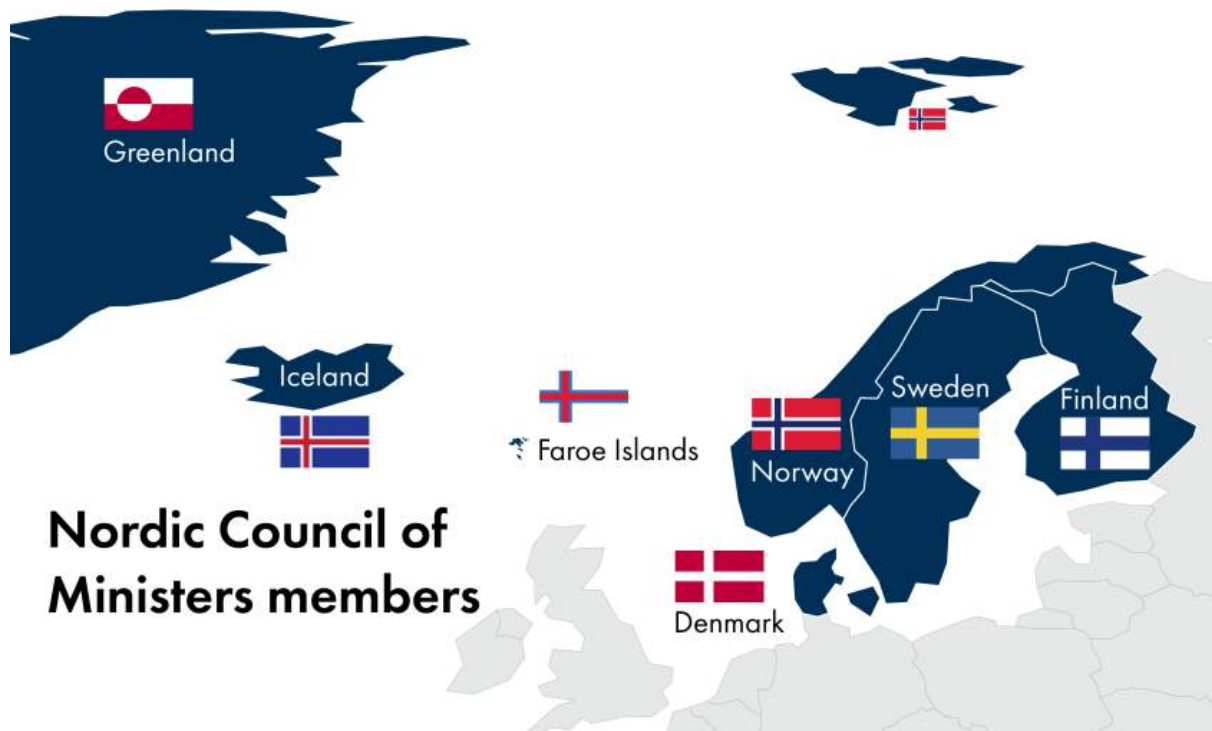
Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden → founding members @ 1952.

Finland joined 1955	Faroe Islands 1970	Åland 1970	Greenland 1984
------------------------	-----------------------	---------------	-------------------

Key Details

- **Structure:** The council is composed of members nominated by political parties from their respective national parliaments, with no direct elections.
- **Leadership:** The presidency rotates among the member nations. At present Finland has been holding the presidency since 1st Jan, 2026.
- **Headquarters:** The council secretariat is based in Copenhagen.
- **Key Achievements:** Historical initiatives include creating a passport-free travel union, joint transport, and uniform telecommunications rates.

- **Awards:** The council annually awards prestigious prizes in literature, music, film, the environment, and children's literature.



Europe's shift to centre of Delhi's frame is welcome

Europe is now central to India's pursuit of export markets, capital, advanced technology and green-energy partnerships.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the **Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy** underscores how far India's perception of, and engagement with, Europe has evolved.

Throughout the Cold War,

India's approach to Europe was shaped largely by → → its close economic and defence ties with the Soviet Union and its rivalry with the West.

- A prolonged neglect is now giving way to expanding cooperation. Buoyed by the **India-EU FTA signed in January 2026**, following the 2024 India-EFTA agreement, Europe has been increasingly entering India's strategic imagination despite the friction around Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- The shift comes at a time when traditional alignments are under growing strain —
 - ⊗ an unpredictable American president,
 - ⊗ an ever-deepening partnership between India's ally Russia and competitor China, and
 - ⊗ a fragile détente between Beijing and Washington, reflected in the Trump-Xi summit.
- Europe is now central to India's pursuit of export markets, capital, advanced technology and green-energy partnerships.
 - The PM's tour itinerary reflects the enormous potential that collaboration with some of the continent's smaller but highly capable economies can unlock.
 - The **Netherlands**, with a population of just 18 million, is a pivotal player in the global chip race because of **ASML**, the sole manufacturer of the advanced lithography machines needed to produce the most advanced semiconductors.
 - ⊗ The deal between **ASML and Tata Electronics** will support scaling up of the latter's fabrication plant in **Dholera, Gujrat** (India's first green field smart city).

- *In defence*, India seeks to diversify procurement away from Russia, and
 - ⊗ *in renewable energy*, it requires both technological expertise and capital.
 - Europe also offers opportunities for India's youth as the diaspora across the continent continues to expand, driven by highly skilled workers and students.
 - *For Europe, meanwhile, India is a critical partner in its efforts to de-risk from a rising China.*
- While the **EU** functions as **a bloc of 27 member states**, each country retains its own strategic priorities and foreign policy outlook.Europe's sub-regions, too, differ sharply in their perceptions of external powers.
- **India already enjoys strong partnerships with key western European powers such as France, the Netherlands and Germany, and it has moved to deepen engagement with the Nordic countries while strengthening ties with Italy in the Indo-Mediterranean.**
- ✧ More must be done to engage with these sub-regions and cultivate cross-linkages for mutual gains. With geopolitical realignments, a fraying rules-based order, and the decreasing relevance of international institutions, India's ties with Europe can no longer be peripheral to its foreign policy.

The European Union



- Member-states
- Close integration
- Left the union
- Candidates
- Negotiations frozen

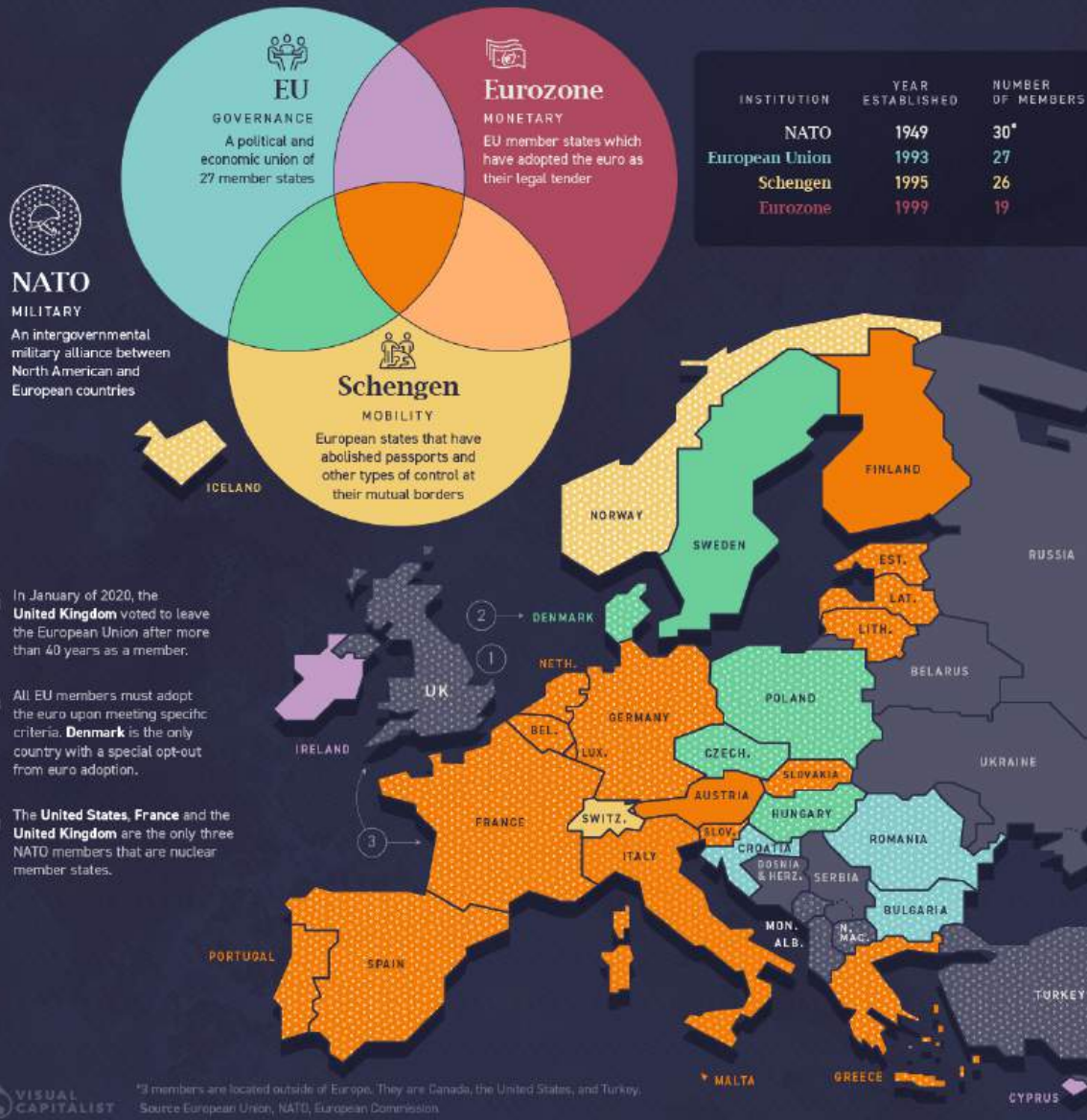
449.2 million people
Population

27
Countries



THE European Member States 2022

The **European member states** are countries mainly in Europe that are part of one or more of the four major treaty groups, namely the European Union, NATO, Schengen and Eurozone.



In Manipur, pull back from edge, build trust

The return of an elected government led by Yumnam Khemchand Singh in February had raised cautious hopes of rapprochement in a state exhausted by prolonged conflict.

In News

- After months of brittle calm, Manipur could once again be on the edge. The immediate provocation — the ambush and killing of three **Kuki church leaders** travelling back to the Kuki-Zo majority Kangpokpi district — has degenerated into a broader atmosphere of fear.
 - There have been retaliatory abductions, disappearances and mounting tensions between **Kuki** and Tangkhul **Naga communities** across the hill districts.
 - In a state mired in ethnic conflict for the last three years, and burdened by layers of historical grievance, incidents such as these could turn into communal flashpoints.

History of prolonged conflict

- The present crisis, that began in Ukhrul earlier this year, however, cannot be understood through the lens of the violence between the state's Meiteis and Kukis that has riven Manipur since May 2023.
 - It can be traced back, instead, to the older, more serrated Naga-Kuki fault line, shaped by decades of
 - territorial contestation,
 - insurgent rivalry and
 - competing visions of political belonging.

Naga	Kuki
☐ The Nagas remain among the Northeast's <u>most politically influential communities</u> , with	☐ The Kukis, meanwhile, <u>carry their → → own histories of displacement and grievance</u> .

- ó powerful tribal bodies, - ó longstanding armed networks, and - ó aspirations tied <u>not merely to demands of autonomy within Manipur</u>, but to a wider Naga political settlement that transcends state boundaries. □ Instability in the hill districts, therefore, echoes far beyond Manipur, - ó intersecting with → → <u>unresolved questions of autonomy, territory and ethnic representation.</u>	
	In an already militarised landscape, → → <u>where weapons continue to circulate freely and trust in state authority has eroded sharply</u>, → → these unresolved antagonisms threaten to → → pull Manipur back into another cycle of violence.

Conciliatory role of the newly elected govt.

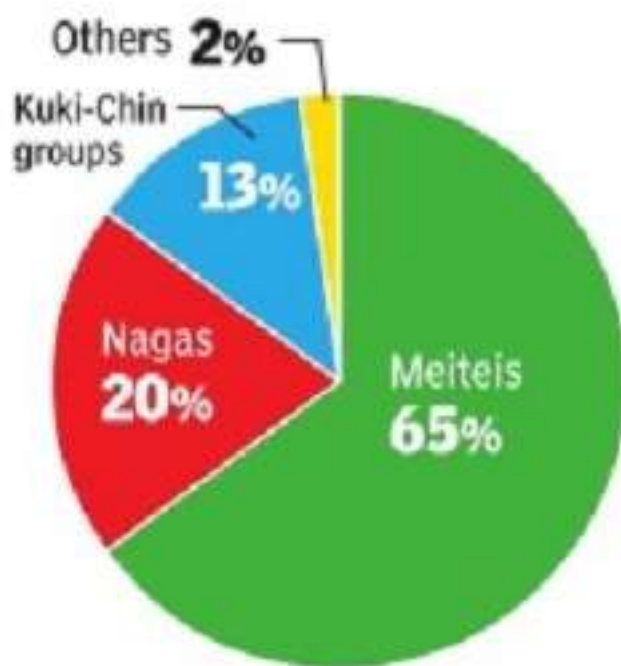
- The return of an elected government led by Yumnam Khemchand Singh in February had raised cautious hopes of rapprochement in a state exhausted by prolonged conflict.
 - ó Presented as a conciliatory figure **capable of balancing Meitei, Kuki and Naga interests**, Singh cannot afford to fall back on the political equivocations of his predecessor.
 - ó His inclusion of **both Kuki and Naga deputy chief ministers** offers an opening, but representation alone cannot substitute for trust.

Way forward

- His government must move beyond reactive measures towards sustained political mediation:
 - ó Securing the unconditional release of hostages,
 - ó guaranteeing safe movement across districts,
 - ó prosecuting the guilty and establishing credible inter-community dialogue mechanisms.

✂ *This moment must be decisively defused, too much is at stake.*

Manipur's ethnic composition



Manipur's ethnic faultlines: Kuki-Meitei divide & recent unrest



There are 16 districts in Manipur, but the state is commonly thought of as divided into 'valley' and 'hill' districts.



In these hill areas, which comprise the bulk of Manipur's geographical area, live 15 Naga tribes and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group.

Imphal (East and West)

Kukis and Nagas point out that tribal areas are 90% of state's geographical area, but the bulk of its budget and development work is focused on the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley.

The Manipur valley is encircled by skirts of low hills that spread into Nagaland and Mizoram.

While tribals can buy land in the valley, Meiteis are prohibited from buying land in the hills





Constitutional facts for UPSC:

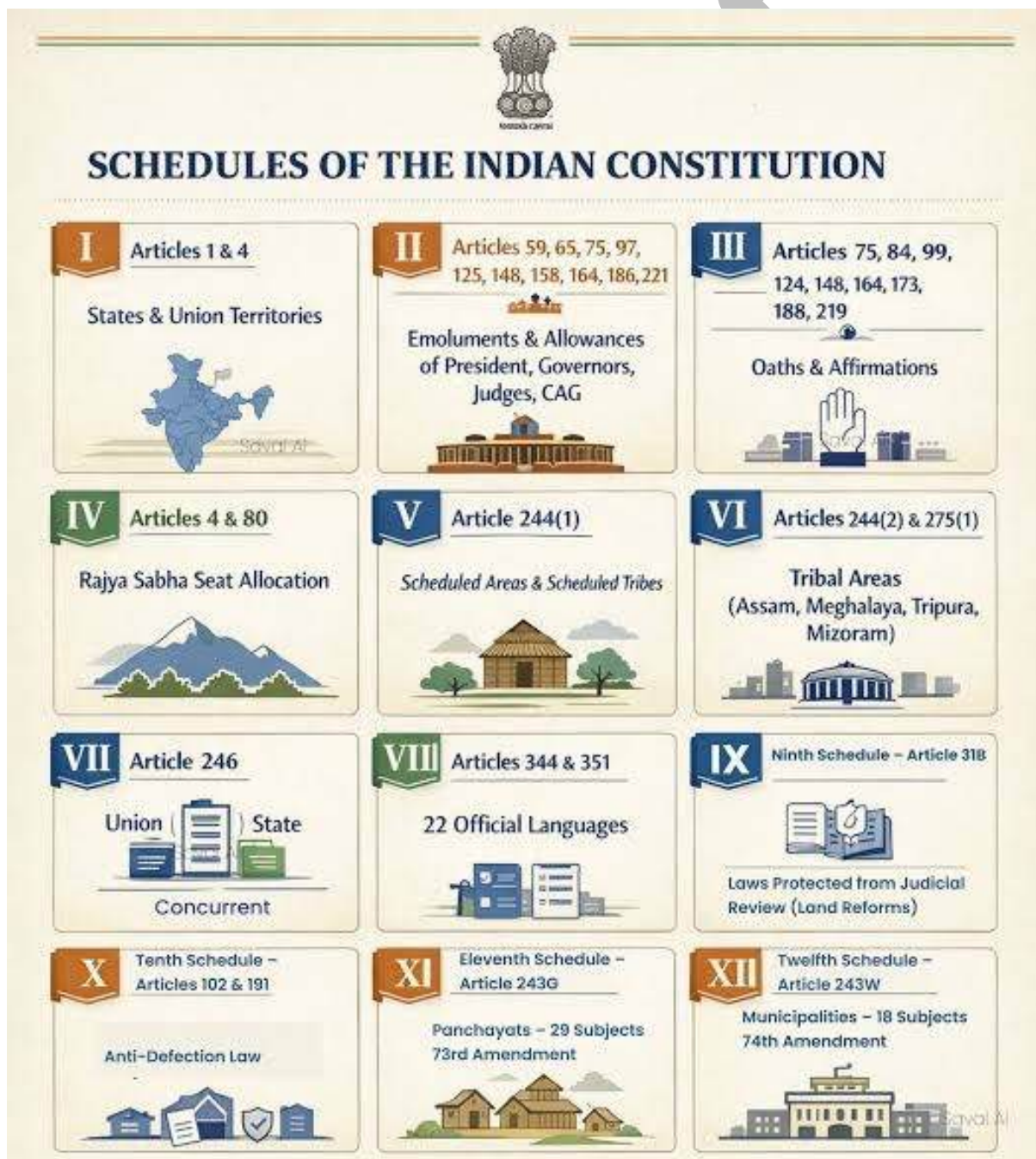
- Manipur enjoys constitutional safeguards under **Article 371C** of the Indian Constitution, which provides special provisions for the administration of its **Hill Areas**.
- Objective** : → → to protect local **socio-cultural and tribal interests**.

Key aspects of these special provisions include:

- Hill Area Committee:** Elected representatives from the hill districts form a special committee that oversees legislation and development matters specific to their regions.
- Governor's Responsibility:** The Governor holds special responsibility for ensuring the proper functioning of this committee and provides annual reports to the President of India regarding the administration of the Hill Areas.

- **Inner Line Permit (ILP):** To protect the indigenous population, culture, and demographics, Manipur is covered under the Inner Line Permit system. Non-native Indian citizens must obtain this travel document to enter and stay in the state.

✂ While Manipur falls under the broader group of states historically receiving central funding and grants under the "**Special Category Status**", its unique legislative and administrative structure is distinctly governed and protected by Article 371C.



Sixth Schedule

Sixth Schedule of the constitution is again in news, after the reconstitution of high-powered committee to examine **Ladakh's demand for inclusion** in the Sixth Schedule.

Sixth Schedule

- » **Constitutional Provisions- Art 244** of the constitution provides for the sixth schedule of the constitution which is applicable to specific areas of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**
- » **Purpose-** It provides for the formation of autonomous administrative divisions called **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** that have some legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.
- » The acts of Parliament or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions, or apply with specified modifications and exceptions

Advantages

- » **Democratic Devolution of Powers-** Sixth Schedule has helped in democratic devolution of powers through the creation of **Autonomous District Councils**, which have some legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.
- » **Preservation of Cultural Practices and Customs-** Tribal language, customs and practices are protected. For ex- **Bodo language of Bodoland were protected.**
- » **Protection of tribal Land rights-** Autonomous councils the powers to legislate on matters like **land, forests, and fisheries.**
- » **Grant-in Funds-** **Finance commission** recommends Grant-in aids for sixth scheduled areas
- » **Sustainable Socio-Economic Development-** Ensures socio-economic development of a region in consonance with the cardinal virtue of sustainability.

Issues

- » **Limited Geographical Coverage-** Only limited to certain tribal pockets of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**
- » **Lack of Effective decentralisation-** Several districts have only one autonomous council. For ex- **Only one District council for entire Bodo Territorial Area districts**
- » **Legislative power of state over autonomous councils-** The laws made by the councils require the assent of governor. In case of conflict, the **governor's assent prevails.**
- » **Financial dependency-** Dependent on state govts for funds in addition to the occasional special package from the Centre. **Lack of timely constitution of State Finance Commission (SFC)**
- » **Corruption, Financial Mismanagement and Lack of skilled professionals**

Way Forward

- » **Increase geographical coverage-** Constitutional amendment to expand coverage of 6th scheduled areas in other tribal dominated regions which need protection. For ex- **Ladakh inclusion in 6th schedule.**
- » **Ensuring regular Elections-** The state governments must ensure regular, free and fair elections to these autonomous councils. For Ex- **Reduce the dominance of Tribal Elites.**
- » **Transparency-** Transparency in **funds, functionaries and functioning** of the autonomous district councils must be enhanced for effective socio-economic development.

22.05.2026

In **‘Cockroach Janta Party’** handle, Government sees national security threat, asks X to block

Official claims IB flagged concerns, growing traction among young, Insta account may be blocked too

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked X to withhold the account under **Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000**, the official said, adding that the input to do so came from the IB.
- The process is governed by → → the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009. Blocking orders are confidential.
- The platform’s founder, Abhijeet Dipke, 30, is from Maharashtra, is currently in Boston.
- The satirical account was launched → → in response to a remark by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant that sparked a row.
- On May 15, the CJI pulled up a lawyer who had filed a petition seeking directions to the Delhi High Court over the designation of a Senior Advocate, a status he himself was aspiring to. “There are already parasites of society who attack the system, and you want to join hands with them? There are youngsters like cockroaches, who don’t get any employment or have any place in (the) profession. Some of them become media, some of them become social media, RTI activists and other activists, and they start attacking everyone”.
 - The remarks triggered an uproar, following which the CJI said it was “totally baseless” to suggest that he had criticised the youth. “What I had specifically criticised were those who have entered professions like the Bar (legal profession) with the aid of

fake and bogus degrees. Similar persons have sneaked into the media, social media, and other noble professions as well, and hence, they are like parasites. It is totally baseless to suggest that I criticised the youth of our nation. Not only am I proud of our present and future human resource, but every youth of India inspires me”.

Section 69A of the Indian Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000

empowers the Central Government → → to direct intermediaries (like ISPs, telecom providers, and web hosts) → → to **block** public access to specific online information or websites **to protect national security and public order**.

Ebola watch: Government defers Africa & big cat summits, alerts airports

In a joint statement with the African Union, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that after consultations on the “evolving health situation in parts of Africa”, the two sides agreed “it would be advisable to convene the **Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit** at a later date”.

In News:

- **Postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit (4th)** and the first International Big Cat Alliance Summit which were to be held in New Delhi in the coming weeks.
- India was slated to host the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV) on May 28-31 in New Delhi **in collaboration with the African Union Commission**, bringing together leaders from across the African continent to strengthen the India-Africa partnership, and lay out a roadmap for deeper cooperation across diverse sectors.

The African Union (AU) is a continental organization consisting of **55 member** states, headquartered in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.**

- Meanwhile, the first International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit, which was scheduled to be held in New Delhi on June 1-2, has also been postponed.
 - The IBCA Summit was being held in conjunction with IAFS-IV as several African countries host big cats and are important partners in global efforts towards their conservation, ecological sustainability and biodiversity protection.
- The Directorate General of Health Services, under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, issued an advisory on Ebola for travellers from “high risk countries” entering Indian ports and airports, and sought their cooperation in health screening.
- Passengers travelling from or transiting through the **DRC, Uganda** and **South Sudan** and experiencing symptoms such as fever, weakness or fatigue, headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, unexplained bleeding and sore throat have been asked to **report to the airport health officer or the health desk** before going for immigration clearance.

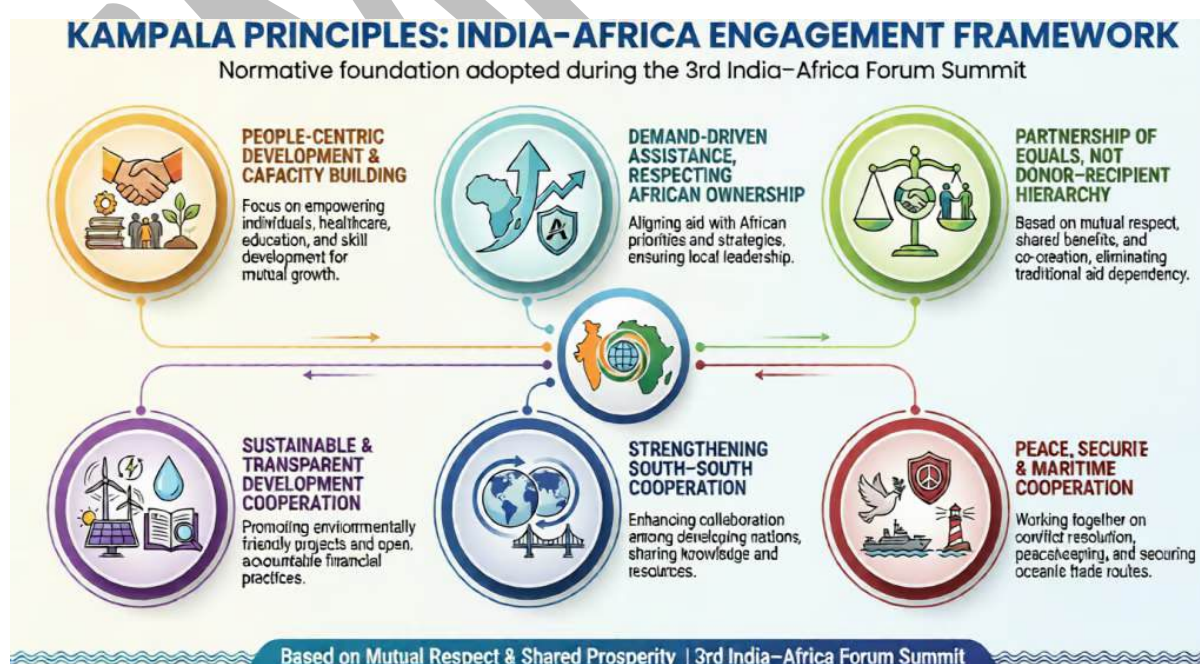
There is no Ebola case in the country as of date.

Own facts:

India-Africa Forum Summit

Previous Summits

IAFS I (2008):	IAFS II (2011):	IAFS III (2015):	IAFS IV (2026)
Held in New Delhi, focusing on establishing inaugural ties with 14 African nations.	Held at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, focusing on infrastructure development.	Held in New Delhi, this was a massive diplomatic outreach that included delegates from all 55 African nations to solidify India's presence on the continent.	Was about to held in New Delhi, May deferred because of outbreak of Ebola virus in African nations



INDIA - AFRICA IN NUMBERS



Nearly **4,500** Indian soldiers are on the ground in Africa under various UN peacekeeping missions.



A fully formed Indian female police unit is also present in Liberia.



India offers **900** scholarships to African students each year.

Indian owned/operated companies are **2nd largest employers in Nigeria.**



3% of South African population consists of people of Indian origin.

India is currently spending **\$7.5 billion** on infrastructure projects in over **40** countries.

THE INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT (IAFS)



India is set to host the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) 2026 in late May, marking the first such gathering in over a decade since 2015.



ABOUT THE INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT (IAFS)



What it is?



The India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is the official institutional platform for African-Indian relations.



It serves as a high-level consultative mechanism between the Government of India and the member states of the African Union (AU) to promote South-South cooperation.

New Delhi



Established In:



- **First Summit:** April 4-8, 2008, in New Delhi, India.



Aim:



To widen and deepen the ambit of mutual cooperation for the benefit of both regions.



To support Africa in health, education, and human resource development through initiatives like the IIT Madras campus in Zanzibar.



To move beyond traditional trade and Line of Credit models toward direct Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and industrial partnerships.

WHY IT IS TIME TO HOLD NEXT EDITION OF INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT

INDIA VS CHINA IN AFRICA



- ▶ WHILE INDIA ORGANISES THE INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT (IAFS) TO ENGAGE WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES, CHINA COMES UP WITH FORUM FOR CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION (FOCAC) SUMMIT.
- ▶ CHINA'S ANNUAL BILATERAL TRADE WITH AFRICA IS OVER **\$200** BILLION WHILE INDIA'S FIGURE STANDS AT AROUND **\$100** BILLION.
- ▶ INDIA EXTENDS CONCESSIONAL LINES OF CREDIT TO AFRICA.
- ▶ CHINA EXTENDS LOANS FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS RAISING ALLEGATIONS OF DEBT-TRAP DIPLOMACY.
- ▶ WHILE CHINA HAS ESTABLISHED ITS FIRST OVERSEAS MILITARY BASE IN DJIBOUTI, INDIA AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES WORK TOGETHER FOR SECURITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization
headquartered in **New Delhi, India.**

Launched by India,	Originally proposed in 2019 and the alliance became a formalized
	officially launched in April 2023 (marking the 50th anniversary of <i>Project Tiger</i>),
	treaty-based organization in January 2025.

it aims to unite big cat range countries (95 **big cat range countries, as well as non-range countries**) → → to protect and conserve seven primary big cat species:

- the tiger,
- lion,
- leopard,
- snow leopard,
- cheetah,
- jaguar, and
- puma

and their ecosystems.

Core Objectives

Habitat Preservation: Securing natural habitats and restoring ecosystems for the world's seven big cats.

Resource Sharing: Mobilizing technical and financial resources to share benchmarked scientific conservation practices.

Combating Threats: Preventing illegal wildlife trade and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Global Action: Fostering transboundary cooperation and unified policies among member nations.

Membership

- Membership is open to all UN member states.
- It primarily targets **range countries** (nations where these cats exist naturally, such as **India, Cambodia, and several African nations**) as well as **non-range countries** (countries where these species aren't naturally found but are invested in global conservation support)

INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

The International Big Cat Alliance is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition aimed at conserving big cat species and their habitats.

Launched by

India (2023)

Headquarters

India

Member states

96

countries

Structure

Consists of Assembly of Members Standing Committee & Secretariat



FUNCTIONS

- Secure the future of big cats (Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, Pumas, Jaguars, and Cheetahs)
- Mitigate the adverse effects of climate change
- Advocate for policy initiatives
- Attain the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals

THREATS TO BIG CATS

- Poaching
- Habitat loss & fragmentation
- Human-Leopard conflict
- Climate change & Deforestation

CONSERVATION STATUS OF BIG CATS

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List	Cites	Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
Tigers	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Endangered	Appendix-1	Schedule-1
Lions	<i>Panthera leo</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-1	Schedule-1
Leopards	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-1	Schedule-1
Snow Leopards	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-1	Schedule-1
Pumas	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Least Concerned	Appendix II (P. c. Costaricensis and cougar: Appendix-1)	NA
Jaguars	<i>Panthera onca</i>	Near Threatened	Appendix-1	NA
Cheetahs	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-1	Schedule-1

OTHER CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN INDIA

- Project Tiger (1973)
- Project Snow Leopard (2009)
- Asiatic Lion Reintroduction Project (2004)
- Project Cheetah (2022)

Animal slaughter ban misreads farm economy

Governments, whether of Suwendu Adhikari in West Bengal or of Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh, should realise that Indian agriculture, like the rest of the economy, is no longer in the age of the bullock cart

- **West Bengal is India's largest meat producer, accounting for roughly 12.5 per cent** of the country's estimated output of 10.5 million tonnes (mt) in 2024-25. It is also **India's second-biggest fish producer, next to Andhra Pradesh**. That makes the state significantly "non-vegetarian" and one of the few — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Assam are the others — to permit consumption of beef and slaughter of cattle.
 - The fact that **West Bengal's milk production has increased from** 5.6 mt in 2018-19 to nearly 8 mt in 2024-25, alongside a **25 per cent rise in its in-milk cow population** during this period, **is proof of the meat sector's growth not being at the expense of dairying either.**
- It is against this background that one must examine the implications of the Suwendu Adhikari-led BJP government's decision to "strictly" enforce the **West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act, 1950**.
 - The law does not allow slaughter of any animal unless it is **over 14 years of age and certified as "fit for slaughter"** by the *head of a municipality or panchayat samiti and a government veterinary surgeon*.
 - Given that the **normal lifespan of a cow or bull is about 15 years** and *no farmer rears them beyond 10 years*, it practically bans any slaughter.
 - The Act, moreover, **only mentions "certain animals"** without specifying cattle or buffalo, and male or female.

- ☞ With most farmers having no means to prove the age of their bovines, nor access to veterinarians for issuing fit-for-slaughter certificates, it leaves them with two options.
- The first is to maintain unproductive animals **by diverting scarce fodder, feed and water** even if these stop giving enough milk — typically after five-six calvings when they are eight-nine years old — or are incapable of working the fields.
 - The second option is to **stop keeping animals and exit dairying**.
- The Adhikari government can claim that it is merely implementing an existing law. The previous Trinamool and Left Front administrations should, indeed, have done away with the Act's provisions that have no place in today's farming environment.
- **In 1950, India had hardly 5,000 tractors, as against over 12 million now.**
 - Bullocks have increasingly yielded to tractors, combines and electric pumpsets for ploughing and irrigating fields and harvesting, threshing and hauling produce to mandis.
 - With chemical fertilisers and artificial insemination, too, replacing organic manure and natural breeding, farmers have incentive to rear bovines only for milk.
- ✂ Governments, whether of Adhikari or of Yogi Adityanath in UP, should realise that Indian agriculture, like the rest of the economy, is no longer in the age of the bullock cart.
-

At UNGA, incomplete climate justice

Transition to green energy systems must take into account the need for economic and social development in countries outside the developed world.

The landmark vote in Favour:

- In July last year, the **International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that countries are "obliged" to "prevent harm from climate change".**
 - The verdict has now received the imprimatur of the UN General Assembly.

141, voted in favour of the resolution	more than 2/3 rd of UN members,
8 nations, including the US, said no	
28, including India, abstained.	

Vulnerable nations protected:

- The resolution could change the tenor of the international climate debate — it strengthens the idea that mitigation measures cannot be founded on the principle of voluntarism.
 - It gives vulnerable nations, particularly small island states — among the sponsors of the move — stronger diplomatic and legal grounds to demand action from major emitters.

Incomplete justice:

- That said, the resolution does not fully reflect the concerns of developing countries like India, which have always argued that → → countries with a longer history of industrialisation, accompanied by extractive colonialism, bear greater responsibility for addressing the climate crisis.
 - Transition to green energy systems must take into account → → the need for economic and social development in countries outside the developed world.
 - The resolution does not adequately recognise this imperative, **especially since it is silent on climate finance.**

- Opening the global-warming mitigation plans of countries to legal scrutiny → → without similar audits of the financial commitments of industrialised countries → → further undermines one of the already-embattled principles of climate negotiations — **common but differentiated responsibilities**.

Role of India:

- India's abstention should, however, not be seen as a vote against the concerns of the small island states.
 - **India's initiative:**
 - New Delhi's initiatives such as SAGAR, and projects like the **International Solar Alliance**, have been sensitive to the anxieties of the countries most threatened by the rising seas.
 - India has also made appreciable progress towards the attainment of its **Paris Pact commitments**.
 - **India's dilemma:**
 - Not out of the small island states' concerns, but because the resolution failed to recognize the socio-economic development needs of the Global South.
 - **India's concerns:**
 - The resolution weakens the UN's traditional principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), expecting identical emission cuts from countries regardless of their industrial maturity.
 - **India's future:**
 - Even as India pushes its justified position in international climate fora, it must stay the course on its green-transition targets. Doing so will be in the interests of the well-being of its people and the competitiveness of its industry.

UNGA Resolution 141-8 Vote Endorses ICJ Climate Ruling; India Abstains Over CBDR and Climate Finance Concerns

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Vision

Launched in 2015 for regional security, sustainable growth, and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region

Core Principles

- Trust, respect for maritime norms, regional sensitivity, peaceful dispute resolution, & cooperation
- Aligns with India's Act East Policy & Neighbourhood First policy

Significance of IOR for India

- **Economic Vitality:** 95% of India's trade by volume & 68% of trade by value
- **Strategic Leverage:** Controls key maritime chokepoints (e.g. Strait of Malacca), boosting trade security
- **Defense Shield:** Enhances naval security against piracy & threats
- **Regional Influence:** Strengthens India's role in South Asia and Indo-Pacific

Major Initiatives of India Aligning with the SAGAR Vision





Genesis: Jointly announced by **India and France in 2015** at the **UN Paris Climate Change Conference (COP-21 of the UNFCCC)**.

- ISA Framework Agreement came **into force in 2017**.



About: It is a treaty-based **intergovernmental organization that is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform** for increased deployment of **solar energy** technologies.



Membership: 119 Signatory members (100 ratified)



Eligibility: **All UN Member States** (2020 Amendment to Framework Agreement)



Main Roles:

- Ensure **energy access, energy security**, and facilitate **energy transition** in its member countries, particularly focussed on **Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing State (SIDS)**.
- Partnership with International Institutions**. E.g. **Observer Status at UN (2021)**
- 9 Comprehensive Programmes** focussing on **3 priority areas** -- Analytics & Advocacy, Capacity Building, and Programmatic Support
- Guided by 'Towards 1000' strategy:**
 - Mobilise USD 1,000 billion of **investments** in solar energy solutions by **2030**
 - Deliver **energy access** to 1,000 million people using **clean energy solutions**
 - Installation** of 1,000 GW of solar energy capacity.
 - Mitigate** global solar **emissions** to the tune of 1,000 million tonnes of CO₂ every year.



Structure

- Assembly:** Apex decision-making body comprising representatives from all member countries.
- Secretariat with Director General**
- Committees:** Standing and Regional Committees

Governance Structure



TOTAL INSTALLED CAPACITY ANNUAL INSTALLATION (IN GW)



COUNTRIES WITH BIGGEST SOLAR FOOTPRINT

Total installed capacity in 2023 (in GW)

China	609.3	India*	72.7
European Union	254.7	Brazil	37.5
United States	137.7	Australia	33.8
Japan	87	Italy	29.7
Germany	81.7	Spain	28.7

* India's installed capacity reached 90.76 GW by end of September 2024

Source: World Solar Market Report, 2024, ISA



Bond yields

Frequent in news

- **Yields** on Indian government bonds –

issued by the Centre		
to raise funds		
to bridge its annual fiscal deficit ,	or	the mismatch between its receipts and expenditure

- **have risen sharply** in recent weeks in the wake of the **war in West Asia** due to → → **the strain on public finances** → →

as <u>expenditure mounts</u> for things such as <u>fertiliser subsidy</u>	and	<u>loss of revenue</u> from the cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel, among others.
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- Bond yields have **risen** across the world, from the US to Japan, to multi-year highs → → as fears of rising inflation unnerve investors that central banks may start raising interest rates.

Bond yields vs price

- ▽ Bond yields move in the opposite direction to prices.
- ▽ Bond prices and yields have an **inverse relationship**;

as the price of a bond goes up, its yield decreases, and
as the price goes down, the yield increases

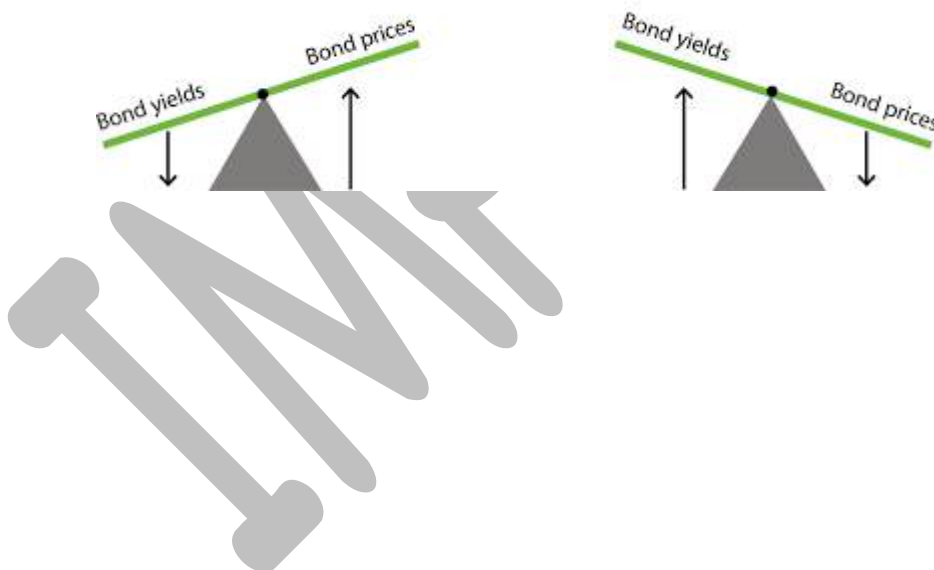
- ▽ This dynamic exists because the annual interest payment (coupon) is fixed when the bond is issued. Therefore, the effective return adjusts depending on what an investor pays for the bond in the secondary market.
- ▽ Rising bond yields are a sign of → → investors expecting higher interest rates in the future.



If bond prices fall:	If bond prices rise:
You pay less to buy the bond, but you still receive the same fixed interest payments. This means your effective percentage return (yield) increases.	You have to pay a higher premium to acquire the bond, which shrinks the overall percentage of your return, lowering the yield.

High bond yields suggest greater investment risk or market shifts.

Bond Prices and Yields



TYPES OF FINANCIAL MARKETS

MONEY MARKET

These markets are meant for fulfilling short term requirements

CAPITAL MARKET:

These markets are meant for fulfilling long term financial requirements

PRIMARY MARKET:

Here, financial instruments are issued for the first time.

SECONDARY MARKET:

In this market already issued financial instruments are traded.

Primary vs Secondary Market: Key Differences & Features

Primary Market

- The market where new securities are issued.
- The issuer sells securities directly to investors.

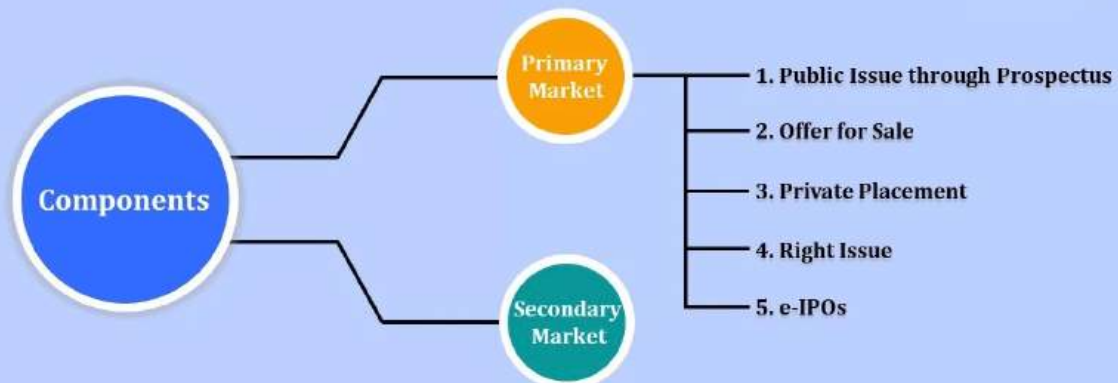
VS

Secondary Market

- The market where previously issued securities are traded.
- Investors buy and sell securities among themselves.

Capital Market -It's Meaning and Components

The Capital market serves medium and long-term funds for the business. It includes Shares, Debentures, Bonds, Mutual Funds, Government Securities, etc

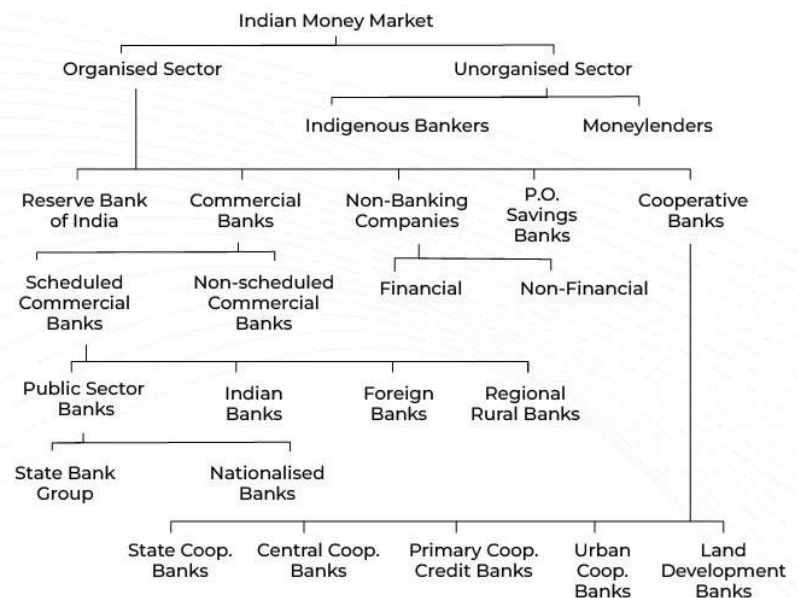


What is a Secondary Market?





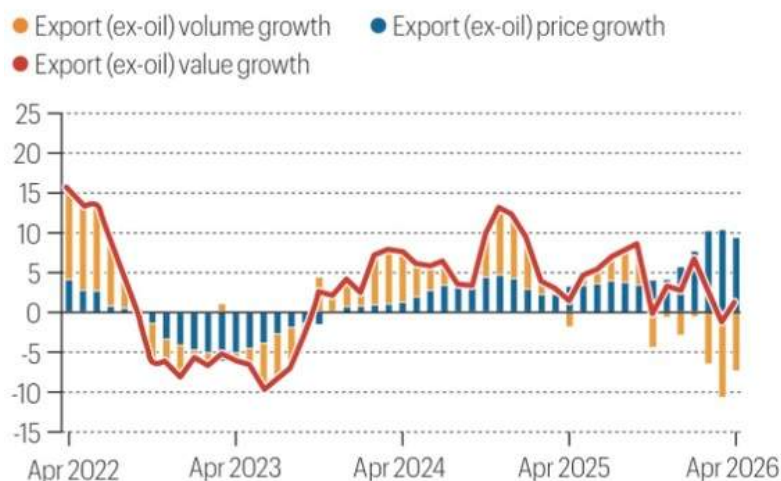
Indian Money Market



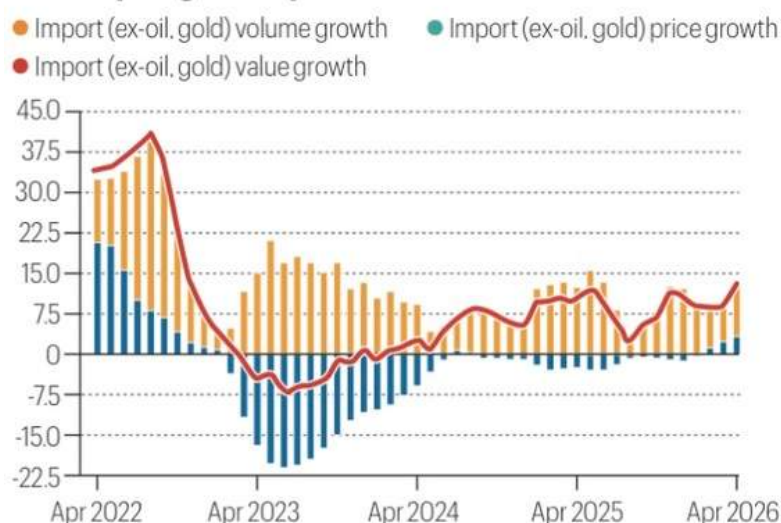
23.05.2026

• Price or volume? What drove India's April trade deficit

Core export growth: price versus volume



Core import growth: price versus volume



India's trade deficit in April

\$28.38
billion

India's trade deficit widened to \$28.38 billion in April. While exports rose sharply by 14% in April, driven by a 40% upswing in electronics and 35% increase in petroleum products whose prices are on the rise because of the war, imports tell an interesting story. A rise in imports is generally seen as an indicator of strong domestic demand, and core imports (non-oil, non-gold imports) were 15% higher on account of both higher volumes as well as prices, although "price effects could be exaggerating the rise", Nomura economist said in a note. "It seems that the pick-up in core import growth has been primarily driven by consumer goods, particularly electronics, while investment/industrial goods growth continued to moderate," they added.

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CEIC, AND NOMURA GLOBAL ECONOMICS

Why India is becoming 'egocentric' data hotspot

- India is emerging as a global hub for "egocentric" (first-person) AI data.
 - This involves workers in factories, warehouses, and kitchens wearing head or chest-mounted cameras to record their daily tasks, → → which is then used to train Vision-Language-Action (VLA) models for humanoid robots and AI.
- This trend is driven by several key factors:
 - ▽ **Training Humanoid Robots:** First-person perspective data perfectly mimics the viewpoint a robot will have, capturing fine-grained hand movements and object interactions that conventional third-person video misses. This is essential for training AI to perform household chores and warehouse operations
 - ▽ **Low Labor Costs:** The abundance of affordable, willing labor makes India highly cost-effective for large-scale video collection and annotation.
 - ▽ **Favorable Environment:** India's large, diverse workforce, coupled with relatively weaker worker protections and privacy regulations compared to the US or Europe, allows startups and AI labs to gather and scale these massive datasets much faster.

Concern:

This rapid growth is actively fuelling the global robotics industry, but it is also sparking intense ethical debates regarding worker surveillance, consent, job displacement, and compensation.

- ☞ **Exploitation and Compensation:** Workers often have little say over where this highly valuable data goes, how it is monetized, or if they will face job displacement by the very robots their movements are helping to train.

- ☞ **Privacy Risks:** The pervasive nature of these head-mounted cameras raises severe privacy concerns, as workers are often unsure of what exactly is being captured or stored during their shifts.

The next big raw material in the global artificial intelligence (AI) race may not be chips or compute power, but human actions themselves.

Sources of Data	➤ Smartphones ➤ Social Media ➤ Wearable devices ➤ GPS & Location services ➤ Online shopping and browsing ➤ AI-based applications
Data revolves around	➤ Location history ➤ Personal preferences in shopping ➤ Behavioural patterns ➤ Digital footprint (Apps, clicks, Search etc) ➤ Health and activity data ➤ Social interactions
Used in	➤ AI ➤ Targeted advertisement ➤ Recommendation algorithms ➤ Surveillance systems ➤ Big Data analytics
Concerns	➤ Data privacy ➤ Cyber security ➤ Consent and data ownership ➤ Mass surveillance
Constitutional question	➤ The Right to Privacy @ Fundamental Right @ Art 21 @ K.S.Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017).

BIG DATA

We are talking about big data when:



Multiple sources - people or machines - generate **large amounts** of data very **quidly**



and the data is **gathered** and **analysed**



to gain new **insights**

How can big data improve our lives?

Environment

New solutions for climate change mitigation

Healthcare

Better diagnosis and more successful treatments

Industry

Innovative products, improved productivity, economic growth

Agriculture

Improved food safety and use of natural resources

Public sector

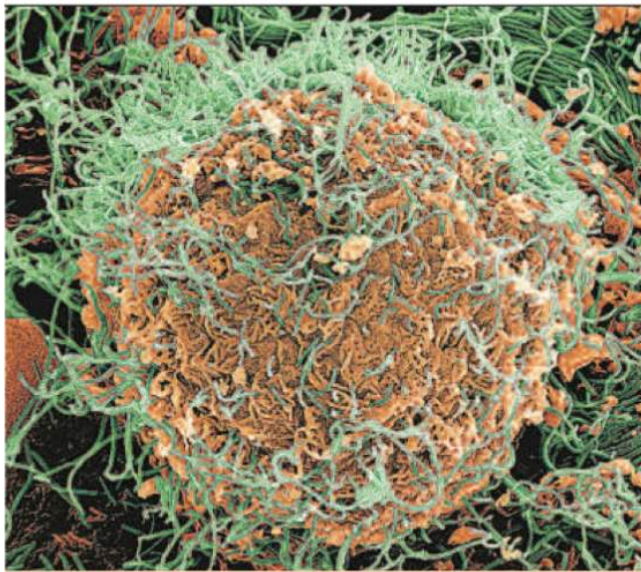
Increased efficiency and transparency

Transportation

Regulating traffic flows, preventing traffic jams

Sources:
European Commission (2020), EPRS (2016)





VACCINES: Two vaccines approved for use (Ervebo, Zabdeno and Mvabea) only offer protection from the Zaire strain. Vaccines for Bundibugyo still under development.

•Ebola Fact Sheet

- Zoonotic infection caused by Orthoebolavirus. Fruit bats presumed to be natural hosts.
- Transmitted when people come into close contact with blood or body fluids of the infected.
- Six strains identified to date; three known to cause major outbreaks: Ebola (or Zaire), Sudan, and Bundibugyo. The Bundibugyo strain has caused the current outbreak.

INCUBATION PERIOD: 2 to 21 days from infection to onset of symptoms.

SYMPTOMS: Fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain rash, and impaired kidney and liver functions.

MAJOR OUTBREAKS: First identified in 1976 in what is now South Sudan and DRC. Later, in Uganda (2000-01), West Africa (2013-16), DRC and Uganda (2018-20), and Uganda (2025).

In **Xi and Putin's 'no limits'** partnership, a growing asymmetry

China is a rising power, while Russia is not just in decline but also dependent on China. Xi holds significant leverage due to this asymmetry

Brief

- Less than a week after Xi Jinping hosted Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing for what was his 25th official visit in the 25th year → → since the signing of the **Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship.**

Strengthening relationship

- The summit celebrated a relationship with *a long and turbulent past*.
 - ▽ Tsarist Russia was among the great predators of Imperial China's "century of humiliation".
 - ▽ The Soviet Union became China's patron after the 1949 communist revolution, only for the relationship to fracture

in the Sino-Soviet split, leading Beijing to tilt towards Washington.

- ▽ Post-Cold War rapprochement occurred slowly, before deepening into a partnership that **Xi and Putin** have since elevated into one of "no limits".

Relationship faultlines

But cracks are bound to surface. China is a rising power, while Russia is not just in decline but also dependent on China.

- ▽ Cut off from Western markets following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia's economy relies heavily on China to purchase its exports.

<i>Economic and Energy leverage</i>	<i>Security and Geopolitical Imbalance</i>
<u>Energy dependency:</u> China has absorbed massive volumes of <u>discounted Siberian hydrocarbons</u> , while keeping Russia "over a barrel" in negotiations.	<u>Selective support:</u> Beijing has provided <u>dual-use components like chips and fiber-optic cables</u> to sustain the Russian war effort, <u>but has deliberately refrained from supplying lethal weapons</u> .
<u>Pipeline delays:</u> China continues to <u>delay its final commitment</u> to the proposed <u>Power of Siberia-2 gas pipeline</u> , utilizing its leverage to drive hard bargains.	<u>Differing ambitions:</u> <u>China's primary economic partner is Europe</u> , putting it at odds with Russia's view of Europe as an enemy.

- ▽ The reality is that Putin needs Xi far more than the other way around, and unless Russia decides to enter into some form of reconciliation with the West, something Trump has expressed optimism about, Moscow's dependence will deepen.

India to strategise

- India has long bet on Russia.

▽ The military defeat to China in 1962 was a major driver of New Delhi's tilt towards Moscow, → → as the US chose Pakistan as its frontline Cold War partner.

▽ **The US-China rapprochement compounded India's fears.**

▽ But things are different now.

- ó A weaker Russia, a stronger China, and a mercurial US president wooing both should push India to strengthen its own capabilities.
- ó Cooperation with the US in technology and AI is a strategic necessity and India must build on that even as Russia remains a source of energy.
- ó As for China, India needs to manage a long border and a massive trade deficit.

✂ *Alliances cannot substitute for the hard work of domestic reform and modernisation.*

25.05.2026

- Launched 2005
- Expanded 2016

International Booker Prize

The International Booker Prize **is celebrating a decade** of championing **translated fiction in 2026**, operating under the campaign theme "Fiction beyond borders".

Reimagined in 2016, the prestigious **£50,000 award** is divided equally between author and translator, formally acknowledging translation as a creative art rather than just a mechanical service.

The long road to reinvention

- Launched first in **2005** → as the Man Booker International Prize, it was a biennial honour awarded to a writer for their entire body of work.
- When the original Booker Prize expanded its eligibility in **2015** to admit writers of any nationality writing in English and published in the UK — it was earlier open only to writers from the **Commonwealth, Zimbabwe and Ireland** — the International Prize, too, changed purpose.
 - It committed for the first time to fiction that had crossed over from another language into English.
 - It also became an annual award for a single work of fiction, written in any language other than English, but available in translation to English-speaking readers.

2005–2015: Originally, the award was presented biennially (every two years) as a lifetime achievement award to an author of any nationality for a body of work.

2016–Present: The rules were revised to award the prize annually for a single book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland. It is now awarded equally to both the author and the translator.

The Nobel connection

No measure of the Prize's impact is more striking than the fact that four authors recognised by the International Booker Prize have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature:

- ☞ Han Kang
- ☞ Olga Tokarczuk
- ☞ Annie Ernaux
- ☞ Jon Fosse

- Since 1969 → Booker Prize
- 2002-19 → Man Booker Prize
- 2020 onwards → Booker Prize

Booker Prize

- The Booker Prize (formerly known as the Man Booker Prize) has been awarded each year to the best single work of sustained fiction, including both novels and collections of short stories, written in English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland since 1969.

Key Award infos:

- **Language:** The book must be originally written in English.
- **Origin:** It must be published in the UK or Ireland.
- **Nationality:** Authors can be from anywhere in the world.
- **Format:** It must be an original, full-length novel... → FICTION
- **The Reward:**
 - The winning author receives a prize of £50,000.
 - Additionally, each of the **six shortlisted authors** receives £2,500, along with a massive boost in global recognition and book sales.
- **Awarded by:** Booker Prize Foundation, a charity → Annually.
- **Aim:** ...“promote the art and value of literature for the public benefit”.

Why is it called the ‘Booker’?

- The Booker Prize, from 1969 to 2001, was named simply after the **Booker Group Limited** – a British food wholesale operator that was its initial sponsor.
- The **Man Group**, an investment management firm based in the **UK**, began to sponsor the prize in **2002** and it thus came to be known as The Man Booker Prize.
- The Man Group ended their sponsorship in 2019.
- **Crankstart**, an American charitable foundation, has been the sponsor after that. The prize name has changed back to the ‘Booker’ since then.

Booker winner Indian origin:

- ☞ Arundhati Roy ('The God of Small Things')
- ☞ Salman Rushdie ('Midnight's Children')
- ☞ Kiran Desai ('The Inheritance of Loss')
- ☞ Aravind Adiga ('The White Tiger')

International Booker winner Indian:

1) *Geetanjali Shree*(2022):

- ó Translated *Hindi novel*, **Tomb of Sand**, became the first Indian language book to win the International Booker Prize in 2022.
- ó The 2018 novel titled '**Ret Samadhi**' was translated by Daisy Rockwell and published as 'Tomb of Sand' in 2021.

2) *Banu Mushtaq* (2025):

- ó Won for **Heart Lamp**, a short story collection translated from *Kannada* by Deepa Bhasthi.
- ó It made history as the first collection of short stories and the first work from the Kannada language to win the award.

How DRDO's new drone-launched missile offers precision strikes, anti-drone combat capability

The **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile-V3** has the ability to engage **both ground and aerial targets**. It also features **more advanced target-seeking systems, improved day-and-night combat capability, and multiple warhead options for different battlefield roles**.

News Brief:

- The DRDO successfully carried out final development trials of the **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3**, paving the way for its critical user trials by the armed forces.

Indigenous drone-launched missile

- The DRDO on May 19 completed the final deliverable configuration development trials of the ULPGM-V3 → → in **both air-to-ground and air-to-air modes** → → at DRDO's National Open Area Range test range in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh.
- The trials were carried out using an integrated **ground control system (GCS)** to command and control the ULPGM weapon system.
- The GCS features **state-of-the-art technologies** to automate readiness and launch operations.
- While the final development trials will be followed by user trials by the armed forces, the term “deliverable configuration” suggests that not much will change in the subsequent trials.

Evolution of ULPGM – From V1 to V3

The ULPGM has undergone significant technological evolution across three generations:

V1	Basic free-fall precision missile
V2	Added propulsion, longer range, and mid-course target updates
V3	<u>Air-to-ground and Air-to-air capability, advanced seekers, multiple warheads, day-night combat, all weather.</u>
	The V3 represents a generational leap — transforming the ULPGM from a basic drone-launched weapon into a <u>highly versatile, multi-role precision missile suited for modern drone warfare.</u>
	The missile can be deployed in both plains and high-altitude regions and is capable of operating during both day and night.
	It is also equipped with a <u>two-way data link</u> , enabling operators to change or update the target even after the missile has been launched.

DRDO has partnered with two production agencies – the public sector company **Bharat Dynamics Limited** and the private sector firm **Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited** – for the development and production of the missiles.

The missile has been **produced entirely through the Indian defence ecosystem**, involving a large number of MSMEs and other industries.

Drones take centre stage

- Drones are increasingly becoming central to modern warfare worldwide.
 - ó From surveillance and precision strikes to counter-drone operations, → → drones are important for both conventional conflicts and asymmetric warfare → → involving smaller, highly mobile threats.
- The system also reflects the growing shift towards **network-centric warfare,** where drones, sensors, and command systems work together in real time → → to detect and strike targets with precision.
- The missile's ability to receive target updates even after launch → → can help forces respond quickly to changing battlefield situations, → → especially in fast-moving combat environments involving drones and other airborne threats.
 - ✂ Development of drone-launched weapons will be one of the DRDO's focus areas. Drones will see an even greater role in coming days as they offer significantly reduced risk to human soldiers and pilots, persistent real-time surveillance and precision strike capability.
 - ✂ They can also undergo rapid mass production and scalability → → compared with conventional manned weapon systems.

Know your Military Drones

Explore how different drones are reshaping military operations



► Surveillance Drones



Watch. Detect. Secure.



Real-time intel for search, rescue, and tactical operations.

Mission: Early threat detection and real-time surveillance.

► Kamikaze Drones



One-time-use Suicide drones for precision hits.

Mission: Precise damage, high-impact attacks.



Strike. Explode. Self-destruct.

► FPV Bombers



Chase. Detonate. Eliminate.



Piloted with VR goggles to deliver explosive payloads.

Mission: Moving target elimination, controlled adaptive strikes

► Armed Drones



Precision strikes with missiles or payloads.

Mission: High-value target elimination.



Hover. Lock. Fire.

► Swarm Drones



Coordinate. Saturate. Attack.



Multiple drones, one purpose -driven by a single mission

Mission: Multiple drones attacking simultaneously to overwhelm defenses.

DRONE TECHNOLOGY



Drone is a pilotless flying machine, using aerodynamics for lift, can operate autonomously or remotely, and may carry lethal or nonlethal cargo.



COMPONENTS.

- Unmanned aircraft (UA)
- Control system (ground control station - GCS)
- Control link (specialized datalink)
- Other related support equipment



CLASSIFICATION.

(as per Drone Rules, 2021)

- Nano: <250 gm
- Small: 25 kg to 150 kg
- Micro: 250 gm to 2 kg
- Large: >150 kg
- Mini: 2 kg to 25 kg

APPLICATIONS

- Mapping & Surveying** (asset inspection, roof inspections)
- Agriculture** (bird control, crop spraying & monitoring etc)
- Multispectral/thermal/NIR cameras, **Aerial Photo/videography** and Live streaming events
- Emergency Response** (search and rescue, marine rescue, fire fighting)
- Disaster** (zone mapping, disaster relief etc)
- Mining**
- Monitoring Poachers**
- Meteorology**, Aviation, Payload carrying

DRONES IN DEFENCE

Purpose

- Surveillance and Reconnaissance
- Search and Rescue
- Maritime Surveillance
- Combat Drones
- Offensive (heterogeneous SWARM drones)
- Counter-Terrorism Operations

India's Counter-Drone System

- Indrajaal** (India's inaugural autonomous drone-defense dome)
- Procurement of combat-capable **Heron drones from Israel**
- Acquisition of **MQ-9B Armed Drones from the US**

RELATED REGULATIONS.

- Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023
- Drones Rules, 2021 and Drone (Amendment) Rules, 2022



INDIA'S INITIATIVES.

- Digital Sky Platform
- No-Permission-No-Takeoff (NPNT) framework
- PLI Scheme for Drones
- Drone Shakti Scheme



ISSUES.

- Increased risk of armed attacks
- Data security
- Cheaper cost** enables a larger population to procure drones
- Use of drones in warfare (**remote warfare**)
- Procurement by non-state actors** can pose serious threats
- Ease in **delivering mass destruction weapons**

Bengal order on madrasas is disturbing

The 'Vande Mataram' order comes on the heels of the government scrapping state assistance schemes based on religious classification, including scholarships for minority students. These decisions may be part of the Adhikari government's attempt to counter what it calls the 'appeasement' policies of its predecessor. But the forced recitation of a controversial song is the wrong answer

Bijoy Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)

News Brief

- The West Bengal government, led by CM Suwendu Adhikari, has mandated the compulsory singing of the national song "Vande Mataram" in all recognized madrasas and state-run schools during morning assembly.
- The directive follows the recent scrapping of minority scholarships and other religion-based assistance schemes

Issues of Debate

This directive has sparked intense political and religious debate across the state:

- ▽ **The Government's Stance:** Supporters, including the BJP, argue the move promotes national unity, patriotism, and a shared civic identity among all students.
- ▽ **Concerns and Backlash:** Critics—including editorials from major news publications and various Islamic boards—have criticized the order as an act of forced performative nationalism. Detractors argue that mandating the recitation in minority institutions infringes on educational autonomy, and highlights religious objections over the verses' references to Hindu deities, such as Durga.
- ▽ **Constitutional Dimensions:** Legal experts point out potential friction with established precedents, such as the Supreme Court's **Bijoy Emmanuel v. State of Kerala, 1986** ruling, which protected the right of students to refrain from singing even the National Anthem if it conflicts with their religious conscience.

Criticism

- Critics argue the order distracts from substantive educational reforms, such as **improving core curriculum standards and higher-education pipelines** within the madrasa system.

Mains writing:

School education — whether in minority institutions, private bodies or state-run facilities — must not become a site for a forced performative nationalism.

Students and their families must not be compelled to endorse, for the sake of accessing their right to education, symbols and signifiers that may go against their religious beliefs.

In **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)**, the Supreme Court held that forcing students belonging to the minority community to sing even the national anthem is a violation of their right to freedom of speech, expression, and religion.

Know your Constitution:

In India, minority madrasas are governed primarily by **Articles 29 and 30** of the Constitution, which protect the cultural and educational rights of religious and linguistic minorities.

Key Constitutional Provisions

Article 29(1):	Grants any section of citizens with a distinct language, script, or culture the fundamental right to conserve it.
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Article 30(1):	Gives all religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. This allows madrasas to determine their own management, curriculum, and medium of instruction.
Article 30(2):	Prohibits the State from discriminating against any educational institution managed by a minority when providing financial aid.

Regulation and Exemptions

Right to Education (RTE) Act:	Under Sections 1(4) and 1(5) of the RTE Act, madarasas and Vedic Pathshalas are largely exempt from the mandates of free and compulsory education rules. This preserves their religious instruction focus.
State Regulations:	The autonomy of minority institutions is not absolute . Courts have consistently held that the State can impose reasonable regulations to prevent maladministration and ensure minimum academic standards are met.

Key Recent Judicial Verdicts

Supreme Court's intervention to balance minority protections with the need for regulated, secular curriculum integration.

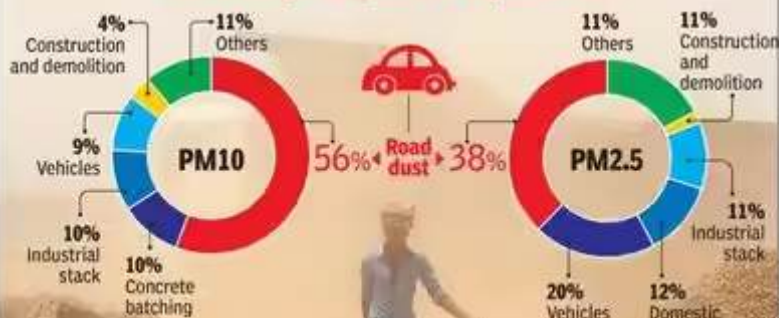
U.P. Madarsa Act Verdict (<i>Anjum Kadari v. Union of India</i>, 2024):	The Supreme Court overturned a previous Allahabad High Court ruling and upheld the constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004.
--	---

	The Court affirmed that madrasas fulfill a secular educational role, <u>but struck down provisions allowing the board to grant higher education degrees (like Fazil and Kamil) that conflict with UGC regulations.</u>
Exemption from RTE (<i>Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust, 2014</i> & subsequent rulings):	The Supreme Court has previously established that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, particularly the 25% quota for disadvantaged students, does not apply to unaided minority schools. Applying these provisions could destroy the distinct minority character of these institutions.
State Regulation of Teachers (<i>Sk. Md. Rafiq v. State of West Bengal</i>):	The Supreme Court previously upheld the State's right to regulate the appointment of teachers in aided minority madrasas through a centralized state commission, finding it a valid regulatory measure to ensure quality education.

Why Delhi is biting the dust

While road dust is a major source of pollution, little has been done to address the problem

Dust is a major component of all pollutants...



HOW POLLUTION CAN BE MINIMISED AT CONSTRUCTION SITES



WHAT EPCA SUGGESTS UNDER COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN

Implement street design guidelines for footpaths and cycle tracks

Status | A majority of footpaths don't meet the guidelines: Vegetative buffers are missing, even central verges not properly maintained

Mechanical/vacuum-based street sweeping

Status | No. of mechanical road sweepers used PWD | 4 (tenders floated for 11 more in Oct); 3 corporations: 19; NDMC: 3

➤ No proper plan to dispose of the waste (largely dust) collected by the machines

Maintain pothole-free roads for free flow of traffic to reduce emissions, dust

Status | PWD recently re-carpeted 450km of road; work on 250km in various stages of sanctioning

Sprinkle recycled water; introduce water fountains at major traffic intersections

Status | As part of the emergency measure, water tankers deployed to sprinkle water on roadsides

➤ Increase green cover

Status | Agencies have failed to maintain greenery along arterial roads; most central verges not maintained and roadsides unpaved

Issue challans for dust due to construction/demolition

PWD | 48 (in the last three months) and 326 in last two years

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS | 387 (excluding south corp)



Over the past year, the MRSRM fleet collectively covered a maximum of 2,891 km — about 70.38 per cent of Delhi's major roads. TASHI TOBGYAL

WHAT IS AN MRSRM?

A Mechanical Road Sweeping Machine (MRSRM) is a modified truck with rotating brushes, water jets, filter bags and storage space

COST

Rs 40-60 lakh

PER UNIT

MAKERS

TPS Infrastructure, Roots Multiclean, Kam-Avida Enviro Engineers (India); Elgin Sweeper, Global Environmental Products (US).

INDIA USE

Mainly in Delhi, Chandigarh, Varanasi, Agra, Patna, Kolkata, Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad.

GLOBAL USE

China (Beijing) uses optical sensors to detect high-dust areas and deploys mechanical sweepers. European nations combine sweeping with high-pressure washing and dust-binding agents. US states like California use advanced mechanical sweepers.

Delhi's dust pollution problem is easy to solve.

Government must get its act together

Unlike geography or crop residue burning, this is an aspect of pollution over which the Delhi government cannot claim helplessness

- It is now well known that the particulate matter (PM) burden on Delhi's air — responsible for the city's chronic pollution crisis — is a toxic mix of multiple pollutants.

- ☐ Addressing it requires a multi-pronged approach that combines systemic overhauls with relatively simple interventions at the local government level.
- ☐ Controlling emissions from the transport, industrial and agricultural sectors involves complex solutions with significant implications for economic activity in the city and its surrounding regions.

- **Dust pollution, in contrast,** can be reduced through relatively less economically disruptive measures such as

regular road sweeping,
water sprinkling,
covering construction sites, and
maintaining roads and pavements.

- ☐ However, the city's limited dust-control infrastructure, especially its Mechanical Road Sweeping Machines (MRSM), remains severely underutilised.
- ☐ The persistent failure to implement such operationally straightforward measures raises serious questions about administrative intent.

- In Delhi, dust pollution

<i>primarily originates from</i>	<i>It accounts for nearly</i>
----------------------------------	-------------------------------

construction sites,	41% of PM10 pollutants and 38% of the finer PM2.5 particles during summer, when dry conditions increase dust levels in the city's air.
demolition activities,	
roadside soil and	
the movement of heavy vehicles.	

- Yet, as the investigation reveals, Delhi's MRSF fleet operates below capacity for much of the year, including during peak-pollution months, and its deployment remains confined to only a few parts of the capital. → → Coverage across municipal zones is uneven, with better-funded zones receiving more service than others. This skewed usage defeats the purpose of the machines. → → Dust does not respect administrative boundaries — when one zone is cleaned while another is neglected, particles circulate across the city because of traffic movement and shifting wind patterns.
- For far too long, Delhi's authorities have treated the city's poor air quality as a seasonal problem, despite a wealth of studies highlighting heavy pollution year-round.
 - Their failure to acknowledge the scale of the crisis prevents the city from deriving the maximum benefit from MRSFs.
 - The fact that the deployment of these machines is concentrated in winter, when smog attracts public attention, shows that the authorities continue to adopt a reactive approach.
 - Delhi needs **a coordinated dust-management strategy** involving civic bodies, the Public Works Department and pollution-control agencies.
 - **Real-time monitoring of MRSF deployment and performance audits** could introduce much-needed transparency into the system.

- Indore's experience with these machines demonstrates that solutions to dust pollution are neither technologically complex nor financially prohibitive.

✂ Unlike geography or crop-residue burning, this is an aspect of pollution over which the Delhi government cannot claim helplessness. Like in its interventions on clean fuel, emission standards and protection of green belts, the Court should nudge Delhi's authorities.

26.05.2026

Health indicators point to gains on infant mortality, total fertility rate but large disparities remain

Read together, the data does not present a single India on the cusp of its demographic dividend, but two demographic realities moving at different speeds

- The just-released Sample Registration System report for 2024 highlights a demographic transformation that is cause for both celebration and concern.
- The country's **birth rate** — the total number of live births per 1,000 people in a population — declined to **18.3** per 1,000 population in 2024, down from 21 in 2014.
- The **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** has also fallen steadily from 39 per 1,000 live births in 2014-2019 to **24 in 2024.**
 - These gains reflect → → decades of sustained public-health investment.
 - Yet, the national averages conceal a deeper gulf between rural and urban areas, and between states:

▪ Chhattisgarh records the country's highest IMR at <u>36</u>, ▪ with MP and UP at <u>35</u> each.	▪ Kerala, at the other end, stands at <u>8</u>; ▪ Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh at <u>11</u>.
---	---

- **This gap** between the best- and worst-performing states **underlines persistent local failures.**

- The broader gains reflected in the data owe much to the cumulative impact of targeted interventions under the National Health Mission.

- These have

expanded immunisation coverage, lowering preventable child deaths, and improved institutional deliveries.

- But the persistence of rural disadvantage suggests that public-health infrastructure has advanced unevenly, with poorer states and districts still struggling to catch up.

<u>Rural</u> IMR at <u>27 deaths</u> per 1,000 live births,	compared with <u>17</u> in <u>urban areas</u> —
---	---

a disparity that reflects enduring inequalities in healthcare access, awareness and maternal nutrition.

- The fertility data, too, compounds this picture of two Indias. India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has remained flat at 1.9 for the fifth consecutive year, below the replacement level of 2.1.

- **Delhi** records the country's **lowest TFR at 1.2**, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal at 1.3.

- But **Bihar's** TFR remains the highest at **2.9**. The consequences of ignoring this are considerable.

Nearly 10% of India's population is now aged 60 and above, signalling that many of the economically advanced states are ageing rapidly.

✂ Read together, **the data does not present a single India** on the cusp of its demographic dividend, but two demographic realities moving at different speeds. Policymakers must resist the comfort of national averages to confront that divergent reality.

Sample Registration System Report 2024

- **Office of the Registrar General of India** → → falls under Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The organization is responsible for conducting the decennial Census and implementing vital statistics, including the registration of births and deaths.

Rural and Urban divergence in the mentioned indicators (Birth Rate, IMR, TFR)

The **birth rate** measures the frequency of new life, showing the total number of live births per 1,000 people in a population per year.

The **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** measures the loss of life, representing the number of deaths of infants **under one year of age** per 1,000 live births.

India's Fertility Shift: Birth Rate, TFR and the State Divide

The Big Drop

18.3

Birth rate per 1,000 population
(2024)

Fertility Divide

21

Birth rate per 1,000 population
(2014)

Why It Matters

1.9

Total Fertility Rate — flat for **5 consecutive years**, below replacement level of 2.1

CONTEXT

A decade of demographic shift

India's birth rate has fallen from 21 in 2014 to 18.3 in 2024 — a steady decline driven by urbanisation, improved education, and sustained public health investment. The national TFR of 1.9 has now sat below the replacement level of 2.1 for five straight years.

India's Fertility Shift: Birth Rate, TFR and the State Divide

The Big Drop

Fertility Divide

Why It Matters

Total Fertility Rate by state — replacement level is **2.1**



THE DIVIDE

Delhi at 1.2, Bihar at 2.9 — a 2.4x gap

The most economically advanced states have fertility rates far below replacement level, while Bihar remains well above it at 2.9. This divergence reflects deep inequalities in education, women's workforce participation, and access to family planning.

India's Fertility Shift: Birth Rate, TFR and the State Divide

The Big Drop

Fertility Divide

Why It Matters

AGEING INDIA

Nearly 1 in 10 Indians is now 60 or older

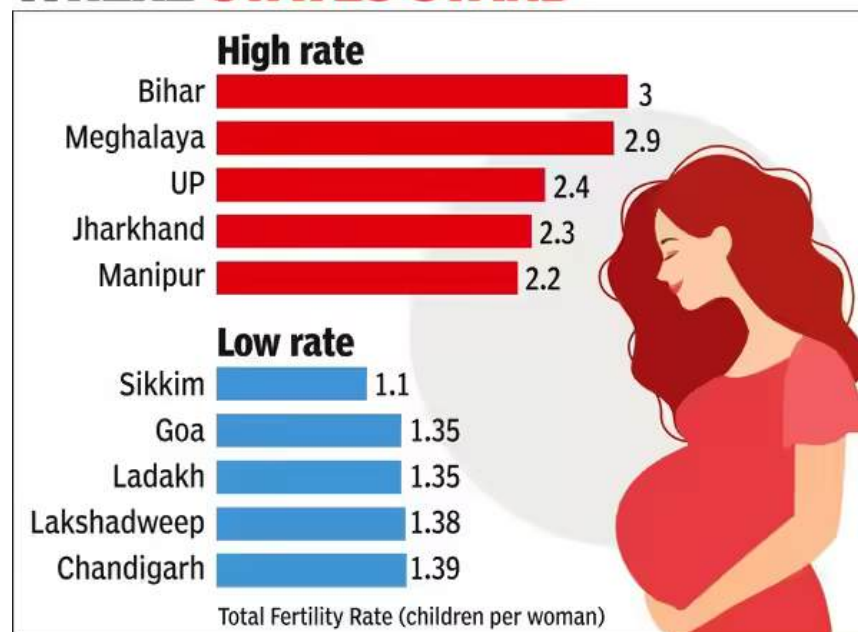
With TFR below replacement level for five consecutive years, India's advanced states are ageing rapidly. Close to 10% of the population is now aged 60 and above – raising questions about pension systems, healthcare capacity, and labour supply in the years ahead.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND AT RISK

Two demographic realities, moving at different speeds

National averages conceal a split: some states are ageing fast with shrinking workforces, while others still have high fertility and young populations. Policymakers must resist the comfort of national averages and confront this divergent reality directly.

WHERE STATES STAND

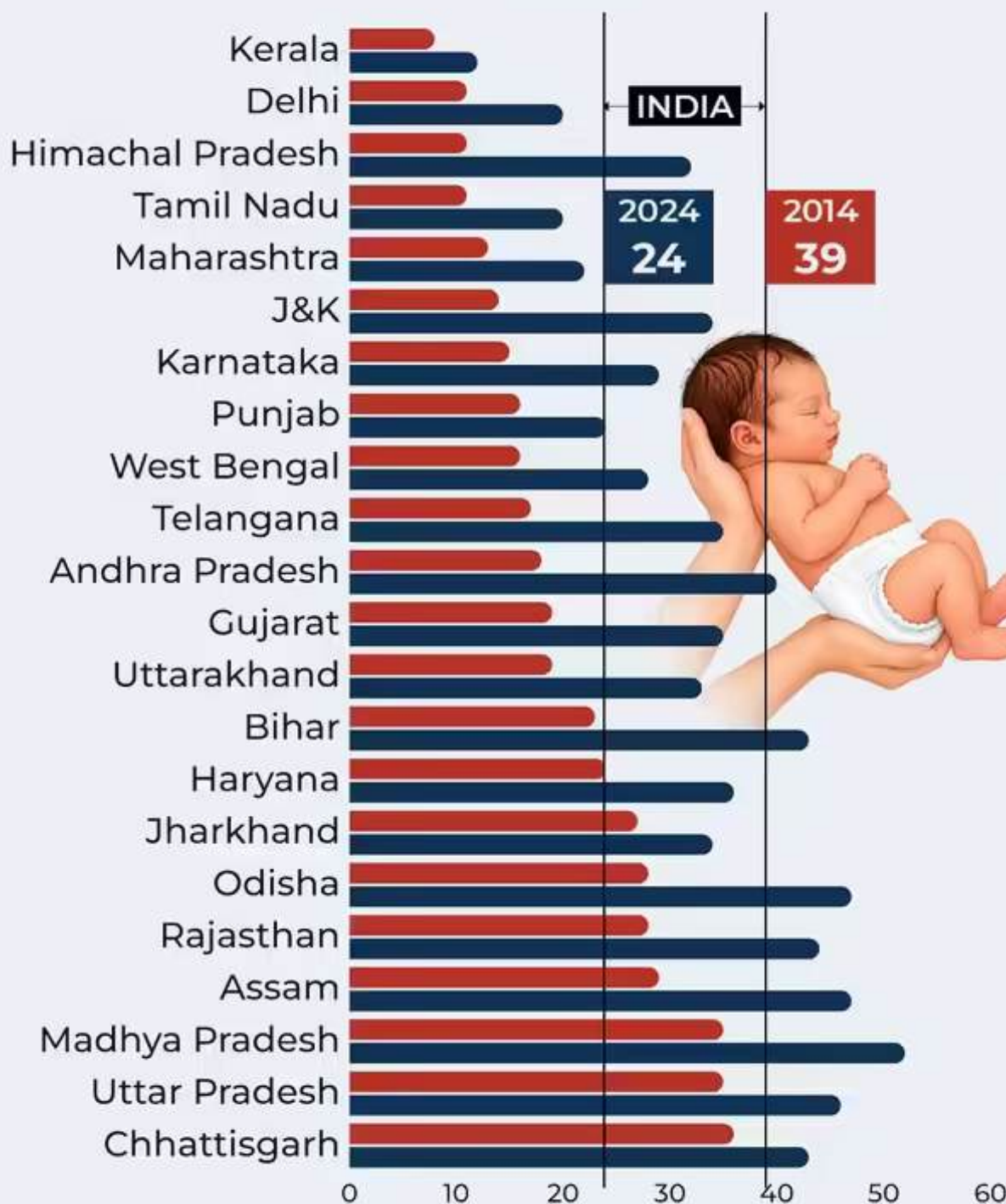


DECLINE IN INFANT MORTALITY RATE (IMR) OVER A DECADE

(Approx. deaths per 1,000 live births)



2014 2024



Why Kerala has announced a new department for welfare of senior citizens

Kerala is India's most rapidly ageing state. The growing graph of senior citizens has thrown up challenges for Kerala in the health and service sectors, mainly on shifting its focus to geriatric care.

India's First State Elderly Commission.

News Brief:

- The newly elected Congress government in Kerala has announced the formation of a **department for the elderly people**, the first such initiative in India.
- At present, the welfare of the aged comes under the **state's Social Welfare department**.

An ageing population refers to a rising proportion of **elderly persons (60 years and above)** in the total population.

A state turning grey

- Kerala is going through a critical phase of demographic transition.
- With its demographic profile similar to East Asian and European countries, Kerala is India's most rapidly ageing state.
- As per the Elderly in India Report of 2021,

Elderly population increasing mode

around 16.5% of the state's population is aged above 60 and is expected to touch 20.9% of the total population by 2031	compared with the all-india figure of 13.1%.
--	---

Increasing mode

The old age dependency ratio — the number of the aged per 100 persons of working age group —	has risen from 19.6% in 2011 to 26.1% in 2021.
	This figure is expected to go up to 34.3% by 2031.

The number of residents in old age homes in Kerala has increased from 19,149 in 2016-17 to 37,895 in 2024-25.

Reason for rapid ageing

1. Declining Fertility Rate

- Kerala's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined significantly over the years.
- TFR in 2023: **1.35 children per woman**.
- This is well below the **replacement level fertility** of **2.1**, which is needed for a population to replace itself across generations.
- Fewer births mean a smaller proportion of young people in the population.

2. Increased Life Expectancy

- Better healthcare facilities, higher literacy, and improved living standards have increased life expectancy.
- People are living longer, leading to a larger elderly population.

3. Large-Scale Migration

- Many people in the working-age group migrate abroad for employment.
- A significant share of migrants to non-West Asian countries settle permanently overseas.
- Elderly parents are often left behind, increasing the proportion of senior citizens in the state.
- Many households consist only of ageing parents.

4. Return Migration of Elderly Workers

- Migrants working in West Asian countries often return to Kerala after retirement.
- This return migration further increases the elderly population.

Geography and Demography

1. Rural-Urban Distribution

- According to the **India Ageing Report 2023**, elderly persons (60+) constitute:
 - **17.5% of Kerala's rural population**
 - **15.4% of Kerala's urban population**
- Rural areas have a higher concentration of elderly people.
- Major reason: **Outmigration of working-age population** to other states and countries for employment, leaving older persons behind.

2. Feminisation of Ageing

- Kerala's ageing population has a strong female predominance.
- Among persons aged **80 years and above**, the sex ratio is:
 - **1,651 women per 1,000 men**
- This phenomenon is known as the "**feminisation of ageing**."

3. Difference in Life Expectancy

- Women live significantly longer than men:
 - **Female life expectancy**: ~78.4 years
 - **Male life expectancy**: ~71.9 years
- Longer female lifespan results in a larger elderly female population.

4. Social Consequences

- Large number of elderly women are:
 - Widows
 - Living alone
 - Facing inadequate social support
 - Facing financial insecurity

5. MGNREGS and Elderly Workforce

- Women constitute **88–90%** of Kerala's MGNREGS workforce.
- National average female participation in MGNREGS:
 - Around **55–59%**
- Among Kerala's MGNREGS workers:
 - **38% are aged 61–80 years**
 - **1% are above 81 years**

6. What Does This Indicate?

- Continued participation of senior citizens in manual labour under MGNREGS reflects:
 - Economic vulnerability among the elderly
 - Insufficient pension and social security support
 - Financial dependence despite advanced age

Health of elderly

Major Health Challenges & Measures

1) Chronic Diseases

- According to the **Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) Wave-1 (2017-18)**:
 - More than **70% of Kerala's elderly** suffer from at least one chronic disease.
- Major ailments:
 - Hypertension
 - Diabetes
 - Arthritis
 - Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs)

2) Mental Health Concerns

- According to the **India Ageing Report 2023**:
 - Nearly **1 in 4 elderly persons (25%)** experience psychological distress.
- Causes:
 - Loneliness
 - Widowhood
 - Social isolation
 - Migration of children abroad
 - Chronic illnesses

3) Dementia Burden

- According to **Smruthipadham (Kerala State Initiative on Dementia)**:
 - Approximately **4.86% of persons aged 65+** suffer from dementia.

- Need for:
 - Early diagnosis
 - Caregiver training
 - Community-based support
 - Public awareness to reduce stigma

4) **Health Profile of Kerala's Elderly**

Indicator	Status
Elderly with at least one chronic disease	>70%
Elderly with psychological distress	Nearly 25%
Dementia prevalence (65+)	4.86%
Welfare pension coverage	~75%

5) **Kerala's Elderly Care Initiatives**

Initiative	Objective
Vayomithram	Mobile healthcare services for senior citizens
Samayaprabha	Daycare centres for elderly persons
Smruthipadham	Dementia care and awareness programme
Kerala Care Palliative Grid	Coordinated palliative care network
State Elderly Commission (2025)	Protection of elderly rights and welfare

6) **Kerala Care Palliative Grid**

- Formed in collaboration with **Digital University Kerala**.
- Integrates:
 - Government institutions
 - NGOs
 - Voluntary organisations

Significance

- One of the largest community-based palliative care networks in the world.
- Provides home-based care for terminally ill and bedridden patients.

State Elderly Commission (2025)

Key Features

- First-of-its-kind initiative in India.
- Functions as a **quasi-judicial body**.
- Focuses on:
 - Protection of rights of senior citizens
 - Welfare monitoring
 - Addressing grievances
 - Policy recommendations

Importance

- Reflects Kerala's transition towards an ageing society.
- Institutional mechanism for elderly welfare.

7) Social Security Measures

Welfare Pensions

- Around **75% of Kerala's elderly population** is covered under welfare pension schemes.

Significance

- Reduces old-age poverty.
- Supports widows and economically vulnerable elderly.
- Enhances social protection.

8) Health and Welfare of Kerala's Elderly

Dimension	Key Findings
Physical Health	>70% suffer from chronic diseases
Mental Health	25% face psychological distress
Dementia	4.86% prevalence among 65+ population
Healthcare Support	Vayomithram, Samayaprabha, Palliative Grid
Legal Protection	State Elderly Commission (2025)
Social Security	75% covered by welfare pensions

Consequences of Population Ageing

- Higher demand for healthcare and geriatric care.
- Increased pension and social security burden.
- Shrinking workforce and labour shortages.
- Greater dependency ratio.
- Need for elderly-friendly infrastructure and policies.

Quick understanding:

<u>Key Terms</u>	
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	• Average number of children born to a woman during her reproductive lifetime.
Replacement Level Fertility	• The fertility level at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next. • For India, it is approximately 2.1 children per woman.
Feminisation of Ageing	• A situation where women outnumber men in older age groups due to higher life expectancy.
Ageing in Place	• Elderly persons remaining in their native homes and communities while younger family members migrate elsewhere.
Old-Age Dependency Ratio	• Number of elderly persons (60+/65+) per 100 working-age persons.

Quick notes

- Kerala's rapid ageing is driven by a combination of
 - **low fertility (TFR 1.35),**
 - **high life expectancy,**
 - **large-scale outmigration of working-age people, and**
 - **return migration of retired workers.**
- Kerala's ageing is characterised by
 - **a rural concentration of elderly people,**
 - **feminisation of ageing due to higher female life expectancy, and**
 - **increasing economic vulnerability reflected in the high participation of senior citizens—especially women—in MGNREGS.**
- Kerala's ageing challenge is increasingly health-centric, marked by a high burden of chronic diseases, mental health issues and dementia, → → which the state addresses through community healthcare initiatives, an extensive palliative care network, welfare pensions, and India's first State Elderly Commission.



WHAT IS GERIATRIC CARE MANAGEMENT?

When a professional care manager coordinates all aspects of your needed senior care. This can include:

- Hiring & evaluating caregivers for home health care
- Advocating on your behalf as you navigate the healthcare system
- Helping you make informed senior care decisions
- Ensuring you receive the best care possible

 **Florida Senior Consulting**

The infographic features a photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a blue top, smiling and holding a clipboard while talking to another person whose back is to the camera. The background is a light blue gradient.



27.05.2026

• Abortion laws elsewhere



USA

In June 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned *Roe v Wade*, its 1973 decision that had established a constitutional right to abortion. As a result, individual states now have the authority to permit, restrict, or ban abortions



CANADA

Abortion is permitted at all stages of pregnancy, irrespective of reason, and is treated as "healthcare service". In 1988, Canada's Supreme Court set aside a federal law banning abortions, reasoning that it violated a woman's "right to life, liberty and security..."



GERMANY

Abortion is classified as a criminal offence, but is permitted within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and the woman must attend mandatory counselling at approved centres



FRANCE

Most European countries permit abortions, within gestational time-limits, on request. In 2024 France passed a bill explicitly guaranteeing women's right to voluntarily terminate pregnancy. Gestational limit for abortion on request in France is 14 weeks of pregnancy

What the law on abortion says

UP TO 20 WEEKS: A registered doctor can terminate pregnancy

20-24 WEEKS: Two doctors must clear the abortion and it can be allowed only for rape/sexual assault/incest survivors, minors, in case of change in marital status during pregnancy, among others

> 24 WEEKS: A medical board reviews case of substantial foetal abnormality or risk to the woman's life/physical/mental health; court decides on the plea after examining board's opinion

Supreme Court on **Abortion & Reproductive Autonomy**

Recent Supreme Court Ruling

- The Supreme Court allowed a 15-year-old rape survivor to terminate her **30-week pregnancy.**

- The Court prioritized the girl's **reproductive autonomy** over concerns regarding **foetal viability**.
- Key principle: **"Unwanted pregnancies cannot be burdened on the woman."**

AIIMS and Government's Position

- **AIIMS** and the government challenged the termination.
- Their arguments:
 - No abnormalities were detected in the foetus.
 - Adoption was a possible alternative.
 - Therefore, termination of an advanced pregnancy was unnecessary.

Supreme Court's Response

- The Court **rejected** this argument.
- It observed that forcing a minor rape survivor to continue an unwanted pregnancy:
 - Causes lifelong trauma.
 - Violates dignity and bodily integrity.
 - Places an unfair burden on the victim.

Important Observation by CJI

"This is a case of child rape. The victim will have a lifelong scar and trauma. It is now a fight between the foetus and the child. The child must survive, and she must have a dignified life."

Ground Reality Highlighted

- Despite the Court's order, doctors and authorities reportedly continued to counsel the parents to carry the pregnancy to term.
- Many women faces:
 - Face enormous procedural hurdles.
 - Must approach higher courts for relief.
 - Often receive relief only after prolonged litigation.

Reproductive Autonomy as a Fundamental Right

- The article emphasizes that **reproductive autonomy** means:
 - The right to decide if, when, with whom, and how to have children.
- The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that this right flows from:
 - **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).**

Includes:

- Right to procreate.
- Right not to procreate.
- Right to make reproductive choices free from coercion.

Earlier Supreme Court Position

- In a **February 2026** case involving a woman seeking termination of a 30-week pregnancy, Justice B.V. Nagarathna emphasized:
 - The interests of the mother must receive due importance.
 - Reproductive autonomy should be given sufficient weight in judicial decisions.

Quick Understanding

Key Constitutional Principle

Reproductive Autonomy = Article 21 + Dignity + Bodily Integrity + Privacy

Keywords

- Reproductive Rights
- Bodily Autonomy
- Dignity of Women
- Child Rape Survivor
- Foetal Viability vs Women's Rights
- Medical Paternalism
- Article 21

One-Line Summary

The Supreme Court has increasingly interpreted abortion rights through the lens of reproductive autonomy, holding that a woman—**especially a minor rape survivor**—cannot be compelled to carry an unwanted pregnancy at the cost of her dignity, bodily integrity, and fundamental rights under **Article 21**.

Warmer nights are a public-health challenge

Core Issue

- Traditionally, Indian summers were extremely hot during the day, but **nights provided relief**, allowing the body to recover from heat stress.
- **Now, due to climate change and urbanisation, nights are becoming significantly warmer**, reducing recovery time and increasing health risks.

Why Are Warmer Nights a Concern?

Key Finding

- A study by Climate Trends (Delhi-based climate research organisation) in Chennai found that:
 - Peak night temperatures in many low- and middle-income residential areas were **not very different from daytime temperatures**.
- This means people experience **continuous heat exposure** throughout the day and night.

Health Impacts of Warmer Nights

Short-term Effects

- Sleep disruption
- Fatigue
- Reduced physical recovery
- Dehydration

Long-term Effects

- Cardiac stress
- Respiratory illnesses
- Kidney ailments
- Increased heat-related morbidity and mortality

Most Vulnerable Groups

- 👴 Elderly persons
- 👶 Children
- 🚧 Construction workers
- 🛵 Gig economy workers (delivery personnel)
- 🛒 Street vendors
- 🌿 Outdoor labourers

How Warmer Nights Affect Health

Climate Change



Higher Night Temperatures



Reduced Body Cooling at Night



Poor Sleep & Incomplete Recovery



Heat Stress Accumulates



↑ Heart Diseases

↑ Respiratory Problems

↑ Kidney Disorders

↑ Mortality Risk

Heat Action Plans (HAPs) in India

What are HAPs?

Heat Action Plans are strategies adopted by states, cities and districts to reduce heat-related risks.

Common Components

- ✅ Early-warning systems
- ✅ Public advisories

- ✓ Cooling centres
- ✓ Coordination among local agencies

Problems with Existing Heat Action Plans

Institutional Issues

- Uneven quality across states.
- Lack of dedicated funding.
- Weak enforcement mechanisms.

Planning Issues

- Focus mainly on emergency response.
- Limited attention to long-term adaptation.
- Failure to identify vulnerable populations.
- Lack of integration with urban planning.

Harvard Salata Institute Findings

Scale of the Challenge

- Nearly **38 crore workers** in India are exposed to heat.

Key Concern

- India's heat adaptation policies remain **deeply unequal**.
- Low-income populations bear the greatest burden.

Urbanisation and Rising Night Temperatures

Why Cities Remain Hot at Night?

Urban Heat Island Effect

Cities contain large amounts of:



Concrete



Asphalt



Glass structures

These materials:

- Absorb heat during the day.
- Release heat slowly at night.

As a result:

- Night temperatures remain elevated.

Urban Heat Island Effect

Natural Landscape

(Trees + Water Bodies)

↓ *replaced by*

Concrete + Asphalt + Glass

↓

Heat Absorption During Day

↓

Slow Heat Release at Night

↓

Warmer Nights

↓

Higher Health Risks

Urban Planning Challenges

Current Problems

- Shrinking air corridors.
- Dense housing clusters.
- Lack of green spaces.
- Poor ventilation.

Required Solutions

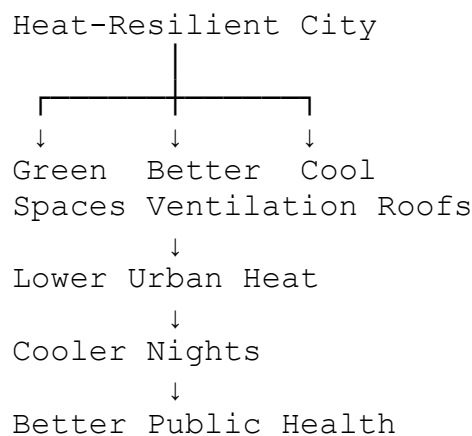
Building Level

- Better ventilation.
- Energy-efficient architecture.
- Passive cooling designs.

City Level

- Urban forests.
- Green roofs.
- Cool roofs.
- Open ventilation corridors.
- More water bodies and parks.

Sustainable Heat-Resilient Cities



Quick Understanding

Key UPSC Keywords

Term	Meaning
Heat Action Plan (HAP)	Strategy to reduce heat-related risks
Heat Stress	Health impacts caused by excessive heat exposure
Urban Heat Island	Urban areas becoming hotter than surrounding rural areas
Climate Adaptation	Adjusting systems to cope with climate impacts
Heat Resilience	Ability to withstand and recover from heat-related risks

One-Line Summary

Warmer nights caused by **climate change and urban heat island effects** are emerging as a major public health challenge in India, necessitating

- stronger Heat Action Plans,
- climate-resilient urban planning, and
- targeted protection for vulnerable populations.

India First Can Converge with America First

Core Theme

- Despite recent tensions over tariffs, visas, and trade issues, the India–US strategic partnership remains strong. Both countries are pursuing their national interests (America First and India First) while seeking areas of convergence.

Key Outcomes of US Secretary Marco Rubio's Visit

Reassurance to India

- Rubio emphasized that:
 - US commitment to India remains strong.
 - Recent measures on tariffs and visas were global policy adjustments, not specifically targeted at India.
 - India-US ties are expected to become even stronger during the current US administration.

Pakistan Factor

- Rubio clarified that US engagement with Pakistan or other countries at a tactical level:
 - will not come at the cost of strategic relations with India.

India's Five-Point Framework (S. Jaishankar)

India outlined the following principles for regional and global affairs:

1. Dialogue and Diplomacy

- Peaceful resolution of disputes.

2. Safe and Unimpeded Maritime Commerce

- Freedom of navigation and secure sea lanes.

3. Adherence to International Law

- Respect for international norms and sovereignty.

4. Opposition to Weaponisation

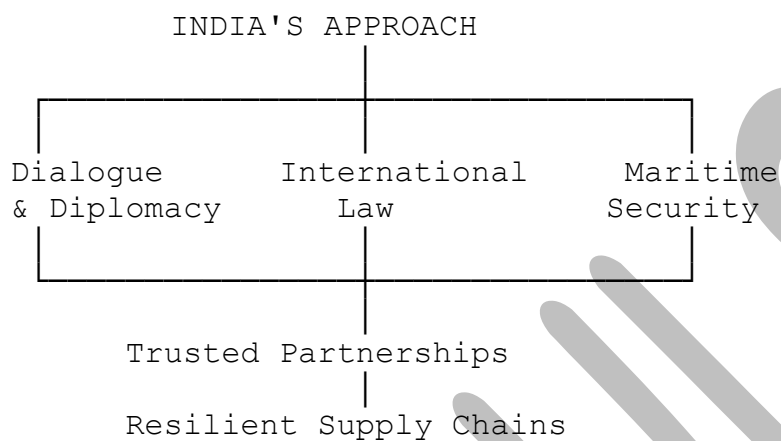
- Against using:
 - Market access
 - Trade

- Resources as geopolitical tools.

5. Trusted Partnerships & Resilient Supply Chains

- Diversified and reliable economic networks.

India's Foreign Policy Framework



QUAD: Major Developments

The foreign ministers of the Quad:

Members

- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**
 - India
 - United States
 - Japan
 - Australia

New Areas of Cooperation

- ✓ Maritime surveillance
- ✓ Port infrastructure
- ✓ Critical minerals
- ✓ Energy security

Emerging Strategic Concerns

US–China Rapprochement

- Growing engagement between the US and China raises questions about:
 - Future US commitment to balancing China.
 - Long-term direction of the Quad.

Shift in US Priorities

- Signs that Washington may be:
 - Redirecting strategic attention from the Indo-Pacific.
 - Focusing more on West Asia.

Strategic Challenge for India

US-China Engagement

+

Possible US Focus on West Asia

↓

Uncertainty in Indo-Pacific

↓

Pressure on QUAD

↓

Greater Strategic Burden on India

India-China Dimension

Reality Check

- India's competitive relationship with China is unlikely to change because of:
 - Border disputes.
 - Strategic rivalry in Asia.
 - Competition for regional influence.

Diplomatic Challenge

- India must adapt to changing geopolitical realities while safeguarding its interests.

Why Domestic Strength Matters

Foreign policy influence ultimately depends on domestic capabilities.

India Needs:

- Higher economic growth.
- Manufacturing expansion.
- Technological advancement.
- Military modernisation.
- Supply-chain resilience.

India's Path to Strategic Autonomy

Economic Growth
+
Industrial Modernisation
+
Technological Strength
+
Military Capability
↓
Greater National Power
↓
Stronger Diplomacy
↓
Effective "India First"

Quick Understanding

UPSC Keywords

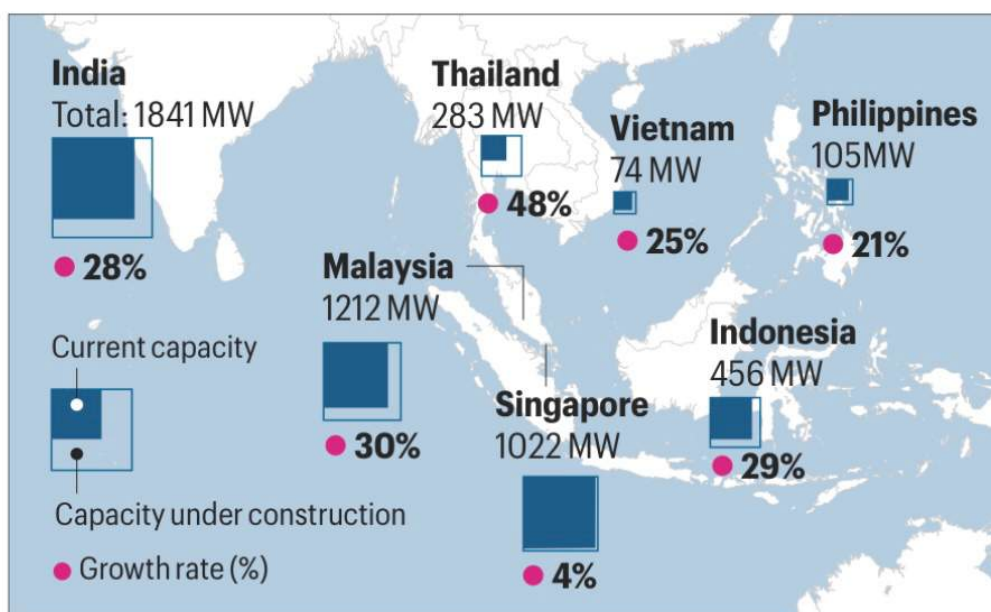
<u>Term</u>	<u>Significance</u>
India First	Prioritising India's national interests
America First	US policy prioritising American interests
QUAD	Indo-Pacific strategic grouping
Indo-Pacific	Strategic maritime region
Critical Minerals	Essential for clean energy and technology
Supply Chain Resilience	Reducing dependence on single sources
Strategic Autonomy	Independent foreign policy decision-making

UPSC One-Liner

The India-US partnership remains anchored in converging strategic interests, but India's long-term global standing will depend less on diplomacy alone and more on building economic, technological, and military strength at home.

● **INDIA'S DATA CENTRE BOOM**

- India and Singapore are the largest data centre markets in South and Southeast Asia, a region which accounts for over 3.5 GW of data centre operational capacity.
- Moody's Ratings expects the region's capacity to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 24% over the next four to five years, subject to power and permitting constraints.
- Growth is shifting to India and Indonesia to serve rapidly expanding domestic demand, and to Malaysia, which also benefits from spillover demand from Singapore.



(1) 'Total' represents current and under-construction capacity. (2) Growth rate reflects CAGR for 2025-30. Sources: Cushman and Wakefield, Moody's Ratings estimate

Adani inaugurates world's largest battery storage outside China

Brief

- **Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL)** has commissioned a cumulative **3.37 GWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)** at **Khavda, Gujarat.**
- It is the **world's largest single-location battery storage deployment outside China.**
- Out of the total capacity, **1.37 GWh** was commissioned in **March 2026.**
- The project strengthens:
 - Grid reliability
 - Peak-hour electricity supply
 - Integration of renewable energy into the grid
 - Round-the-clock clean power availability

Significance of the Project

Energy Storage Benefits

- ✓ Stores excess solar and wind energy
- ✓ Supplies power during peak demand
- ✓ Reduces intermittency of renewable energy
- ✓ Improves grid stability
- ✓ Supports India's clean energy transition

Scale of Impact

- The **3.37 GWh BESS** can store enough electricity to:
 - Power nearly **1 million homes for one day**
 - Meet peak electricity demand of cities like:
 - Indore
 - Chandigarh
 - Entire state of Goa

How Battery Energy Storage Works

Solar/Wind Energy
↓
Excess Electricity Generated
↓
Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
↓
Stored Energy
↓
Released During Peak Demand
↓
Reliable 24×7 Power Supply

Why BESS is Important for India

Renewable Energy Expansion
↓
Need for Energy Storage
↓
Battery Energy Storage Systems
↓
Grid Stability + Energy Security
↓
Net-Zero & Clean Energy Goals

Quick understanding

What is BESS?

- **Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)**
is a technology that stores electricity in batteries for later use, helping balance supply and demand in the power grid.

What is GWh?

- Gigawatt-hour (GWh) is a unit of stored electrical energy.
- 1 GWh = 1 million kilowatt-hours (kWh).

One-Line Summary

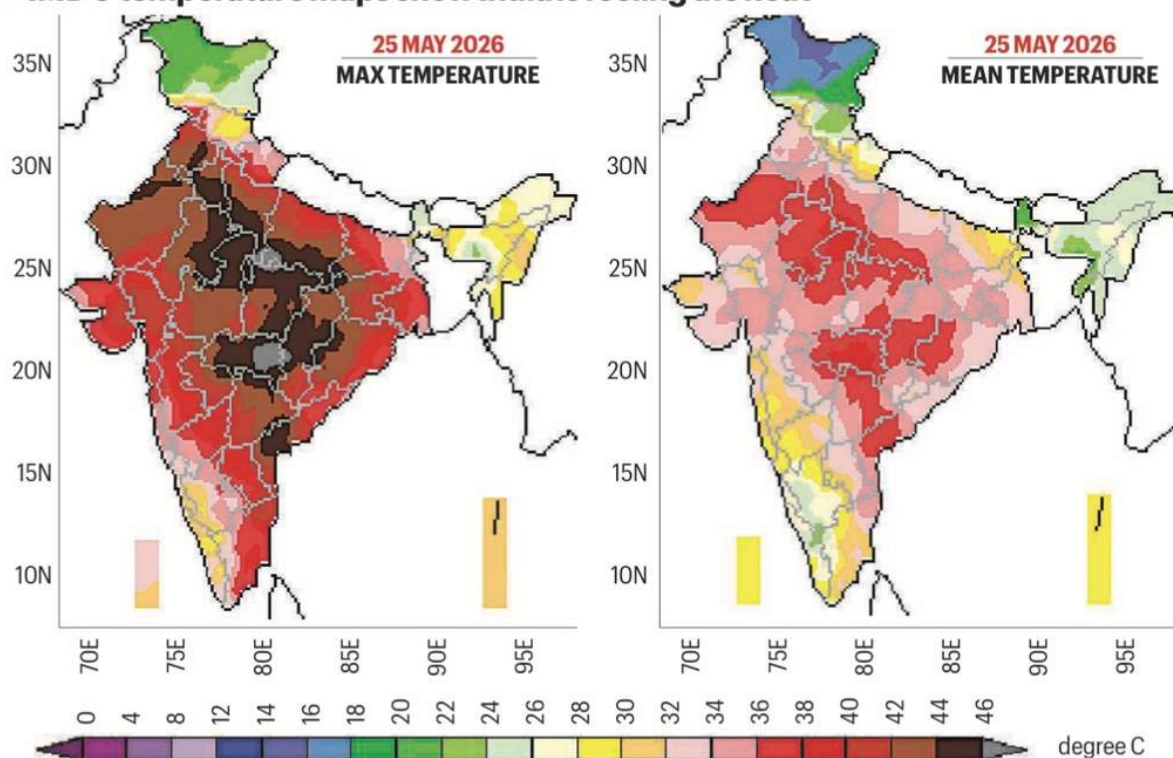
- Adani Green Energy's 3.37 GWh Battery Energy Storage System at Khavda, **Gujarat**—the world's largest single-location BESS outside China—marks a major step towards
 - ☞ grid stability,
 - ☞ renewable energy integration, and
 - ☞ India's clean energy transition.

• CLIMATE

In warming India, local data monitoring is key

A heat strategy that works in one city may not work elsewhere because local climate, population and anthropogenic emissions vary

• IMD's temperature maps show India is feeling the heat



Likely to rise more

While heat waves are not new to India, rising baseline temperatures are increasing their frequency and severity.

Heat wave frequency in India has been rising since 1961, with projections indicating a rise of 12 to 18 days under continued warming trajectories.

What is Driving India's Rising Heat?

Global Factors

1. El Niño

- A climate phenomenon involving warming of the **equatorial Pacific Ocean** and atmospheric changes.
- Leads to:
 - Higher temperatures in India.
 - Weaker monsoon conditions.
- IMD has projected the **2026 Southwest Monsoon at 92% of the Long Period Average (below normal)**, largely due to El Niño.

2. Anthropogenic (Human-Induced) Climate Change

- Rising greenhouse gas emissions are increasing baseline global temperatures.
- Result:
 - More frequent and intense heat waves in India.

Local Factors

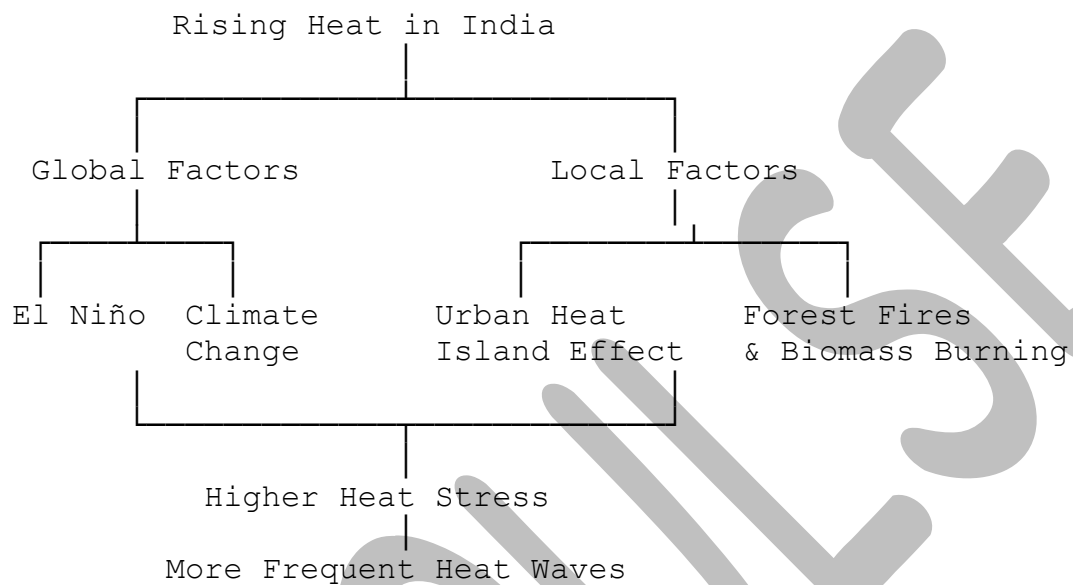
1. Urban Areas

- **Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect** caused by:
 - Concrete structures
 - Vehicles
 - Air conditioners
 - Industries
- Makes cities significantly hotter than surrounding areas.

2. Rural Areas

- Surface heating is intensified by:
 - Forest fires
 - Biomass burning
 - Barren and exposed land surfaces

Drivers of India's Rising Heat



One-line summary

- India's rising heat is driven by a combination of global factors (El Niño and climate change) and local factors (Urban Heat Island effect, forest fires, and land degradation). Ground-based observations remain the most reliable indicator of local heat stress.

28.05.2026

Why your credit card is now less rewarding

Card issuers are curtailing points, cashbacks and benefits. Behind this is a combination of factors, from rising costs to tighter regulations

- Banks and card issuers are reducing rewards because **interchange fees (merchant fees) and profit margins have come under pressure.**

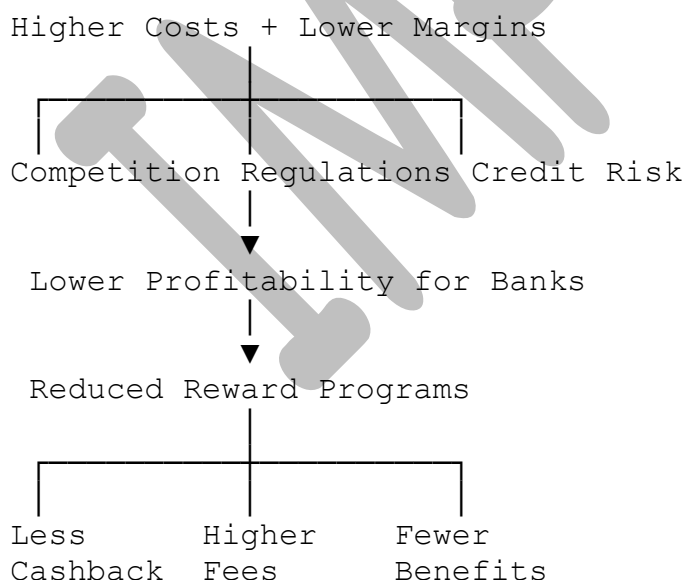
- ☞ Increased competition,
- ☞ tighter regulations,
- ☞ rising reward costs, and
- ☞ higher default risks

have made generous cashback and reward programs less sustainable.

- *As a result*, many issuers are:

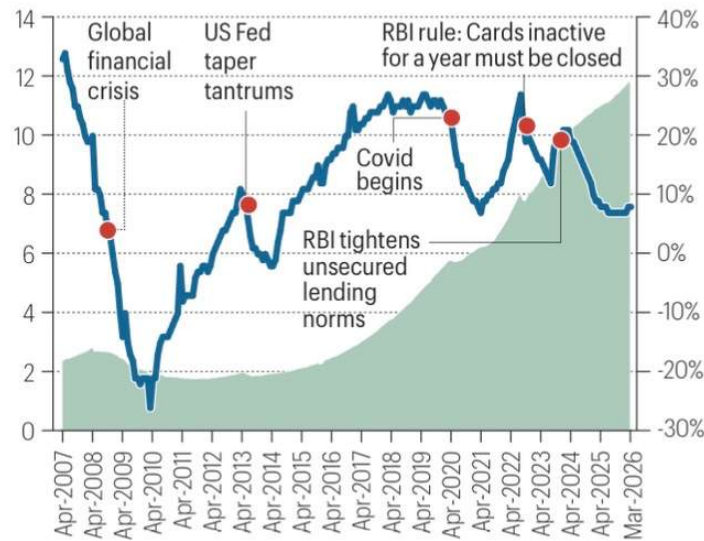
- ☞ Reducing reward points and cashback rates.
- ☞ Increasing annual fees.
- ☞ Imposing spending thresholds.
- ☞ Limiting lounge access and premium benefits.

Reason in flowchart



• Growth of credit cards in India

● Number of credit cards (in crore)
● Growth (year-on-year, right-hand scale) ● Key events



SOURCE: RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

• Devaluation spree

Some examples of credit card issuers curtailing benefits:

HDFC Bank Infinia

- Annual fee: **Rs 12,500**
- New requirements to retain it: **Rs 18 lakh** spend in 2026-27, or 'Total Relationship Value' of **Rs 50 lakh** with bank

American Express Platinum Travel

- Annual fee: **Rs 5,000**
- Benefit: Up to 40,000 reward points, Taj voucher for Rs 10,000
- Required annual spend to avail it: **Up from Rs 4 lakh to Rs 7 lakh**

SBI Cashback

- Annual fee: **Rs 999**
- Earlier 5% monthly cashback on online spends capped at: **Rs 5,000**
- This cashback is now capped at: **Rs 2,000**

Tracking gains

According to a survey last year, only 5% of users do their own research before picking a card.

Only 4% regularly track their use of reward points, and just 3% 'strategically optimise every spend'.

VB-GRAM G Rules: Replacing MGNREGS

Brief

- The **Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 [VB-GRAM G]** comes **into force on 1 July 2026**, replacing the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** after nearly two decades.
- The new scheme increases employment guarantees, changes funding responsibilities, and introduces a more centralized resource allocation mechanism.

Major Changes under VB-GRAM G

1. Increased Employment Guarantee

- ✓ Wage employment increased from 100 days to 125 days per household annually.

2. Seasonal Pause

- ✓ Introduces a 60-day pause during sowing and harvesting seasons to ensure availability of agricultural labour.

3. Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

- ✓ Wages and unemployment allowances to be paid directly into:
 - Bank accounts
 - Post office accounts

4. Continuity for Existing Workers

- ✓ Verified MGNREGS job cards (through e-KYC) remain valid until new **Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards** are issued.

VB-GRAM G vs MGNREGS

Feature	MGNREGS	VB-GRAM G
Guaranteed Employment	100 days	125 days
Wage Funding	Centre pays 100% wages	States share burden
Allocation Basis	State labour budgets	Centre-determined allocation
Payment Mode	DBT	DBT
Seasonal Restriction	No	60-day pause

Impact on States

Normative Allocation System

- Fund allocation will be based on the **16th Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula.**
- Total allocation for FY 2026-27:
 - ₹95,692.31 crore

Likely Gainers

- ↑ Uttar Pradesh
- ↑ Bihar
- ↑ Madhya Pradesh
- ↑ Gujarat
- ↑ Assam
- ↑ Haryana
- ↑ Punjab

Likely Losers

- ↓ Tamil Nadu
- ↓ Andhra Pradesh
- ↓ Rajasthan
- ↓ Maharashtra

Performance-Based Incentives

A portion of funds may be reserved and distributed based on:

- ✓ Timely wage payments
- ✓ Social audit compliance
- ✓ Completion of works
- ✓ Other performance indicators specified by the Centre

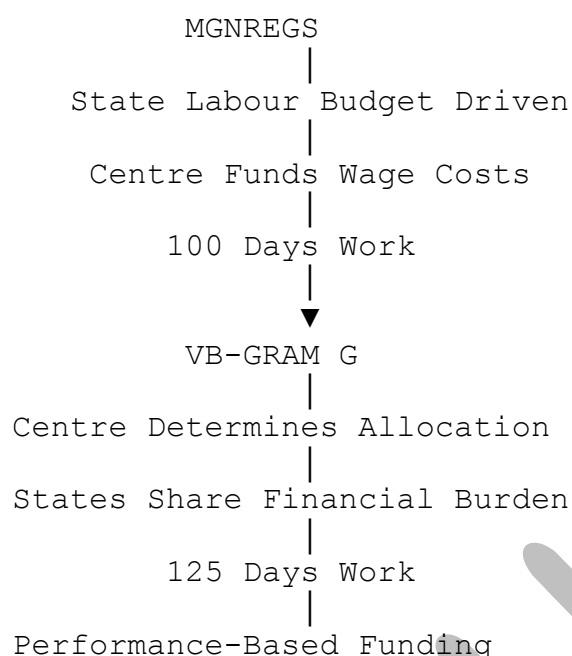
Major Concern for States

Under the new Act:

- Any expenditure beyond the Centre's normative allocation must be **borne by the respective State Government.**

This shifts a significant financial burden from the Centre to the States.

Diagram: Shift from MGNREGS to VB-GRAM G



One-line summary

- VB-GRAM G marks a major shift from a demand-driven employment guarantee model to a more centrally allocated and performance-linked framework, while increasing employment days from 100 to 125 and placing greater fiscal responsibility on states.

VB-GRAM G vs MGNREGS

- VB-GRAM G increases the number of working days from 100 to 125 and provides for a 60-day pause during sowing and harvesting seasons to ensure the availability of farm labour.

- In MGNREGS, the Centre paid 100% of the wage bill. VB-GRAM G shifts a significant portion of the funding burden onto states.

- VB-GRAM G flips the MGNREGS model of Central allocations based on state labour budgets, with Centre now determining devolutions.

Beneath camouflage: Questions for **HDFC**

HDFC – MSRDC controversy

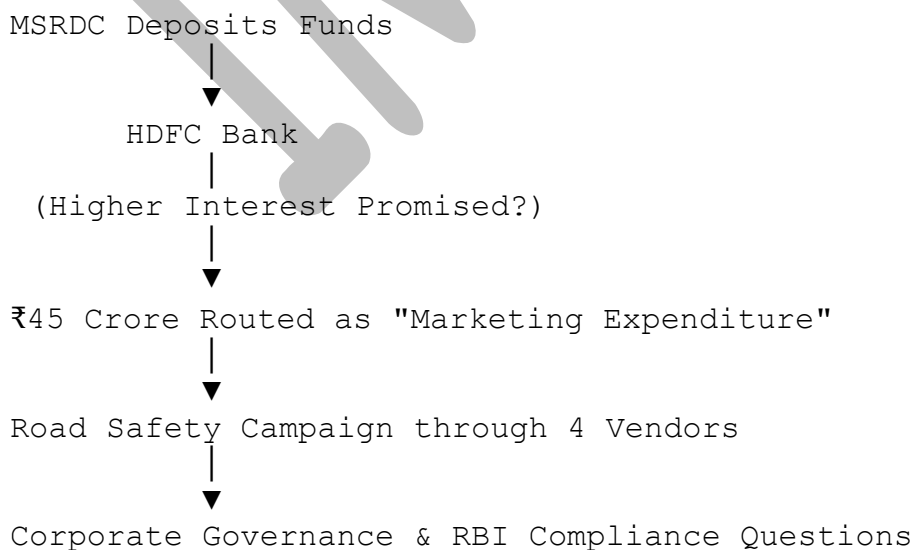
Brief

- An internal probe at **HDFC Bank** found that **₹45 crore** was allegedly routed as **marketing expenditure** instead of being paid directly as interest.
- The payment was linked to deposits made by **Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC)**.
- The money was allegedly disguised as contributions to a **road safety awareness campaign** through four local vendors.
- HDFC's vigilance investigation reportedly found violations of:
 - RBI regulations
 - Bank's code of ethics
- Former Chairman resigned citing practices inconsistent with his values.
- Under the **Banking Regulation Act**, banks cannot offer negotiated interest rates to individual customers.

Major Questions Raised

- Why was a higher-than-permissible interest rate promised?
- Why was the payment routed through the marketing department?
- What happened to the ₹45 crore?
- Did MSRDC receive both the promised interest and the campaign funds?

Diagram



One-line summary

- The controversy raises serious concerns about
 - ☞ corporate governance,
 - ☞ transparency,
 - ☞ regulatory compliance, and
 - ☞ the possible circumvention of RBI rules regarding deposit interest payments.

29.05.2026

• Maternal deaths in Sidhi

53 WOMEN who died before, during or after childbirth in one year

- Their average age 26
- Youngest was 19

Died in transit, in ambulances or vehicles scrambled by families	13
Died at home	13
Deaths where anaemia was a contributing factor	16

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE

Sidhi district	Madhya Pradesh	National average
211	159	87

22 Maternity ward staff; around 40 are required

7 Units of blood in the district hospital blood bank

1 Anaesthesiologist at the district hospital, unavailable for night shifts

492 patients referred out of the district hospital,
486 of them to Rewa, 70 km away

APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2026



Europe Heatwave & El Niño

Europe heat will abate soon, but El Niño looms

El Niño, the unusual warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, could be among the strongest ever this year. It could affect the Indian monsoon

Europe's Heatwave

- Europe is experiencing unusually high temperatures due to a **Heat Dome**.
- A heat dome forms when a **high-pressure system traps hot air near the ground**, preventing it from rising and cooling.
- It also suppresses cloud formation and rainfall, intensifying heatwaves.
- The heatwave is expected to ease as the heat dome weakens.

Climate Whiplash

- Europe witnessed a rapid shift from below-normal temperatures to extreme heat.
- Such sudden weather swings are known as **Climate Whiplash**, increasingly linked to climate change.

Emerging El Niño

- **El Niño** is the abnormal warming of equatorial Pacific Ocean waters.
- It is expected to persist through 2026 and may become one of the strongest on record.
- Impacts are probabilistic, not certain.

Impact on India

- Increased likelihood of:
 - Below-normal monsoon rainfall.
 - More frequent and intense heatwaves.
- IMD has forecast **below-normal monsoon rainfall** partly due to El Niño.
- Historically, **70% of El Niño years** have witnessed deficient monsoon rainfall in India.

Diagram: Heat Dome & El Niño Effects



One-line summary

- While Europe's current heatwave is driven by a temporary heat dome, → the emerging El Niño poses a larger global threat, → potentially causing weaker monsoons and more severe heatwaves in India.

What Europe is experiencing

‘Heat dome’: High-pressure air systems trap warm air near the ground and increase surface temperatures.

•
‘Climate whiplash’: A rapid, extreme fluctuation in weather.

• **Highest temperatures recorded in Europe this week**

FIGURES IN DEGREES CELSIUS

UK	35.1
France	36.4
Spain	38.7
Portugal	32.9
Germany	34
Switzerland	32

COMPILED FROM RESPECTIVE NATIONAL WEATHER AGENCIES

Everest Death Zone

Two Indians die descending Everest: Why retrieving a body from that height is so difficult

Bodies have lain on the Himalayas for years, serving as a landmark and warning for climbers every year. Why can't they be brought down?

Brief

- Hyderabad climber **Arun Kumar Tiwari** died during descent from **Mount Everest** on May 21, 2026, at about **8,790 m**, just below the summit (8,848 m).
- His family chose to leave his body on the mountain, a common occurrence in the Everest "Death Zone".

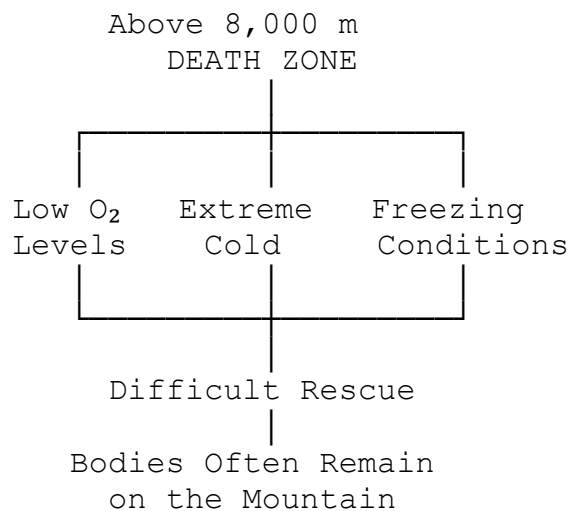
What is the Death Zone?

- Region above 8,000 m altitude.
- Only about **one-third of sea-level oxygen** is available.
- Risks include:
 - High-Altitude Cerebral Oedema (HACE)
 - High-Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE)
 - Severe frostbite
 - Extreme exhaustion

Why Bodies Cannot Be Easily Retrieved?

- ✓ Frozen bodies become extremely heavy.
- ✓ Steep, narrow, icy terrain.
- ✓ Very low oxygen levels.
- ✓ Rescue teams face life-threatening risks.
- ✓ Requires **8-10 Sherpas** and can cost up to **₹1 crore**.
- ✓ Helicopters cannot effectively operate in the Death Zone.

Diagram: Everest Death Zone Challenges



2 PM Rule on Everest

- Climbers must **begin descent by 2 PM**, even if they have not reached the summit.
- Purpose:
 - Avoid sudden storms.
 - Prevent descent in darkness.
 - Reduce fatalities during return journeys.

N.B:

- More people die climbing down from Everest than going up, because they push themselves to reach the summit even when they are struggling.
- The 2 pm rule is that you must start climbing down at 2 pm, no matter how close to the summit you are.
- Leaving in the afternoon is crucial as weather that high in the mountain is tricky – a storm can gather and darkness fall very quickly, making the already risky descent much more dangerous.

One-line summary

- The Everest Death Zone (>8,000 m) is one of the most dangerous environments on Earth, where low oxygen, extreme cold, and difficult terrain make rescue and body recovery exceptionally risky and expensive.

SIR

EC must answer but SC gives it free pass & more

Brief

- The Supreme Court upheld the Election Commission's (EC) authority to conduct **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls.
- The Court emphasized:
 - Free and fair elections.
 - Accurate and reliable electoral rolls.
 - Constitutional responsibility of the EC.

Concerns Raised by Critics

- Burden of proof shifted to voters, especially vulnerable groups.
- Stringent documentation requirements.
- Short timelines for verification and appeals.
- Risk of exclusion/disenfranchisement from voter lists.

Citizenship Aspect

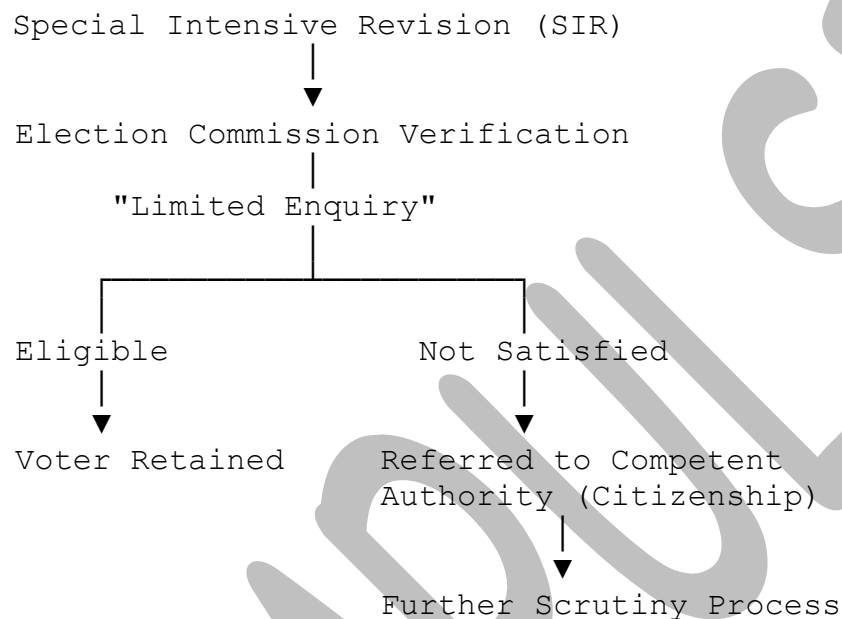
- The Court held that the EC can conduct a "**limited enquiry**" to verify eligibility for electoral rolls.
- However, final determination of citizenship remains with the competent authority under the Citizenship Act/Foreigners Act framework, ultimately under Central Govt.'s jurisdiction.
- If the EC is not satisfied, it may refer the case to the competent authority **within four weeks**.

The EC cannot legally declare someone a non-citizen.

Key Criticism

- Critics argue that the verdict gives the EC broad procedural freedom without sufficient safeguards.
- Concerns exist that voter deletion could indirectly trigger citizenship-related scrutiny.

Diagram: Effect of the Present Verdict



One-line summary

- The verdict strengthens the **Election Commission's powers to maintain electoral integrity** but has sparked debate over voter inclusion, due process, and the potential linkage between electoral verification and citizenship scrutiny.

Quick Understanding

Who is the "Competent Authority" for Deciding Citizenship in India?

Under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, the power to determine, grant, register, or cancel citizenship generally lies with the **Central Government**, acting through the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

Different Authorities Depending on the Issue

Issue	Competent Authority
Grant of citizenship (registration/naturalisation)	Central Government (MHA)
Renunciation, termination, deprivation of citizenship	Central Government (MHA)
Doubtful citizenship cases involving foreigners	Authorities under the Foreigners Act and MHA
Assam citizenship disputes (NRC-related)	Foreigners Tribunal, subject to judicial review
Appeal against administrative decisions	High Courts and the Supreme Court <u>through judicial review</u>

30.05.2026

Sharp rise in obesity, diabetes in five years since 2019, shows latest health survey

Proportion of obese women jumps 6.7 percentage points; 4.4 for men

• Men and women who were overweight or obese

CATEGORY	2023-24 (NFHS-6)	2019-21 (NFHS-5)
Women (15-49 yrs) overweight or obese	 30.70%	 24%
Men (15-49 yrs) overweight or obese	 27.30%	 22.90%

NFHS-6 (2023-24): Rising Obesity, Diabetes & Health Trends in India

Key Highlights

- Adult obesity is rising rapidly in India.
 - Women (15-49 years): 24% → 30.7%
 - Men (15-49 years): 22.9% → 27.3%
- Urban areas show significantly higher obesity levels than rural areas.
- High blood sugar/diabetes burden has also increased among adults.
- Caesarean-section deliveries have risen, especially in private hospitals.
- Positive trend: Child stunting (<5 years) declined substantially.

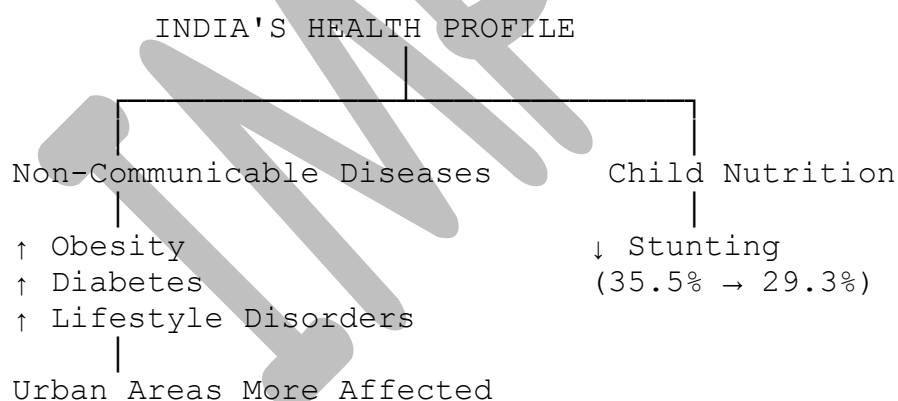
Comparative Table (NFHS-5 vs NFHS-6)

Indicator	2019-21	2023-24
Overweight/Obese Women	24.0%	30.7%
Overweight/Obese Men	22.9%	27.3%
Women with High Blood Sugar	13.5%	17.8%
Men with High Blood Sugar	15.6%	20.9%
C-Section in Private Facilities	47.4%	54.1%
C-Section in Public Facilities	14.3%	16.9%
Stunted Children (<5 yrs)	35.5%	29.3%

Urban vs Rural Divide

Indicator (2023-24)	Urban	Rural
Obese Women	42.8%	25.5%
Obese Men	36.3%	23.0%
Women with High Blood Sugar	21.9%	16.2%
Men with High Blood Sugar	23.9%	19.7%

Diagram: India's Emerging Health Transition



One-line summary

- NFHS-6 highlights India's dual burden of health: while child malnutrition is declining, obesity, diabetes, and lifestyle-related diseases are rising rapidly, particularly in urban areas, posing a major public health challenge.

Deliver verdicts within 3 months, upload bail orders same day: Supreme Court to High Courts

The Court said that orders in cases seeking bail or suspension of sentence should be communicated to the jail authorities as soon as it is pronounced

Brief

- The Supreme Court, led by Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi, issued new guidelines to curb delays in delivering reserved judgments.

Key highlights

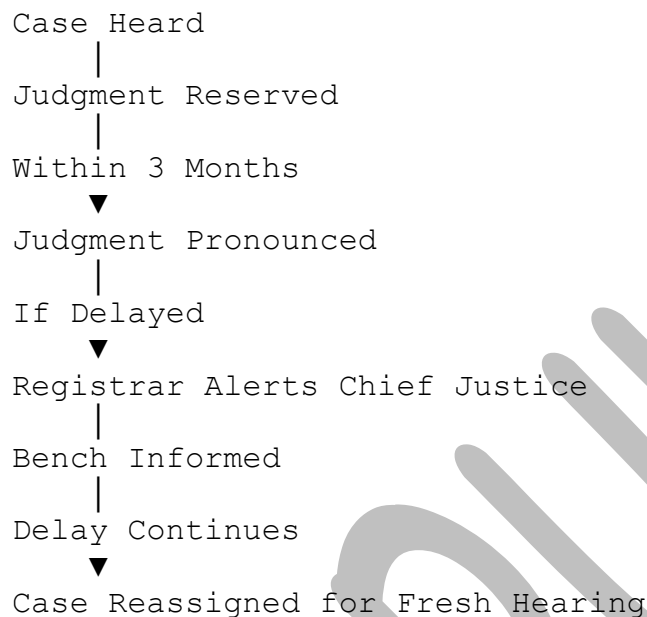
- High Courts must pronounce judgments within **3 months** of reserving them, with special urgency in **bail and personal liberty cases**.
- Bail orders should **preferably** be delivered the same day or the next day and promptly communicated to jail authorities.
- Monthly monitoring of pending reserved judgments has been mandated. If a judgment remains pending beyond 3 months and corrective measures fail, the case may be reassigned to another bench.
- The directions aim to strengthen judicial efficiency and public trust.

Comparative Analysis: 2001 vs 2026 Directions

Aspect	2001: Anil Rai v. State of Bihar	2026 Supreme Court Directions
Monitoring of Reserved Judgments	Periodic lists to be prepared	Automated monthly list mandatory
Delay Threshold	3 months	3 months
Litigant's Remedy	Can seek early pronouncement after 3 months	Registrar & Chief Justice intervention automatically triggered
After 6 Months Delay	Party may seek reassignment	Reassignment possible if delay persists
Bail Cases	No specific timeline	Same-day/next-day pronouncement preferred

Aspect	2001: Anil Rai v. State of Bihar	2026 Supreme Court Directions
Uploading Judgments	Not specified	Within 24 hours on website
Release after Bail	Not specified	Preferably same day or next day

Process Flow



One-line summary

- The 2026 Supreme Court guidelines strengthen accountability by imposing stricter timelines, automated monitoring, and possible reassignment of delayed cases, particularly safeguarding personal liberty and access to justice.

Airtel Priority Postpaid & 5G Network Slicing

Highlights

- Airtel launched "Priority Postpaid" using **5G Network Slicing**.
- Provides **better connectivity during network congestion**.
- Network slicing creates **virtual lanes** within the same 5G network.
- Premium users may get **preferential access to network capacity**.

- Debate centers on **Net Neutrality** (equal treatment of internet traffic).
- Airtel argues it does **not prioritize specific apps or websites**, hence complies with net neutrality.
- Critics say it creates a "**fast lane**" for **paying customers**.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT is examining the issue.

What is 5G Network Slicing?

- A 5G network can be divided into multiple **virtual slices**, each designed for a specific purpose.
- Different slices can support:
 - Ultra-low latency applications
 - Industrial automation
 - Mission-critical services
 - Premium consumer broadband

Highway Analogy

Traditional Network

All users share the same lane



5G Network Slicing

Lane 1 → Emergency Services

Lane 2 → Industries

Lane 3 → Premium Users

Lane 4 → Regular Users

Same Highway, Different Virtual Lanes

Net Neutrality Debate



Airtel's Argument

- No discrimination based on:
 - Websites
 - Apps
 - Content providers

- Prioritization is user-based, not content-based.
- Therefore, it remains compliant with India's net neutrality rules.

✗ Critics' Concerns

- Creates a **premium fast lane** for those who can pay more.
- May undermine the principle of equal internet access.
- Could widen the digital divide between premium and regular users.

Network Slicing vs Traditional Plans

Feature	Traditional Plan	5G Network Slicing
Benefit	Higher speed	Priority access
Congestion	All affected	Premium users favored
Resource Allocation	Shared	Dedicated virtual slice

Stakeholder Positions

Stakeholder	Position
Airtel	Service complies with net neutrality
Reliance Jio	Network slicing acceptable if application-agnostic
Net Neutrality Advocates	Concerned about preferential access
Parliamentary IT Committee	Examining possible violation

One-line summary

- Net Neutrality = Equal treatment of internet traffic without discrimination based on content, service, or user category.
- The core challenge is → → balancing 5G innovation and quality-of-service improvements with India's strong commitment to net neutrality and non-discriminatory internet access.

How Acs catch fire, and the role temperatures plays in it

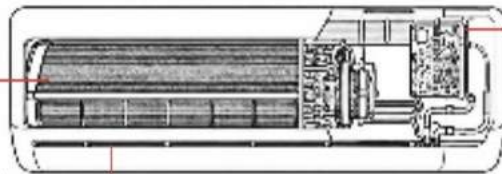
• Common causes of ACs overheating

Blocked air filters:

Dirty filters restrict airflow, causing the AC to overheat

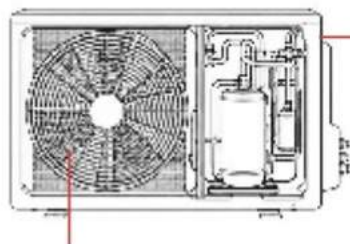
Short circuits:

Faulty wiring or electrical issues can cause sparks and ignite the unit



Gas leaks: Refrigerant leaks can create pressure build-up and pose fire hazards

Compressor: A damaged compressor can overheat and malfunction



Overuse: Running ACs for long hours during summers can overheat components

SIMPLE SAFETY PRACTICES

- Regular maintenance
- Secure indoor/outdoor wiring connections, ensure that the circuit breaker and fuse are in good condition
- Install a stabiliser if electricity frequently fluctuates
- Clean dust on air filters, since it can hinder air flow and put pressure on the system
- Set temperature between 24-26 degrees Celsius. Low temperature settings can stress the machine

Gaza Conflict: Israel Expands Military Control

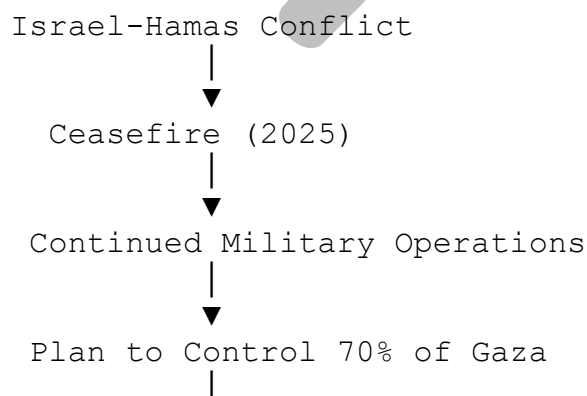
Highlights

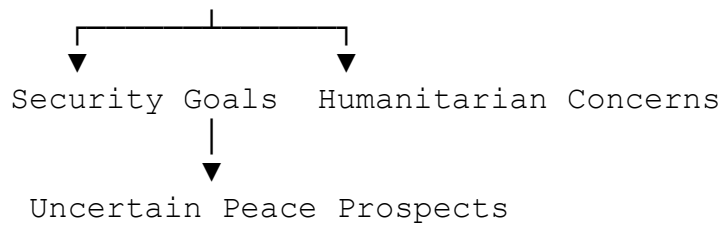
- Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to bring **70% of Gaza under military control**.
- Critics view this as a violation of the **October 2025 ceasefire** reportedly brokered by Donald Trump.
- The move comes amid ongoing tensions despite efforts to end the Gaza conflict.
- Analysts suggest domestic political considerations may influence the escalation.
- Israel's stated goal remains weakening Hamas, while humanitarian concerns continue to grow.
- Peace initiatives and reconstruction efforts have stalled, raising doubts about prospects for a durable settlement.

Conflict Dynamics

Issue	Situation
Ceasefire	Alleged violations reported
Gaza Control	Israel seeks control of 70%
Humanitarian Impact	Severe civilian suffering
Peace Process	Progress remains limited
Political Context	Domestic and regional pressures

Diagram





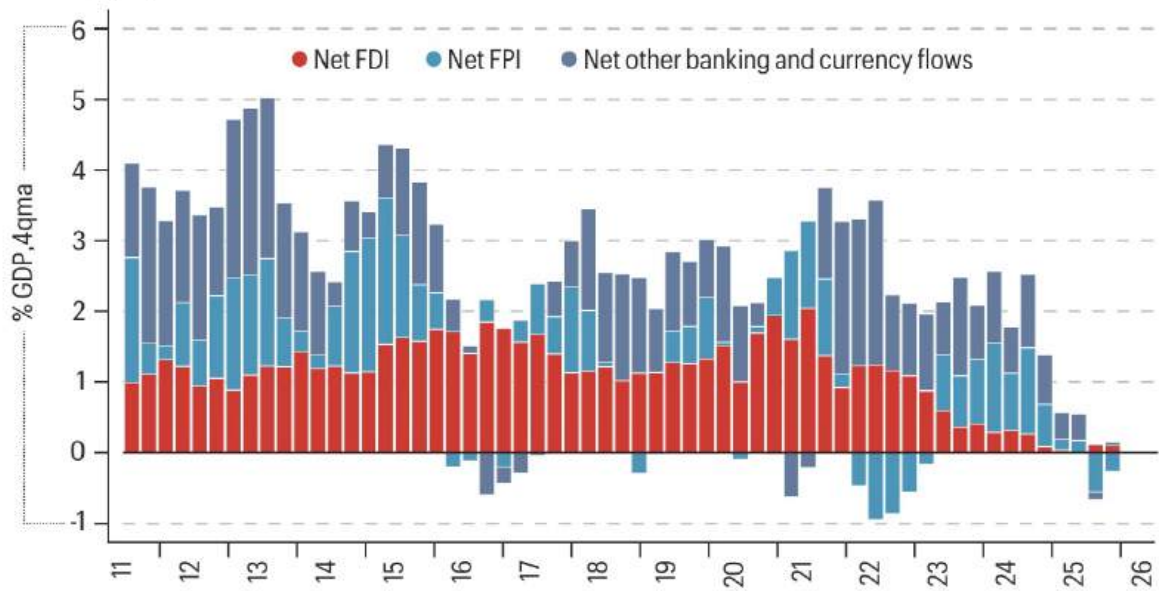
One-line summary

- The Gaza crisis highlights the challenges of balancing **security objectives, humanitarian concerns, ceasefire implementation, and long-term conflict resolution** in West Asia.

- ✂ Trump and Netanyahu's tense phone call a few days ago underscored their differing approaches to Iran, an inevitable divergence given the war's growing unpopularity in the US and the mounting political costs for the Trump administration.
- ✂ Netanyahu's apparent pursuit of eternal war follows a familiar script: **Prolong conflict for political self-preservation and to defer domestic accountability** for the October 7 security failure.
- ✂ In more than two years, Israel has failed to achieve its stated objective of destroying Hamas, even as it has killed at least 75,000 civilians and reduced Gaza to dust and ashes.

• DRYING FINANCIAL FLOWS INTO INDIA

Net financial account flows under FDI, FPI and other banking and currency categories have all dried up. And it all started well before the war in West Asia disrupted the crude oil flow. According to ANZ Research, tight global financial conditions and concentrated global growth driven by the technology supercycle led to India's current balance of payments stress.



SOURCE: RBI, MOS&PI, BLOOMBERG, MACROBOND, ANZ RESEARCH