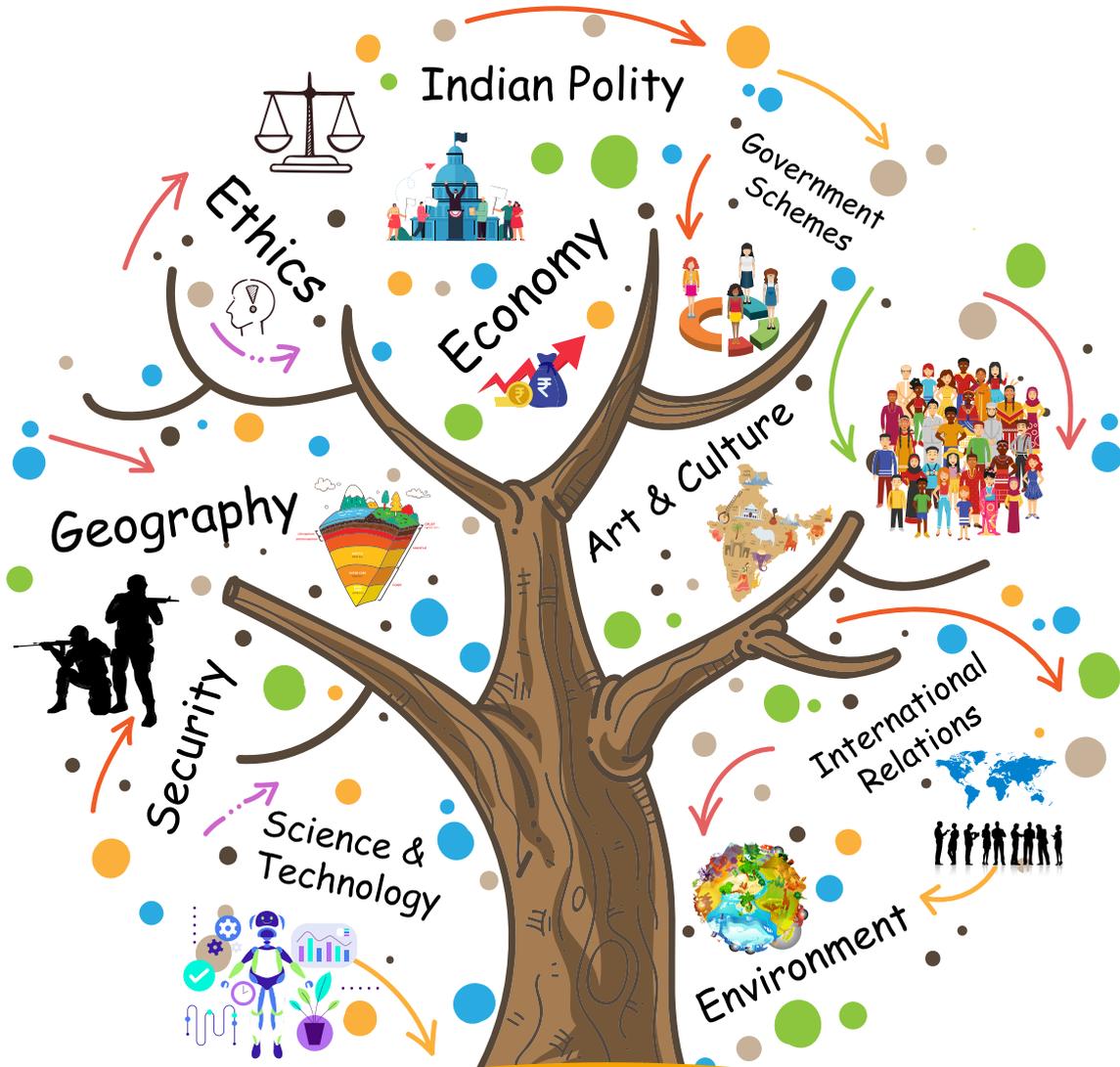


JANUARY 2026

Current Affairs



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January 2026

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Economic Survey 2025-26

The Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, tabled the Economic Survey 2025-26 on January 29, 2026 in Parliament.

Key highlights from recent economic updates emphasize contributions across sectors and strong export performance.

Indicator	Details
GDP Growth (FY27)	Projected at 6.8-7.2%, reflecting robust real GDP expansion.
Inflation (Apr-Dec 2025)	Averaged historic lows around 1.33-1.7%.
Sector Contributions	All major sectors grew, with agriculture stabilizing rural demand.
Exports (FY26)	Reached record USD 825 billion in FY25 and USD 818 billion in FY26.
Investment & Credit	Enhanced private capex and credit growth strengthened sovereign ratings.
Monetary Policy	Supportive conditions with repo rate at 5.25% as of December 2025

India's FY26 economy is off to a strong start, backed by steady fundamentals, ongoing policy aid, and solid performance across sectors. Despite global challenges, it stays resilient with good growth, very low inflation, better job trends, and stronger finances. Smart fiscal, monetary, and reform policies boost stability, investment, spending, and growth for all.

Agriculture and allied activities

- Agriculture sector recorded the highest decadal growth between 2015-16 and 2024-25 (4.5%). Sub-sectors of livestock (7.1%), fishing (8.8%), and crops (3.5%) have observed a strong performance. The agriculture sector grew at 4.6% in 2024-25.

- Crop yields remain considerably lower and productivity remains constrained by multiple input and structural gaps. They include fragmented landholdings, inadequate marketing and storage infrastructure, and issues with access to inputs such as quality seeds and credit.
- Climate change also continues to pose a significant challenge. Key priorities include: (i) improving productivity and resource sustainability, (ii) enhancing R&D, (iii) improving climate resilience, (iv) deepening private investments in infrastructure and food processing, and (v) expanding high-growth areas such as horticulture, dairy, poultry, and fisheries.

Industries

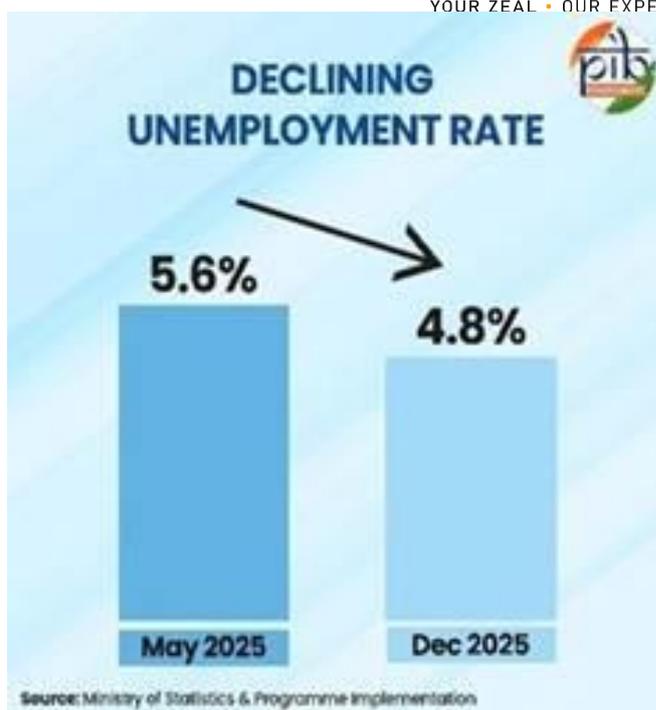
- Industrial sector grew 7% in H1 FY26 (vs. 6% prior year); manufacturing rebounded to 9% in Q2 FY26 (from 2.2% Q2 FY25). Medium/high-tech sectors form 46% of manufacturing value added.
- Future growth needs shift to scale, competitiveness, innovation, and global value chains. R&D spending is low at 0.64% of GDP (business share: 41% vs. China's 77%). Recommendations: boost private R&D, promote MSMEs for supply chains, rationalize tariffs on intermediates/capital goods.

Services

- Services sector contributed 54% to GDP in H1 FY26, growing 9% (vs. 7% prior year). Financial, real estate, and professional services lead growth.
- Services exports rose 14% from FY23-25, fueled by software/professionals. Future needs: diversification, value chain upgrades, productivity, skilling, deregulation. Emerging areas: data centres, niche tourism, space/ocean services. Recent trade deals boost opportunities.

Employment

- Employment indicators are stable with rising labour participation. Unemployment dropped to 3.2% in FY24 (from 6% in FY18).
- Self-employment hit 60% of workers in Q2 FY26; 60% manufacturing jobs in 7 states.
- Survey stresses quality jobs, vocational training, industry skilling, and gig worker social security/income support.



AI Adoption

AI adoption boosts capital productivity over labor, creating tension for labor-rich India between productivity gains and jobs.

Challenges: limited compute, funding for large models, and foundational research participation. India's edge lies in application innovation and human capital. Recommendations: prioritize open systems, sector-specific models, shared infrastructure, and education/skilling upgrades.

Survey identifies critical minerals and storage as key barriers to scaling renewables. Climate finance constraints persist, with inadequate domestic funds. Adaptation, urban infra, hard-to-abate sectors, and MSMEs remain underfunded.

Urbanisation

Urban challenges arise from land, housing, and mobility supply constraints, plus fragmented municipal governance and limited city fiscal autonomy. Survey recommends unlocking land via clear titles, better density norms, and transit-oriented development; strengthening public transport with congestion pricing; and efficient urban water, sanitation, and waste systems.

India's External Performance



According to UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2025, India ranks third among countries in the Global South in terms of the diversity index of trade partnerships, following China and the UAE. India's index score of 3.2 exceeds that of all countries in the Global North, underscoring its resilience in the face of tariff uncertainties and other emerging challenges.

India's total exports reached record levels of USD 825.3 billion in FY25 and USD 418.5 billion in H1 FY26, driven by strong growth in services exports and sustained momentum in non-petroleum, non-gems, and jewellery exports

Economic Survey predicts Bright India but darker world

The Economic Survey of India has predicted India's medium-term growth at 7% which is higher than the previous 6.5%. At the same time it has outlined a grim outlook for the global economy.

It has estimated a 10%-20% higher chances of a global financial crisis which could be worse than the crisis of 2008. Even though the conditions remain stable as in 2025, the world will become more fragile and less secure.

Other issues highlighted by the Economic Survey

Uneven distribution of secondary schools

Uneven distribution of secondary schools has been highlighted as one of the biggest obstruction in achieving the target set by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, to increase the expected years of schooling to 15 years from 13 years.

- Only 17% schools provide secondary education in rural areas and 38% in urban areas.
- Largest number of out-of-school children were of secondary school age (14 years- 18 years). Need to supplement household income, domestic responsibilities continue to be the biggest reasons for dropping out of school.
- While India had improved enrolment at early levels of school education the secondary-age specific net enrolment (NER) remains low at 52.2%.
- To transform the large human resource base into high quality human capital India needs to increase its expected year of schooling (EYS) to 15 years i.e. 5+3+3+4 as suggested by NEP for 3-18.2 years.

Vikshit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill 2025

- The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 15, 2025.
- The Bill seeks to establish a regulatory body for higher education.
- This body will replace the following existing bodies: (i) University Grants Commission (UGC), (ii) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and (iii) National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).
- The Bill repeals the three Acts providing for constituting these bodies. The Bill exempts legal and medical education from its purview. These will continue to be regulated under separate Acts.
- The Bill establishes the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan (the Commission) as the apex regulatory body for higher education.

Concerns over unconditional cash transfers

In the background of 4 states going into polls, the Economic Survey has out strongly against Unconditional cash transfers (UCT) including to women.

These UCT have short term gain but they raise concerns about fiscal sustainability and medium-term growth, particularly when these incentives are not supported by investments in employment, skills and human resource development.

Rising Digital addiction and mental health problems

The Survey has brought into light the rise in digital addiction and mental health problems emerging from screen addiction especially among children and adolescents. The Survey has also recommended structured interventions such as

- Cyber safety education
- Peer mentor programme
- Parental training on screen time management
- Age appropriate digital access policy
- Platform for accountability for harmful content
- Differentiated data plans for educational and recreational activities
- Default blocking of high risk content

The Survey has also highlights technology enabled surveillance and service delivery and sustained investments in preventive care, nutrition, mental health, digital wellness and community level health systems is essential to conserve the demographic dividend and ensure healthier, more productive workforce in the coming decades.

India's urban story: an unfinished promise

Indian cities are sight of daily strain such as long commutes, uneven services, shared spaces etc. India's urban pressure stems from persistent supply side constraints in land, housing and mobility.



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Governance and Polity

1. Central Excise Amendment Act 2025

Context: The Centre has notified the Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025 and related tax changes on tobacco products, effective February 1, 2026.

Tax reset

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025 specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products

- The Finance Ministry has notified that provisions of the Health Security and National Security Act, 2025, which intends to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1

- Beedis have been moved to the **18%** GST category from the now-defunct **28%** slab
- All other tobacco products have been moved to the **40%** slab



About Central Excise Amendment Act 2025

- The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 1, 2025. The Bill seeks to amend the Central Excise Act, 1944.
- The Act provides for the levy and collection of central excise duties on goods manufactured or produced in India.

- Central excise duties on many items were repealed with the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, except for certain items such as tobacco and tobacco products.

FOCUS ON HEALTH, SECURITY

➤ Govt will use proceeds from cess on tobacco and pan masala to boost health, national security

➤ "Idea is to ensure that prices remain the same for consumers. It is not a revenue raising exercise," says a govt official



➤ Compensation cess on tobacco products and pan masala is to be levied up to March 2026

➤ But, the levy may be withdrawn earlier to enable govt to raise resources to meet bond payment requirement

- Along with GST, GST compensation cess was also introduced on products such as tobacco to compensate states for revenue loss due to the introduction of GST. Thus, tobacco and tobacco products are currently subject to GST, compensation cess, and central excise duty.

- The compensation cess is planned to be discontinued. The Bill aims to revise the rate

of central excise duty on tobacco and tobacco products to keep taxes on these products at the existing level.

Increase in duties for tobacco and related products: The Bill increases central excise duty on unmanufactured tobacco, manufactured tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco substitutes.

The Bill also prescribes higher excise duties for manufactured tobacco products. For instance, the duty on chewing tobacco will increase from 25% to 100%. Duty on hookah or gudaku tobacco will increase from 25% to 40%. For smoking mixtures for pipes and cigarettes, the duty is proposed to be increased from 60% to 325%.

Significance of Tobacco in indigenous culture

In indigenous and rural Indian communities, tobacco carries deep cultural, social, and ritualistic significance, symbolizing hospitality, masculinity, and tradition while bridging the spiritual and everyday worlds.

Key Cultural Roles:

- **Ritualistic Use:** Offered to deities/spirits in tribal ceremonies for protection and cleansing.
- **Social Symbolism:** Shared via hookah/pan with guests; marks elder status and authority.
- **Medicinal Beliefs:** Viewed as healing or evil-repelling, despite health risks.

Product/Category	Old Tax Structure	New Tax (Budget 2026)	Price Impact
Cigarettes	GST 28% + NCCD + Cess	GST 40% + Excise ₹2,050–₹8,500/1,000 sticks (by length) + NCCD 60%	Packs up 300% (e.g., ₹55+ per pack)
Pan Masala/Gutkha/Chewing Tobacco	GST 28% + Cess	GST 40% + New Excise Duty	25-50% hike
Bidis (Rural staple)	GST 28% + Lower Cess	GST 18% + Adjusted Excise	15-20% increase

Other impacts

- Health benefits:** New taxes aim to slash smoking by 20-30% among India's 100M+ users, aligning with WHO's tobacco control treaty (FCTC) and National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP). This could prevent 1.35 million annual deaths and save ₹30,000 crore yearly in healthcare costs from tobacco-related

diseases like cancer and COPD.

- b. **Economic effects:** Government projects ₹1.2 lakh crore revenue in FY27 (25% rise), earmarked for schemes like Ayushman Bharat health coverage. However, firms face pain: ITC's margins drop 8-10% with 15% share plunge; smaller players like Godfrey Phillips suffer more amid volume declines.
- c. **Social impact:** 45 million bidi workers—80% women from tribal communities in MP, Bihar, WB—earn under ₹10,000/month and face layoffs.
- d. **Cultural impact:** it may disrupt tribal rituals (deity offerings), hospitality (hookah/pan sharing), and status symbols, likely fuelling black market growth and inequality.

2. Transforming waste-ridden urban India

Context: India needs to move away from a linear to circular mode of waste management, minimising waste and also recovering energy and other resources.

India's urban problem

- Expanding cities and towns is a growing reality of India. As the cities continue to expand, studies reveal that most Indian cities do not comply with the global standards of city in providing healthy and clean environment.
- NCR and other Indian cities rank among the world's most polluted, despite government, regulatory, and court interventions yielding limited results. This causes public frustration.
- The goal of Swachh Bharat Mission has also shifted to garbage free cities from earlier open defecation free India, which it claims to have achieved successfully.
- It is estimated that cities in India will generate 165 million tonnes of waste annually by 2030, and emit over 41 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. By 2050, as the urban population grows to about 814 million, the waste burden could rise to 436 million tonnes.

Need for early solution and circularity

- The good thing about urban waste is that over 50% of municipal waste is organic, manageable via composting or large bio-methanation plants. Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants turn wet waste into green fuel and power.
- Dry waste includes non-recyclables, with plastic as the major ecosystem and health threat.
- Plastic waste presents the biggest waste management challenge. Dry waste recycling hinges on household segregation, feeding material recovery facilities that must scale with growing volumes. Refuse-derived fuel (RDF) from dry waste powers cement industries but remains underdeveloped. Entrepreneurship and market links for circular economy solutions need major boosts.

- India generates around 12 million tonnes of construction and demolition (C&D) waste annually, thus construction waste and waste from other infrastructure activities is mounting threat for urban India. Much of this waste holds value as recyclable raw materials for reuse, cutting costs and environmental damage yet mixing with household trash blocks efficient processing. Recycling capacity grows but can't keep pace with the India's waste generation.
- Wastewater is the other thread in waste management and circularity. Water and sanitation are state subjects and States need to take proactive steps to recycle wastewater and reuse it in agriculture, horticulture, and for industrial purposes.

What could help is ensuring more serious compliance with the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016, which seek to levy a charge on generators of high volumes of construction and demolition waste, besides setting out other parameters. The Environment (Construction and Demolition)

Obstructions in way of circularity

- Too many actors at play:** Waste segregation at source, collection, processing, and distribution systems don't work smoothly. Recycled products struggle with poor quality, marketing difficulties, and financial viability.
- Infrastructure gaps persist in testing/monitoring:** Extended Producer Responsibility doesn't cover all dry waste; Construction & Demolition waste lacks origin tracking, poorly integrated with building laws. Need better inter-departmental coordination, awareness, incentives/penalties for true urban circularity.
- Municipalities lack funds and resources to launch circular economy projects:** though a Recent New Delhi urban conclave united policymakers, experts, and industry to roadmap city rejuvenation. Asia-Pacific leaders, meeting in Jaipur last year, backed India's Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)—a platform for sharing waste management knowledge and best practices across regional cities and institutions.
- 3Rs:** Citizens must see clear profits and purpose to join the circularity movement. In India's growing consumer culture, Reduce (first R) is toughest, Reuse grows challenging with endless new products, but Recycle—powered by tech, private firms, and strong policies—can become circularity's backbone. It transforms waste swamps into national resources for cleaner cities.

Circular Economy Vs Linear Economy

A circular economy is an economic system designed to eliminate waste and pollution by keeping products and materials in continuous use through maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling whereas **Linear economy** is a system in which people buy a product, use it, and then throw it away. The term linear refers to the straight progression that a product can follow, with a beginning, a middle and an end. There is no thought along the line regarding recycling or reuse.

Circular economy aligns with SDGs (responsible consumption, climate action) by decoupling growth from resource depletion, tackling waste, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Core Principles:

- Eliminate waste via smart design
- Extend lifespans (repair, reuse, remanufacture)
- Regenerate nature (renewables, biodiversity restoration)

Linear Economy: Prioritizes sustainability/resilience over GDP obsession.

India Context

- **Manufacturing:** Circular practices cut raw material costs (e.g., steel recycling saves 70% energy); promotes industrial clusters for waste-to-value (textile waste → yarns).
- **Agriculture:** Crop residue → biofuels/compost reduces stubble burning (e.g., Punjab's paddy straw pellets); biogas from cattle dung boosts rural energy/incomes.
- **Services:** Waste logistics optimized via apps (e.g., urban dry waste pickup); tourism shifts to zero-waste models.

Digital Enablers

- AI: Predicts waste generation, sorts recyclables (e.g., computer vision at MRFs).
- Blockchain: Tracks e-waste from cradle-to-grave, ensures EPR compliance.

Economy Links

- **Green Economy:** Renewables + circularity for net-zero industries.
- **Blue Economy:** Coastal waste → marine plastics recycling, sustainable fishing gear reuse.

Holistic shift: Turns 62M tonnes annual waste into ₹25,000 Cr resource opportunity by 2030.



COP30:

- At the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30), at Belem, in November 2025, host Brazil quite fittingly placed waste at the heart of the climate agenda. Sizeable funds were committed to a new global initiative, No Organic Waste, NOW, to cut methane emissions.
- The Conference noted Circularity as the way to inclusive growth, cleaner air, and healthier populations. COP30 called upon cities to accelerate circularity initiatives where waste is recognised as a resource.
- Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), espoused by India at COP26, in Glasgow in 2021, calling for “deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption”

was strongly premised on the idea of circularity as well.

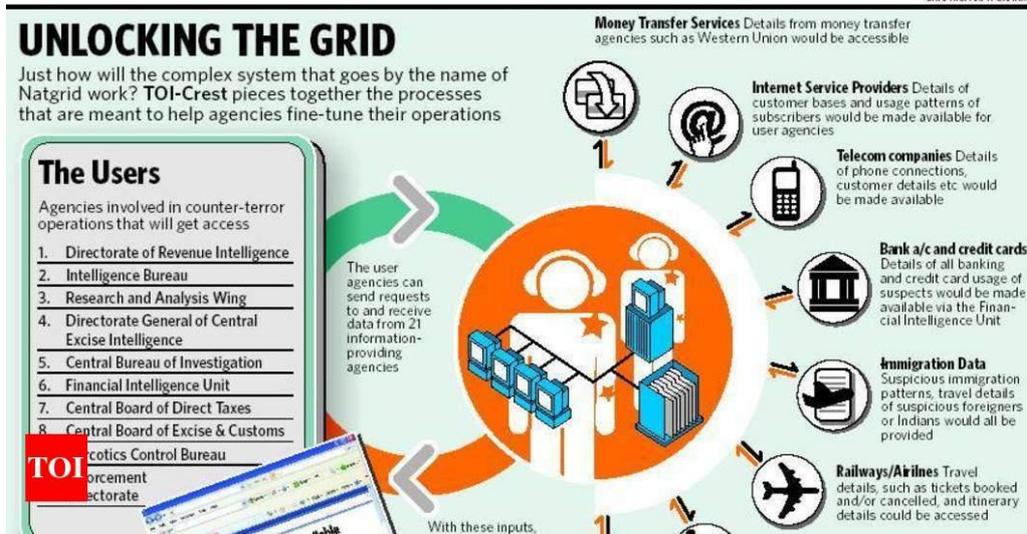
3. NATGRID to be integrated with the National Population

Register

In News: The Union Government has integrated the **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** with the National Population Register (NPR). This secure linkage enables authorised security and enforcement agencies to access family-based demographic data for nearly 119 crore residents.

About NATGRID

- NATGRID was first conceptualised in 2009 in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.
- It is a secure, integrated intelligence-sharing platform designed to help law enforcement and security agencies access multiple databases in real time for counter-terrorism and criminal investigations.
- It became operational in 2023 and currently processes around 45,000 data access requests per month from authorised agencies.



- NATGRID allows access to Aadhaar, banking, tax, FASTag, passport, travel, Financial Intelligence Unit and social media data. The information is categorised as non-sensitive, sensitive, and highly sensitive (bank statements, financial and tax data, export-import details).
- Advanced analytics tools like Gandiva support facial recognition, entity resolution, and multi-source data analysis, allowing investigators to identify suspects using images and family-linked NPR data.

National Population register:

The NPR is a nationwide database containing demographic and family-wise details of residents in India, including name, age, gender, address, and family relationships

The data for NPR, which stores information family wise, was first collected in 2010 with the first phase of the 2011 Census and was last updated in 2015 through door-door enumeration. It was to be updated further during the 2021 Census which was indefinitely delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

NPR is the first step for the creation of a countrywide National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The NPR is prepared under the provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. It is mandatory for every “usual resident of India” to register in the NPR.

Privacy Concerns

- The police and security agencies can access almost all kinds of data about a citizen without even having to register a First Information Report.
- The purpose of the information being sought has to be stated and the senior police officers have an oversight.
- The access to NATGRID is so far available to Superintendent of Police-rank officers, while earlier it was

only meant to be accessible to ten Central agencies such as the Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing, NIA, Enforcement Directorate, FIU, Narcotics Control Bureau, and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence among others.

Advantages of linking NATGRID with NPR

- a. **Faster Investigations:** Real-time family/household tracing speeds up terror probes, crime networks, and financial fraud cases—weeks reduced to minutes
- b. **Predictive Intelligence:** "Gandiva" AI tools enable facial recognition, pattern analysis, and risk profiling to preempt threats like lone-wolf attacks
- c. **Inter-Agency Harmony:** Breaks silos; central/state police (SP+ rank) access unified data for coordinated counter-terror, cybercrime, narcotics.

Strategic Gains

- a. **Network Dismantling:** Kinship mapping reveals family ties and hidden connections in terror cells or crime syndicates, while relational analytics uncovers money trails and operational links—enabling surgical strikes on entire networks rather than isolated actors.
- b. **Operational Efficiency:** Accelerates probes into economic crimes (hawala, shell firms), human trafficking rings, and terror financing by cross-referencing NPR demographics with NATGRID intelligence—cutting manhunts from months to days.
- c. **Post-26/11 Resilience:** Born from Mumbai attacks' lessons, this integration fortifies India's internal security architecture against asymmetric threats, ensuring proactive disruption over reactive response through.

Key concerns

Key concerns about integrating NATGRID with NPR revolves around privacy, misuse of data and surveillance concerns.

- a. **Mass Surveillance Risk:** Access to 119 crore residents' family data without FIR enables profiling, violating Puttaswamy's (2017) privacy test (necessity, proportionality).
- b. **No Statutory Backing:** Lacks dedicated law; queries logged but routine access erodes due process safeguards.
- c. **Weak Monitoring:** No parliamentary/independent oversight; audit trails exist but mission creep from counter-terror to routine policing raises abuse fears.
- d. **Algorithmic Bias:** "Gandiva" AI risks caste/religion profiling, amplifying prejudices under "objective" tech.
- e. **State-Centre Tensions:** Broader state police access (SP+ rank) without uniform consent protocols.

- f. **Cyber Vulnerabilities:** Massive database vulnerable to breaches; no full DPDP Act enforcement yet.

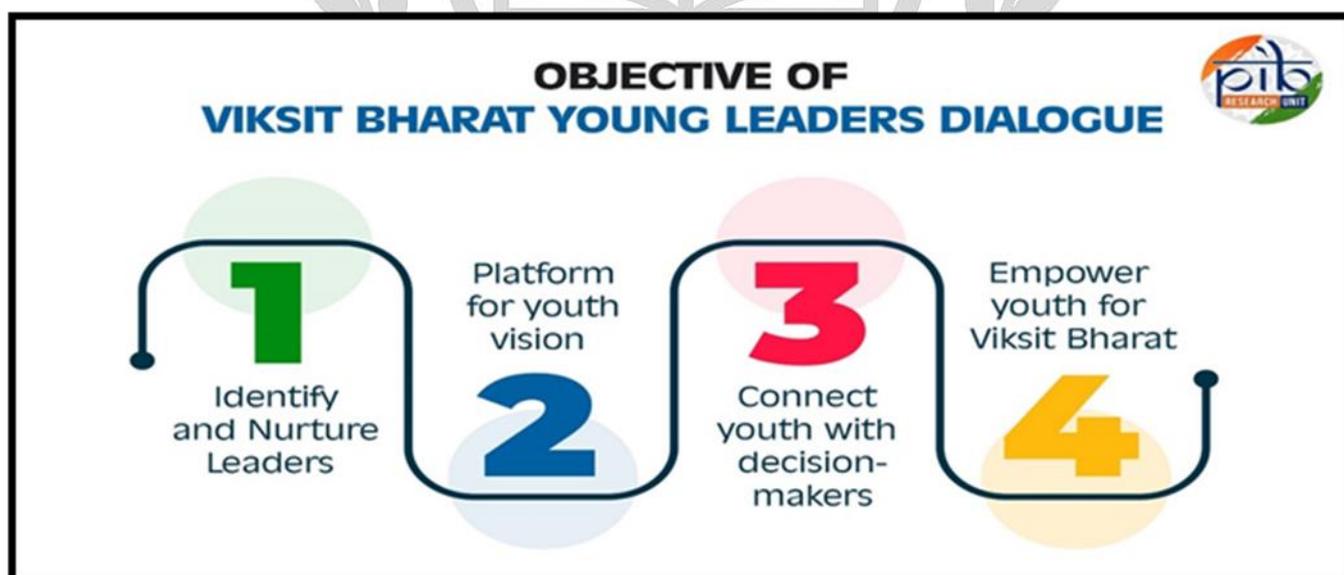
4. Youth Leadership is key to Viksit Bharat

Context: The Department of Youth Affairs, under the leadership of Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment organised the second edition of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBYLD 2026) from 09–12 January 2026 in New Delhi.

Aim of the program

Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBYLD) 2026 offers youth (15-29 years) a national platform to pitch innovative ideas for Viksit Bharat@2047, fostering engagement with policymakers and global icons.

Focus: Nurtures leadership through inclusive, solution-driven participation aligned with India's 2047 vision.



India: Home to Largest number of young people

India is home to largest youth population in the world. It is therefore but natural that the direction of the nation's future will be shaped not merely by policies or institutions, but by the imagination, conviction and courage of its young citizens.

Yuva Shakti: India's Greatest Asset

This demographic powerhouse transcends mere numbers, it's a national treasure driving innovation, fortifying democracy, and fueling inclusive, sustainable growth.

Shaping Viksit Bharat

The nation's future hinges not just on policies or institutions, but on the imagination, conviction, and courage of its youth, propelling India toward global leadership by 2047.



Why is Youth important for India?

The voices of India's youth matter in shaping the India of 2047 as India's youth (65% under 35, world's largest) power demographic dividend for Viksit Bharat.

Economic Engine

India's youth have always been at the heart of the nation's defining moments, from the freedom struggle to the building of the institutions of an independent India. In

current scenario, youth led start-ups, AI platforms etc. are emerging as growth setters globally.

Innovation and tech

Half of India's patents come from people under 35. They lead in AI software and solar tech because of startup hubs at IITs. Young people make AI tools in local languages (like Bhashini). This could add \$1 trillion to India's economy by 2030 through farming apps, chatbots, and more. 40% of solar and EV jobs go to under-30s. Youth startups invent better batteries and install panels fast.

Digital Boom

60% of India's internet users are young people under 35. They are responsible for large scale transactions through UPIs which helps in easing the pressure on banks as money remains in circulation. Additionally, they create apps which are not only affordable but also promote domestic products.

Change in society

Young people are also harbingers of change in society. They can break established patterns like forms of caste discrimination, racism and class conflicts through rational medium like social media platforms. Young people use social media to spread awareness on lesser talked topics like LGBTQ, social and economic issues faced by underprivileged people and also awareness about general health and well-being of people. Social change is imperative for nations that want to achieve the goal of development.

Significance and Structure of VBYLD

- Encourages critical thinking and solution formulation regarding national challenges.
- Promotes diversity in thought, language, and culture, ensuring inclusive participation.
- Aims to transform youth participation into leadership roles in shaping India's future.

5. Governor Vs. Cabinet: Conflict in Kerala and Tamil Nadu

Context: The Tamil Nadu Governor walked out of the State Assembly during his customary address while the Kerala Governor omitted specific paragraphs from his address without consulting the cabinet. These incidents have reignited the debate on the discretionary powers of the Governor and the sanctity of Article 176.

Why Governor-State Clashes Happen

The Centre appoints Governors, leading to friction in opposition-ruled states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Telangana. Ruling parties view Governors as central proxies attempting "rule by proxy," while Governors see their role as enforcing constitutional "course correction" on contentious issues. This creates ongoing political standoffs.

Governor-State Conflicts

State	Governor	Key Issues
Tamil Nadu	RN Ravi	Recall demanded; accused of instigating communal hatred; SPA petitioned President for sacking
Kerala	Arif Mohammed Khan	Ordinance proposed to replace as university Chancellor (refused assent); policy address disputes
Telangana	Tamilisai Soundararajan	Phone tapping suspicions; protocol violations during visits; called state "undemocratic"

Article 176, Constitution of India 1950

(1) At the commencement of every session, the Governor shall address the Legislative Assembly or, in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, both Houses assembled together and inform the Legislature of the causes of its summons.

(2) Provision shall be made by the rules regulating the procedure of the House or either House for the allotment of time for discussion of the matters referred to in such address and for the precedence of such discussion over other business of the House.

Article 175: Empowers the Governor to address either House or both Houses of the State Legislature and to send messages, particularly in relation to Bills. However, this power is exercised as part of executive functioning and does not confer independent discretion, remaining subject to the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

Article 163: Establishes that the Governor shall act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers except in matters where the Constitution explicitly provides discretion.

Role of Governor

The Governor acts as the nominal executive head of an Indian state, serving as a vital link between the Union Government and the State Government.

Governor of a state is appointed by the President for a five-year term though they enjoy office at the discretion of the President.

- a. **Executive Head:** The Governor is the state's constitutional head, and all executive actions are taken in their name. They appoint the Chief Minister, other ministers, the Advocate General, and state election commissioners.
- b. **Legislative Powers:** The Governor summons, prorogues, and dissolves the State Legislative Assembly. No bill passed by the assembly becomes law without the Governor's assent. They can also promulgate ordinances when the legislature is not in session.
- c. **Discretionary Powers:** In certain situations, the Governor acts without the advice of the Council of Ministers, such as when selecting a Chief Minister after a hung assembly or recommending President's Rule under Article 356.
- d. **Financial Powers:** The Governor ensures the annual financial statement (budget) is laid before the legislature and recommends money bills.
- e. **University Chancellor:** The Governor typically serves as the Chancellor of state universities and appoints Vice-Chancellors.

Article 200 of the Constitution

Article 200 outlines the Governor's powers over state Bills. After legislative passage, they can

- Give assent to the bill
- Withhold assent
- Reserve it for the President

the absence of a specific timeline for decision-making has led to Governors withholding assent for prolonged periods, leaving Bills and legislative processes stalled indefinitely.

Supreme Court on Governor's Bill Delays

The Supreme Court ruled in 2025 that Governors cannot indefinitely withhold assent to state Bills under Article 200. This stemmed from cases like Tamil Nadu v. Governor, where prolonged delays stalled over 10 Bills, frustrating elected legislatures.

Kerala Governor-Cabinet Clash

Kerala Governor and the Cabinet are locked in a dispute over revisions to the policy address during the January 2026 Budget session.

The Governor edited Cabinet-approved policy address text, removing criticisms of Bill delays by himself and Centre's fiscal federalism stance (paragraphs 12, 15, 16). He sought proceedings and videos from the Assembly Speaker, citing legal advice to adhere to changes, while the Chief Minister reinstated the original via Assembly motion, asserting Cabinet's authority.

Tamil Nadu Policy Address Dispute

The Governor walked out shortly after arriving, refusing the customary policy address for the third consecutive year. He cited 13 issues, including "unsubstantiated claims," omission of rising crimes like POCSO cases, drug abuse, and Dalit atrocities, plus microphone interruptions. The government upheld the Cabinet-approved text; the Speaker enforced it, leading to the exit.

Tamil Nadu has joined hands with states like Kerala and West Bengal to amend the Constitution and eliminate Article 176 policy addresses. Thus, heightening centre-state friction.

Significance of Article 176

Article 176 mandates the Governor's policy address at the start of each state assembly's first session annually.

Core Purpose

It outlines the state government's agenda, priorities, and reasons for convening the legislature, setting the tone for debates and motions of thanks. Prepared by the Cabinet on whose aid and advice the Governor acts (Article 163), it reflects elected executives' views, not the Governor's personal stance.

Legislative Role

The address triggers discussions on government policies, with time allocated for replies and no-confidence motions if needed. It ensures accountability, as the ruling side defends it floor-wide, embodying parliamentary democracy and federal balance.

Governor walkouts or omissions disrupt constitutional norms but rarely halt assembly business.

Courts treat skipping as an "irregularity," not illegality for e.g., Speaker can declare it delivered by laying the text on the table. No direct penalty; proceedings continue without judicial voiding.

Though it may not cause any disruption as such, these incidents heighten conflict between centre-state thereby eroding the federal principle of the constitution.

6. GSDP share as criterion for Central state transfers

Context: The implementation of GST has weakened the direct link between tax collection and the place of economic activity. The issue is critical because ₹75.12 lakh crore was transferred to States between 2020-21 and 2024-25, and the method used to distribute this amount affects State fiscal autonomy and perceived fairness.

A key finding is the very high correlation (0.99) between actual transfers and GSDP, compared to a much weaker link with Finance Commission devolution, making GSDP a stronger alternative measure.

Central tax collections, transfers and GSDP GSDP, reflecting accrual of central taxes, strikes a balance between efficiency and equity in tax devolution

State-wise direct tax and gross GST collections, central transfers and GSDP from 2020-21 to 2024-25

States	Direct tax and GST collection		Central transfers		FC devolution	GSDP		Transfers using GSDP share	Loss or gain
	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	(₹ lakh crore)
Andhra Pradesh	3.32	2.97	3.23	4.30	4.07	64.35	4.97	3.74	0.51
Assam	0.75	0.67	2.93	3.90	3.13	24.48	1.89	1.42	-1.51
Bihar	0.76	0.68	6.5	8.65	10.06	38.48	2.97	2.23	-4.27
Chhattisgarh	1.68	1.50	2.36	3.14	3.41	23.03	1.78	1.34	-1.02
Gujarat	7.69	6.88	2.55	3.39	3.48	108.38	8.37	6.29	3.74
Haryana	6.02	5.39	0.83	1.10	1.09	48.82	3.77	2.83	2.00
Himachal Pradesh	0.48	0.43	1.19	1.58	0.83	9.58	0.74	0.56	-0.63
Jharkhand	1.58	1.41	2.22	2.96	3.31	20.69	1.60	1.20	-1.02
Karnataka	14.14	12.65	2.93	3.90	3.65	113.94	8.80	6.61	3.68
Kerala	1.81	1.62	2.03	2.70	1.93	51.19	3.96	2.97	0.94
Madhya Pradesh	2.17	1.94	5.56	7.40	7.85	61.26	4.73	3.56	-2.00
Maharashtra	40.3	36.06	4.99	6.64	6.32	179.83	13.90	10.44	5.45
Odisha	2.61	2.34	3.32	4.42	4.53	36.40	2.81	2.11	-1.21
Punjab	1.47	1.32	1.57	2.09	1.81	34.71	2.68	2.02	0.45
Rajasthan	2.83	2.53	4.57	6.08	6.03	67.96	5.25	3.94	-0.63
Tamil Nadu	8.5	7.61	3.5	4.66	4.08	120.41	9.30	6.99	3.49
Telangana	4.32	3.87	1.84	2.45	2.10	64.81	5.01	3.76	1.92
Uttar Pradesh	5.14	4.60	11.88	15.81	17.94	116.28	8.98	6.75	-5.13
Uttarakhand	0.9	0.81	1.24	1.65	1.12	14.84	1.15	0.86	-0.38
West Bengal	4.46	3.99	5.23	6.96	7.52	74.64	5.77	4.33	-0.90
8 small States	0.82	0.73	4.63	6.16	5.79	20.07	1.55	1.17	-3.46
Total	111.75	100.00	75.12	100.00	100.02	1294.15	100.00	75.12	0.00

Centre-State revenue sharing

India's central tax revenue sharing with states faces criticism over equity, state autonomy, and effectiveness. Post-GST, states rely heavily on Finance Commission-determined transfers from the Centre. Several states claim current formulas fail to capture their true economic contributions,

spotlighting Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) as a potential core criterion for devolution.

GSDP: Gross State Domestic Product

It measures the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a state's geographic boundaries over a specific period, typically one year, without double-counting. Similar to national GDP, it captures economic output across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors.

Key Uses

GSDP gauges a state's economic growth, living standards (via per capita figures), and development trends, guiding Finance Commission transfers and budgets. States like Telangana release annual estimates at current and constant prices for accurate comparisons.

India's structure of centre-state share transfer

- a. **Finance Commission's Mandate:** The Finance Commission sets states' share of central tax revenues and the allocation formula. Fifteen commissions' recommendations have shaped transfers; the 16th's report awaits submission.
- b. **Transfer Mechanisms:** Funds flow via tax devolution (formula-driven), grants-in-aid, and centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) aligned to national goals.
- c. **GST's Fiscal Impact:** GST curtailed states' tax autonomy, triggered revenue shortfalls from rate reductions, and shrank the divisible pool as cesses/surcharges grew.
- d. **Equity-Driven Formula:** Commissions emphasize fairness through income distance and population weights, yet shifting criteria and fiscal disparities fuel state grievances.

Challenges in India's Central Transfer Framework

- a. **Narrowing of the Divisible Tax Pool:** Cesses and surcharges have surged from 11.3% of gross tax revenue in 2009–10 to 16.3% in 2022–23. Since these are not shared with states, they shrink states' fiscal autonomy.
- b. **Rise in Earmarked Transfers:** The growth of centrally sponsored schemes restricts states' flexibility to prioritize spending based on local priorities.
- c. **Poor Adherence to Finance Commission Recommendations:** In the 15th Finance Commission period, actual devolution stood at just 38.1% of gross tax.
- d. **Redistribution Bias Over Performance Incentives:** Finance Commissions have overemphasized criteria like income distance and population, favoring equity at the expense of linking transfers to states' fiscal contributions.

Limitations of Tax Collections as State Contribution Metrics

- a. **GST's Destination-Based Design:** The GST framework severs the connection between production location and tax collection site through its destination-based taxation.
- b. **Corporate Tax Attribution Flaws:** Corporate taxes are credited to the registered office's state, ignoring the actual sites of economic activity.
- c. **Complications from Multi-State Activities:** Labor mobility, inter-state supply chains, and corporate transactions obscure accurate state-wise tax attribution.
- d. **Illustrative Distortions:** Automobile firms remit taxes via registered offices, not factory locations; plantation firms centralize profits despite spread-out operations.
- e. **Key Implication:** Direct tax data mirrors collection hubs, not genuine value addition across states.

Towards Equitable Distribution:

- a. **Elevate GSDP's Role Thoughtfully:** Assign higher weight to GSDP in transfer formulas, without sidelining core redistribution metrics.
- b. **Harmonize Fairness and Performance:** GSDP captures states' economic efforts, complementing criteria that aid laggard states.
- c. **Offset Headquarter Tax Skew:** Adjust for states where tax inflows outpace GSDP due to clustered corporate registrations.
- d. **Bridge Production-Tax Gaps:** Use GSDP to rectify mismatches where value creation happens locally but taxes accrue elsewhere.
- e. **Cap Disruptive Shifts:** Introduce GSDP gradually to limit sharp fiscal swings between states.
- f. **Boost Transfer System Trust:** Tying devolution closer to real economic output fosters greater faith in the process.

Using GSDP more prominently in central-state transfers links funds to real economic activity, making the system fairer and better balancing efficiency with equity than current methods. However, it should complement, not replace redistribution criteria to address regional gaps and preserve cooperative federalism.

7. Delimitation after 2027, redrawing power in India

Context: delimitation exercise which is due after Census 2027 will be the most consequential redrawing of political power since Independence. It will redefine how seats are distributed in the Lok Sabha and how India understands fairness, federalism and regional balance.

Delimitation

The Constitution calls for delimitation after each Census, but this has been frozen for nearly 50 years.

Lok Sabha seats across states remain fixed since 1976, using 1971 Census data to reward population control efforts.

Table 1: If the number of seats is retained at 543 and reapportioned among States based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain/loss
U.P.	80	91	11
Bihar	40	50	10
Rajasthan	25	31	6
M.P.	29	33	4
Tamil Nadu	39	31	-8
Andhra + Telangana	42	34	-8
Kerala	20	12	-8
Karnataka	28	26	-2
Punjab	13	12	-1
Himachal	4	3	-1
Uttarakhand	5	4	-1

Table 2: If the number of seats is increased to 848 based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain
U.P.	80	143	63
Bihar	40	79	39
Rajasthan	25	50	25
M.P.	29	52	23
Tamil Nadu	39	49	10
Andhra + Telangana	42	54	12
Kerala	20	20	-
Karnataka	28	41	13
Punjab	13	18	5
Himachal	4	4	-
Uttarakhand	5	7	2

The 2001 84th Amendment prolonged this suspension until the first Census post-2026

Delimitation refers to fixing or redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state assembly constituencies to reflect population changes, as mandated by Articles 82, 170(2), 330, and 332.

A high-powered Delimitation Commission, appointed by the President, conducts this process after

each Census via parliamentary acts like the Delimitation Act, 2002. Its orders are final and non-justiciable.

Challenges in Timely Execution

Past Commissions took 3-5.5 years; the 2002-08 exercise only adjusted internal boundaries, skipping inter-state seat reallocation. The next one must redistribute Lok Sabha seats (first since 1976), redraw all constituencies, and reserve 33% for women. Even with 2027 Census data out by 2028, completion before 2031-32 looks unlikely, delaying women's quota to 2034 elections or later.

Population mismatch between North and South

- In 1970s the fertility rate across all states was alike, however with evolution of technology, medicine and awareness programmes the fertility rate differs widely. While the Southern states have managed to achieved a lower rate of population growth, the Northern states are still growing exponentially, thereby creating a rift between north and South.
- If seats are given based only on population, southern states lose power in Parliament even if they get more seats overall. This rewards states that didn't control growth.
- Even if southern states keep their current seat counts in a larger Lok Sabha, their influence shrinks. Parliament functions on absolute numbers: UP and Bihar together commanding over 25% erodes other regions' bargaining power, despite technical compliance.
- Although, the Government has assured that the complex arithmetic of population and number of seats proportionate to it in Lok Sabha will not affect the balance in terms of seat and their power in the parliament few points must be noted.

Six options to be considered

- **Option 1:** Extend the freeze past 2026 until fertility rates equalize. This maintains current seat balance but denies growing states fair representation, invites Article 14 challenges, and weakens equal suffrage with outdated 1971 data.
- **Option 2:** Grow Lok Sabha from 543 to 750 or 888 seats, guaranteeing no state loses seats while others gain significantly. Yet proportional allocation still boosts larger states' shares disproportionately, failing to resolve southern states' core concerns.
- **Option 3:** Use a weighted formula—80% population, 20% development metrics (literacy, health, fertility control) like Finance Commission devolution indices. This rewards good governance, not just numbers. Ratio could shift to 70:30.
- **Option 4:** Revive Rajya Sabha as true federal chamber. Restore domicile rules for state-specific representation. Fix unequal seats (UP: 31, Sikkim: 1) via tiered equality: large states (15 seats), medium (10), small (5) balancing population and federalism like US Senate model.
- **Option 5:** Split Uttar Pradesh into 3-4 states to curb its dominance. Already divided once (Uttarakhand, 2000), with ongoing demands for Bundelkhand and Purvanchal. Dividing projected 151 seats into ~38 per state prevents single-state control—true federalism fix.
- **Option 6:** Phase redistribution over two cycles—half seats adjusted in 2034, rest in 2039. Eases political shocks while meeting constitutional mandates.

Navigating through complexities

- a. Delimitation will transform coalition politics. Two states holding 25% of Lok Sabha seats alters government formation math entirely. Regional parties lose leverage despite seat gains, forcing a delicate balance between constitutional equity and political stability.
- b. The Delimitation Commission should include experts in demography, constitutional law and federal studies, with meaningful State representation. Transparency, extensive public hearings and robust oversight are essential.
- c. The next delimitation redraws internal boundaries based on geography, administration, and SC/ST quotas. While SC/ST seat numbers follow population ratios, their locations allow Commission discretion thereby inviting manipulation. Therefore the same strict formula must be applied to both.
- d. Delimitation is a pivotal national exercise that redistributes political power and shapes coalitions for decades. Executed well, it strengthens unity and modern representation; poorly, it breeds

distrust and erodes federalism. The Census counts people; delimitation tests democracy. With data yet to be released, dialogue becomes urgent before consensus is disturbed.

Delimitation stands at the crossroads of equity, federalism, and democracy. By thoughtfully integrating population data with performance incentives—like weighted formulas or Rajya Sabha reforms—India can reward governance while ensuring fair representation.

Phased rollout and open interstate dialogue can build consensus, averting coalition shocks and other risks.

At its core, delimitation must celebrate India's unity where achievement is rewarded, and collaborative federalism prevails.

8. No discrimination under UGC's New Equity rules

Context: The University Grants Commission (UGC) recently notified new regulations to address discrimination, including caste-based bias, in higher education institutions.

Strong measures

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, were notified on Tuesday

■ Discrimination has been defined as “any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of them”

■ Caste-based discrimination means “discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes”



■ The new rules specify punishments, which can range from being debarred from offering degrees or programmes, for non-compliance

Background:

The notification is a result of the intervention of The Supreme Court after petitions by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi—who died by suicide in 2016 and 2019 amid caste discrimination claims—prompting these new UGC anti-discrimination rules.

UGC's 2026 Equity Promotion Rules

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued the Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations, 2026. These target discriminations based on caste, religion, gender, race, birthplace, or disability.
- Priority protection goes to SCs, STs, OBCs, EWS, and persons with disabilities to foster inclusion. Replacing the 2012 rules, they apply universally and outline clear complaint filing and resolution processes for campuses.
- These rules replace the earlier 2012 Promotion of Equity Regulations and apply to all higher education institutions.

- They establish a defined structure and procedure for filing and addressing complaints related to discrimination within campuses.

Implementation

To operationalise the Promotion of Equity Regulations, 2026, the University Grants Commission has mandated a three-tier institutional mechanism in all higher education institutions.

Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC)

- Every institution must establish an Equal Opportunity Centre to oversee policies for disadvantaged groups.
- The EOC will coordinate with district administration and police and facilitate legal aid when required.
- It will comprise five faculty members, with no category-wise reservation mandated.
- If a college lacks five faculty members, the university-level EOC of its affiliating university will perform these functions.

Equity Committee Structure

A 10-member Equity Committee, chaired by the institution head, supports the EOC. It requires 5 reserved category members (OBC, SC, ST, PwD, women).

Significance of the new rules

- Broader Social Justice:** First-time inclusion of OBCs alongside SCs/STs/PwDs ensures holistic equity.
- Enforceable Accountability:** Strict penalties and timelines (24-hour meetings, 15-day reports) transform soft guidelines into binding rules.
- Institutional Empowerment:** Dedicated Equity Committees with reserved representation enable swift, credible grievance redressal.

These new rules strengthen laws and systems to stop caste discrimination in colleges. They respond to a 2019 IIT Delhi study showing 75% of students from weaker castes face bias on campus.

About University Grants Commission (UGC)

UGC, established by the UGC Act 1956, coordinates, funds, and upholds standards in India's higher education. Originating from the 1944 Sargeant Report, it began as an advisory body in 1945, expanded post-Independence, and was formally launched in 1953 under Maulana Azad.

Key Functions
Allocate grants to universities and colleges

Key Functions
Advise Centre/states on higher education policy
Maintain and coordinate academic standards
Frame regulations (e.g., equity, PhD norms)
Disburse scholarships and fellowships

9. Aadhar Mascot UIDAI

In News: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) launched the Aadhaar mascot, a new resident-facing communication companion to simplify public understanding of Aadhaar services. The Aadhaar mascot named Uday (उदय) will be helpful in making Aadhaar-related information more relatable, and people-friendly.



Significance

- Makes Aadhaar services (updates, authentication, offline verification) relatable and simple for all ages.
- Embodies trust, security, inclusion, and digital empowerment—boosting public awareness and adoption.
- Acts as visual ambassador, simplifying communication on responsible use and tech upgrades

10. Jal Jeevan Mission

In News: The government's flagship Jal Jeevan Mission which aims to supply clean drinking water to every rural home, has been allocated ₹67,600 crores in the 2026-27 budget, a slight increase from ₹67,000 crore last year for 2025-26.

Despite receiving a substantial budget allocation of around ₹67,000 crore for the financial year 2025-26, the Jal Shakti Ministry anticipates spending only about ₹17,000 crore by the end of this period on March 31, 2026. This projection comes straight from the official Union Budget documents.

The sharp gap between allocated funds and expected spending stems from reduced disbursements after audits and reports uncovered serious irregularities—such as corruption, poor project execution, and fund leakages—in the Jal Jeevan Mission across multiple states. As a result, the central government has tightened funding to states to address these governance lapses and ensure better accountability.



The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that achieving the Mission's goals will save women 5.5 crore hours daily previously spent collecting water and prevent nearly 400,000 deaths from diarrheal diseases.

Safe water coverage could reduce under-five child mortality by almost 30%.

Significant job creation, estimating millions of person-years of direct and indirect employment through the



About JJM: Overview

Since August 2019, Government of India in partnership with States is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) – Har Ghar Jal to make provision of potable water to every rural household across the country.

Progress Overview

JJM expanded tap connections from 17% in 2019 to over 81% by October 2025, with full coverage in states like Goa, Haryana, and

Gujarat. Extended to 2028 with enhanced funding, it emphasizes sustainability through community-led maintenance and digital monitoring. Over 2.12 lakh villages are now "Har Ghar Jal" certified, verified by Gram Sabhas.

Health Improvements

Access to safe water has slashed waterborne diseases; one assessment found 98% of connected households reported no incidents last year. It could prevent 1.36 lakh annual under-5 child deaths, per studies, while boosting hygiene and reducing infant/maternal mortality. In villages like Borbori, Assam, cases dropped from 27 to zero post-JJM.

Women's Empowerment

Women, previously spending hours fetching water, now save time for education, work, and income activities, reducing drudgery and enhancing dignity. This has increased female workforce participation, especially in agriculture, and supported poverty reduction via better household economics. Community groups like women's SHGs manage schemes, collecting tariffs for self-sustainability.

Economic and Social Shifts

JJM generated millions of person-years of employment in construction and maintenance, halving rural deprivation indices from 2011-2021. It fosters "ease of living" through Jan Andolan participation, water security plans, and tech like apps for monitoring. Overall, it models community-driven governance, linking water to broader development toward Viksit Bharat.

11. Gram Swaraj and limits of decentralization

Context: As per a statement given by a leader from opposition renaming the MGNREGS as VB-G RAM G will erase Mahatma Gandhi's presence from people's memory and hence his idea of Gram Swaraj.

Mahatma Gandhi envisioned Gram Swaraj as a system where villages operate as self-governed, self-reliant, and economically independent units. He firmly believed that true democracy and national progress could emerge only through empowering rural communities.

Gandhi's concept of Gram Swaraj

Aspect of Gram Swaraj	Key Features
Village Autonomy	Villages as complete republics managing their own social, economic, and political affairs.
Self-Reliance (Swadeshi)	Emphasis on producing food, clothing, and basic necessities locally.
Decentralized Governance	Democratically elected Panchayats for local decision-making.
Core Values	Equality, non-violence, and social harmony in village life.
Inter-Village Relations	Balance between independence and interdependence among villages.
Holistic Development	Focus on moral, social, and economic progress.

India's Constitution enshrines Gandhi's Gram Swaraj ideals through Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs) in Part IV and Fundamental Duties in Part IV-A.

DPSPs and Gram Swaraj

DPSPs guide the State toward decentralized, self-reliant rural development, echoing Gandhi's village republics. Article 40 mandates organizing village panchayats as units of self-government.

Articles 43 and 43A promote cottage industries, worker participation, and equitable wealth distribution to foster economic independence and Panchayati Raj.

Article 47 emphasizes adequate livelihoods, nutrition, and public health, aligning with self-reliance in basic needs.

Fundamental Duties Alignment

Fundamental Duties, added by the 42nd Amendment (1976), impose moral obligations on citizens to realize Gram Swaraj values.

Article 51A(g) requires protecting the environment and compassion for living creatures, supporting sustainable village economies.

Article 51A(e) promotes scientific temper and humanism, nurturing social harmony and holistic progress.

Article 51A(j) encourages public property protection, reinforcing interdependence among villages

DPSPs and Fundamental Duties complement each other and Fundamental Rights, as affirmed in Kesavananda Bharati (1973), to build a welfare state with Gandhian decentralization.

Post-Independence India has struggled to realize Gandhi's Gram Swaraj vision due to systemic barriers hindering true devolution of power to villages.

- a. **Urban Bias in Policies:** Development strategies prioritized urban industrialization over rural areas, creating skewed resource allocation that neglected village self-reliance.
- b. **Centralization Despite Reforms:** The 73rd Amendment empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions, but states retain control over finances, functions, and functionaries, undermining local autonomy.
- c. **Infrastructure Gaps:** Villages often lack schools, hospitals, roads, electricity, and internet, stunting economic viability and self-governance capacity.
- d. **Stifled Rural Economies:** Insufficient credit, markets, and training for village enterprises limit job creation and perpetuate migration to cities.
- e. **Persistent Social Barriers:** Caste hierarchies, patriarchy, and community divisions block equitable participation in panchayat decisions and resource sharing.
- f. **Political Resistance to Power Shift:** State and central governments withhold real authority from local bodies to maintain political leverage and patronage networks.
- g. Reliance on Temporary Aid Programs like MGNREGA offer wage support but rarely build sustainable skills, assets, or entrepreneurial ecosystems for true independence.

Way forward

Government must devolve genuine financial, administrative, and political powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

- a. **Strengthen Capacity:** Enhance training for local representatives to ensure effective governance.
- b. **Prioritize Infrastructure:** Invest in rural education, healthcare, digital connectivity, and skill development.

- c. Promote Enterprises: Support rural MSMEs via credit, markets, and innovation hubs.
- d. Ensure Inclusion: Drive social equity through awareness and community participation.
- e. Boost Accountability: Strengthen monitoring mechanisms for transparent local governance.
- f. Scale Successes: Replicate proven village development models nationwide.

12. India, the beautiful- But first, India the functional

Context: Despite India's rich cultural diversity, foreign tourist arrivals reached only 5.6 million by August 2025, while Singapore, smaller than Delhi, attracted double that at 11.6 million in the same period and Thailand reaped over \$60 billion from tourism as compared to India which earned barely a third.

The data shows that India is unable to unlock its tourism potential. Tourism is not only about seeing monuments and selling sunsets but also creating experiences that are seamless, safe, and memorable. It is the latter part where India is lagging behind.

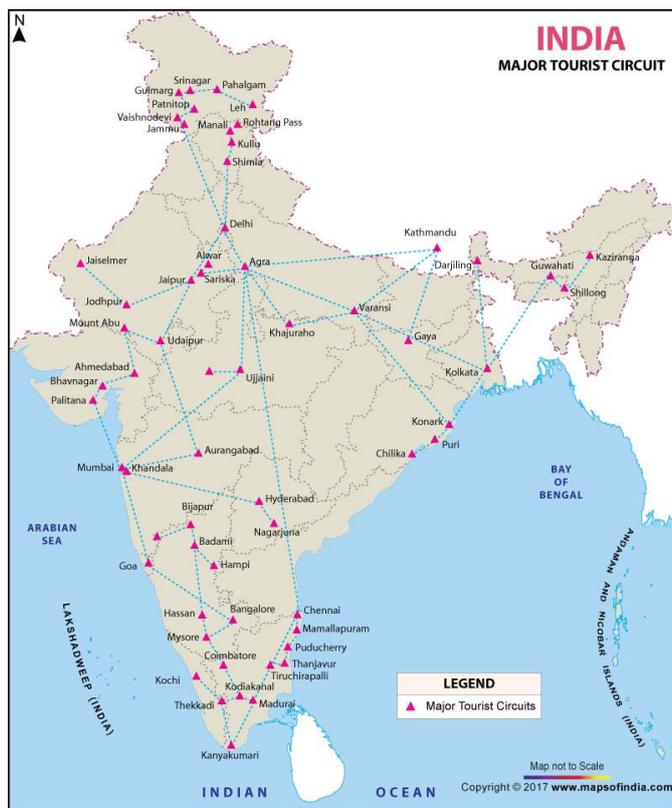
Three Main Problems- image, infrastructure and 'India itself'.

- a. **Image:** India's 'Incredible India' campaign captivates, but negative perceptions like women's safety concerns, scams, poor sanitation, and bureaucracy overshadow country's cultural value. Tourists want to feel welcome, not worried. Singapore and Thailand win by always being safe, smooth, and fun.
- b. **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure ranks as the next major challenge. The tourist journey starts at arrival—airports, immigration, taxis, and Wi-Fi set the initial tone. Potholed roads and confusing signs undermine even luxury stays. Poor last-mile access to remote sites persists, while clean toilets, steady internet, and preserved heritage remain essential. Ironically, though budget-friendly, India's mid-range and premium travel costs more than Southeast Asian rivals, eroding competitiveness.
- c. **India itself:** The vastness of India can overwhelm tourists, in addition to this scammers, noise, chaos, unruly crowd, uncontrolled traffic and poor hygiene further erodes India's value as a tourist destination. The hospitality sector faces a 40% deficit in trained staff as young graduates prefer desk jobs, scarcity of vocational training and trained staff at airports is also where India is lagging.

Multi-pronged strategy to unlock India's tourism potential

- a. **Rebrand and Relaunch:** The Government should promote curated circuits like the Golden Triangle, Himalayan trail, and coastal belt with top-notch infrastructure and safety. Boost digital storytelling via immersive virtual tours, influencer tie-ups, and authentic user-generated content highlighting India's magic.
- b. **Infrastructure development:** Build infrastructure to match ambition. Foster public-private partnerships to adopt and maintain heritage sites nationwide via an expanded 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme. Upgrade roads, rail, and sustainable transport to hidden gems. Ensure clean restrooms, signage, and waste management at

key spots.



c. **Prioritize safety and training:** Expand the tourist police with more women hires and multilingual support; crack down on scams and harassment. Launch centralized apps for verified guides and transport. Invest in skills for homestays, eco-lodges, local artisans not just five-star hotels.

d. **Streamline Visa process:** speed up intuitive e-visas; offer long-term multi-entry for frequent travelers. Waive reciprocity for low-risk countries. Remove bureaucratic hurdles that deter more than they protect.

e. **Promote sustainability and authenticity:** Modern travelers crave eco-tourism and authentic experiences. India must balance

growth with preservation: regulate footfalls at fragile sites, promote community-based tourism, and prevent development from harming culture or environment.

Tourism as an Economic strategy

Elevate tourism as a national priority

World Tourism Organisation data shows it generates far more jobs than manufacturing—especially for unskilled/semi-skilled youth amid rising automation and regional unrest (e.g., Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal). It's an economic and strategic imperative warranting government tax breaks and policy support.

The hospitality sector shapes India's global image, yet GST reforms hurt it, denying input tax credits, making 5% rates worse than prior 12%. This must change.

International Relations

13. USA-Venezuela (Donroe Doctrine)

Context: The US launched Operation Absolute Resolve in Venezuela, capturing President Nicolás Maduro, his wife Cilia Flores, and top officials. Framed as a "Trump Corollary" to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, it signals heightened US interventionism in Latin America.

This also indicates revival of neo-imperialistic expansionist policy.

Monroe Doctrine of 1823



The Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President James Monroe in 1823, established four core principles that separated the Western Hemisphere from European influence.

- The U.S. would not interfere in European internal affairs or wars.
- The U.S. would respect existing European colonies in the Americas.
- The Western Hemisphere was closed to future European colonization.
- Any European attempt to oppress or control independent nations in the Americas would be viewed as a hostile act against the U.S

Donroe Doctrine

The “Donroe Doctrine” (a blend of “Donald” and “Monroe”) is a modern interpretation of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, shaped by President Donald Trump’s foreign policy approach. Unlike the original doctrine, which was defensive in nature, the Donroe Doctrine openly supports coercive intervention and regime enforcement.

Core Principles of the "Donroe Doctrine"

- Reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore U.S. preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.
- Protect U.S. homeland and access to key regional geographies.
- Deny non-hemispheric competitors (e.g., China, Russia) the ability to position forces, threatening capabilities, or control strategically vital assets in the hemisphere.
- Prioritize "Peace Through Strength" via proactive U.S. dominance, enabling military action against threats like hostile regimes or cartels.

The doctrine asserts that the United States is the sole security guarantor of the Western Hemisphere. It rejects interference by non-Hemispheric powers such as China and Russia.

Why did the US intervene in Venezuela?



a. **Narcoterrorism:** The US charged Maduro and top officials with narco-terrorism and drug trafficking, calling the regime a direct threat to America and tying it to the fentanyl crisis—giving legal and political cover for the intervention.

b. **Oil and Geopolitics:** Venezuela holds the world's largest proven oil reserves over 300 billion barrels, or one-fifth of the global total but produces less than 1% of world oil. Years of US sanctions, economic crisis, and crumbling infrastructure have slashed

Venezuela's oil output. The US sees controlling its oil assets as vital for energy security, stable prices, and leverage in global markets.

- c. **Counter to extra-regional powers:** Venezuela's ties with China, Russia, and Iran challenged US dominance in the Western Hemisphere, prompting Washington to reassert primacy via a revived Monroe Doctrine. Yet the US-Venezuela conflict alarms Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba, fearing sovereignty erosion through military pressure, sanctions, and counter-narcotics pretexts.

Concerns about Donroe Doctrine

- a. **Sovereignty Breach:** Forcible detention of a sitting head of state directly violates national sovereignty and diplomatic norms.
- b. **Weak Global Backlash:** Worldwide protests stayed limited, showing fading trust in collective international resistance.
- c. **Erosion of Global Rules:** This episode proves the post-WWII system fails to restrain major powers.
- d. **Force as Policy Norm:** Military abductions are now framed as legitimate tools, normalizing coercive regime change.
- e. **Risk to Other Powers:** Such actions embolden China and Russia to dominate their influence zones.
- f. **Taiwan Parallel:** China's Taiwan claims gain indirect legitimacy when force trumps international law.

Global Implications

The US intervention in Venezuela has wide-ranging global effects, reshaping geopolitics, norms, and alliances.

- a. **Reassertion of US Hegemony:** Signals willingness to use force for hemispheric dominance, expelling Russian/Chinese influence and securing oil assets emboldening unilateralism.
- b. **Sovereignty Erosion:** Direct breach of norms by detaining a head of state, with muted global protests eroding faith in international law.
- c. **Regional Instability:** Sparks refugee flows, fears in Mexico/Colombia/Cuba, and divides Latin America (e.g., Argentina supports, others condemn).
- d. **Precedent for Great Powers:** Justifies force by rivals like Russia (Ukraine) or China (Taiwan), weakening post-WWII rules-based order.
- e. **Economic Shifts:** Potential oil market stabilization from Venezuela's reserves, but risks humanitarian crises and drug trade disruptions.
- f. **Allied Strains:** Undermines US credibility on democracy/human rights globally, complicating efforts in Europe/Indo-Pacific.

Implications for India

- a. **Energy Security:** Venezuela's vast oil reserves matter amid India's diversification from Russia; US control could stabilize prices but heighten supply risks.
- b. **Strategic Autonomy:** Highlights limits of external alliances (e.g., Russia's failure to protect Venezuela), pushing Atmanirbhar Bharat in defense and tech.

- c. **Diplomatic Balancing:** Tests non-alignment amid US ties (QUAD, trade) vs. Global South expectations; contrasts with BRICS partners' condemnations.
- d. **Multilateralism Strain:** Underscores a unipolar resurgence, urging India to bolster hard power and indigenous capabilities.

The US Venezuela intervention revives unilateral force via the Donroe Doctrine, exposing sovereignty's fragility. India must prioritize strategic autonomy, energy diversification, and defense self-reliance amid great-power shifts.

14. To compete with China, India may need China

Context: India is considering removing the post-2020 restrictions on Chinese FDI imposed after the Galwan clash. This signals a shift away from a security-first approach that sharply reduced Chinese investment.

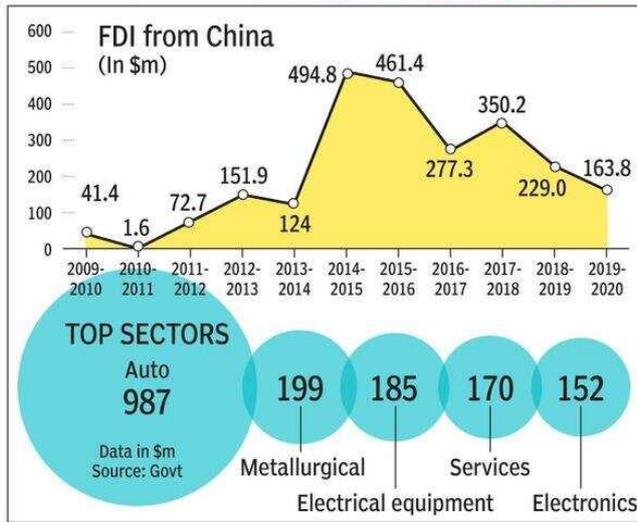


India-China Paradox

India faces a strategic paradox in its economic ties with China amid global supply chain shifts: while aiming to reduce dependence, selective Chinese investment and manufacturing links remain vital for boosting India's export edge, industrial growth, and global value chain integration.

Despite China's FDI stock falling to 14th place by 2024, India's trade dependence on China remains high, revealing a contradiction between geopolitical mistrust and India's need for Chinese capital and components for manufacturing and exports.

FDI FROM CHINA AT 6-YEAR LOW



Reasons for FDI Curbs on China

- Galwan valley clash:** Post-Galwan Valley clash (2020), India imposed curbs to block opportunistic Chinese takeovers of distressed firms.
- Policy Instrument:** It mandated government approval for FDI from countries sharing land borders with India.
- Impact:** Sharp decline in new Chinese investments despite stable trade volumes.

China's FDI trajectory since 2020

- **FDI Ranking Decline:** China's rank in India's FDI inflows fell from 18th (2023) to 22nd (2024).
- **FDI Stock Position:** China's cumulative FDI stock in India placed it at 14th position in 2024, down from 9th in 2014.
- **Stock Value:** Chinese FDI stock in India stood at approximately \$4.25 billion in 2024, significantly lower than Hong Kong (\$192 billion) or Singapore (\$102.6 billion).

Why does India need FDI from China?

- Supply Chain Integration:** Chinese firms bring scale, tech, and components for electronics/renewables, boosting PLI schemes and exports to US/EU (e.g., smartphones, EVs).
- Cost Competitiveness:** Lowers production costs, cuts import dependence, and upgrades value chains in labor-intensive sectors like textiles/pharma.
- Employment & Growth:** Generates jobs, attracts excess Chinese capacity, and supports 'Make in India' amid weak domestic investment.
- Strategic Leverage:** Builds economic interdependence for diplomacy, mirroring East Asian models, while reducing trade deficit (\$99B in 2024-25).

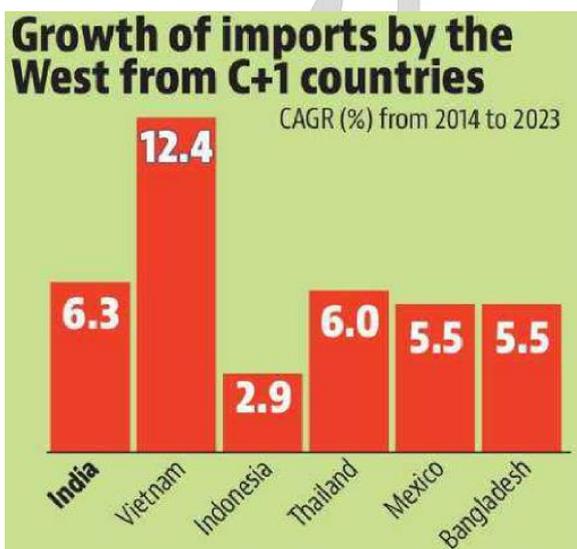
Can India replace China in global supply chain

India cannot fully replace China in global supply chains soon but can capture significant share (10-15% by 2030) via "China+1" diversification.

- Demographics & Incentives:** Young workforce (demographic dividend till 2040), PLI schemes (\$26B+), and low costs attract Apple (20% iPhones), Samsung, EVs.

- b. **Sector Gains:** Electronics surged 25%+ annually, with clusters in Tamil Nadu/Uttar Pradesh driving smartphone dominance. Pharma holds 20% global generics market, exporting \$28B+ yearly. Renewables target 500GW by 2030 (solar up 30GW/year), fueled by PLI and local solar cell production, positioning India as EV/battery hub.
- c. **Geopolitics:** US and EU are moving factories away from China due to COVID issues and new tariffs, this "China+1" strategy benefits India and Vietnam. India's iPhone exports jumped 40% to \$15B in 2025, together grabbing 15% of the shift. QUAD alliances and trade deals make India a trusted partner for strong supply chains in chips and defense.

China+1 strategy



- It refers to the global trend where companies diversify their manufacturing and supply chains by establishing operations in countries other than China.
- This approach aims to mitigate risks associated with over-reliance on a single country, especially in light of geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions.
- China has been the centre of global supply chains for the past few decades, earning the title of "World's Factory". This was due to favourable factors of production and a strong

business ecosystem.

Barriers to India's Competitiveness

- **Complex Regulations:** Red tape and inconsistent policies scare away investors.
- **Weak Manufacturing Edge:** High costs, poor infrastructure, and unskilled workers lag India behind Southeast Asia (per CME rankings).
- **Broken Infrastructure:** Bad roads, logistics, and power raise business expenses.
- **Rigid Labour Rules:** Strict laws block hiring flexibility and job growth.
- **Messy Taxes:** Multiple indirect taxes inflate costs.
- **Land Delays:** Slow acquisition process stalls factories and hikes prices.
- **Skills Gap:** Education doesn't match modern job needs.

India faces a paradox to compete with and partially replace China in global supply chains, it must selectively embrace Chinese FDI, technology, and components India needs targeted Chinese investment and technology to upgrade its factories, slash costs, and accelerate exports, leveraging a rival's strengths as a strategic shortcut to claim a bigger share of global supply chains.

15. US President clears bill to slap 500% tariffs on countries buying Russian Oil

Context: The 'Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025' empowers US tariffs and secondary sanctions on nations buying Russian oil, gas, or uranium. The President can waive them for 180 days if deemed vital for US national security. The bill also called Russia sanctions bill proposes 500% tariffs that could cripple India–US trade, hit exports, weaken investment flows, and disrupt India’s global trade negotiations.

The Bill also includes fresh restrictions on Vladimir Putin and certain Russian military commanders, along with 500% tariffs on direct Russian imports into the US.



Implications of this bill for India

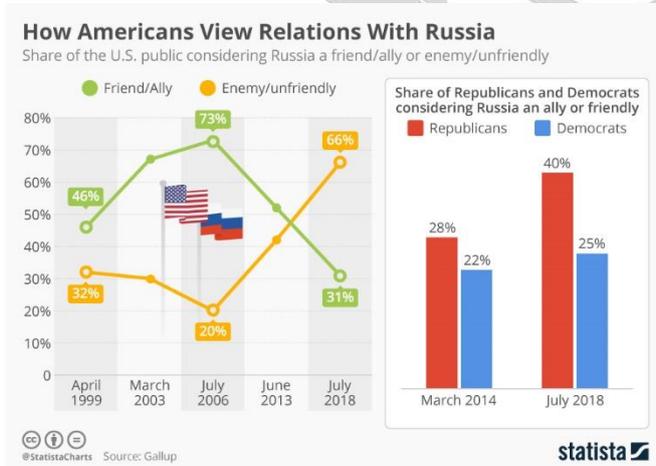
- a. **Trade Disruption Risks:** 500% tariffs could halt India's \$120B annual US exports, making goods uncompetitive overnight. US absorbs 18% of India's exports; labor sectors (textiles, gems, seafood) already hit by 50% duties face factory closures.
- b. **Labour-Intensive Sectors at Risk:** Textiles, footwear, and marine exports already under 50% US tariffs face collapse from added Russia sanctions penalties.
- c. **Strained India-US relations from Russian oil sanctions would erode India's leverage in critical trade talks worldwide:** This comes as India is in active trade talks with the European Union, ASEAN, and partners including Chile, Peru, Australia, Bahrain, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Eurasian Economic Union, Canada, and the Southern African Customs Union.
- d. **India at peril of greater loss:** While proposed US tariffs on countries buying Russian oil could disrupt global trade, India is likely to be hit harder than China due to weaker export diversification. Despite US tariffs, China recorded a \$1 trillion trade surplus in 2025, driven by dominance in sunrise sectors and control over critical minerals.
- e. **Manufacturing cut:** India, though pushing manufacturing reforms and investment, remains vulnerable as many exports are less technology-intensive, making them easier to replace.
- f. **Investment uncertainty for India:** US tariff risks are hurting investment sentiment in India. The

rupee weakened more than 7% in the past year (9%+ real effective depreciation), underperforming peers. US-India trade uncertainty could worsen macro risks amid capital outflows.

Strategic Roadmap for India

- Energy Diversification:** India should gradually shift from Russian oil (40% imports) to US/Venezuela sources, using presidential waivers for breathing room. India should also diversify trade with other countries specifically the Middle-east countries for discounted crude, hedging against sanctions.
- Trade resilience:** India should accelerate FTAs with EU, GCC, ASEAN, UK to reroute \$120B US exports. In addition to this, India must boost production linked incentives for textile/ pharma to cut reliance on US.
- Defense Autonomy:** reduce reliance on Russia and other countries for defence equipment procurement by strengthening producing indigenised defence equipment under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat.
- Diplomatic Maneuvers:** Leverage QUAD for tech/security gains while maintaining Russia ties for cheap arms/energy. India should also work closely with China for manufacturing gains against US and Europe

Russia-USA relations: From Hope to Hostility



- The post-Cold War era began with US-Russia optimism—cooperation on arms control (START), counterterrorism post-9/11, and Russia's NATO ties but quickly soured over NATO expansion, Iraq, and Kosovo.

Escalation Under Putin

Tensions between the US and Russia intensified markedly during Vladimir Putin's leadership

through a series of flashpoints that shattered diplomatic resets.

- Georgia War (2008):** Georgia's attempt to retake South Ossetia triggered Russia's full invasion, advancing deep into Georgian territory. Moscow recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent, defying Western protests and halting NATO expansion momentum

Ukraine Crisis (2014): Russia annexed Crimea after Ukraine's pro-EU revolution and backed Donbas separatists, prompting US/EU sanctions. This violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, where Russia pledged to respect Ukraine's borders.

Syria Clash (2015+): Russia's intervention propping up Assad directly opposed US-backed rebels, leading to near-misses between coalition aircraft and creation of deconfliction lines amid accusations of war crimes.

Election Interference (2016): US intelligence accused Russia of hacking DNC emails and social media campaigns to sway the presidential election, resulting in sanctions and expulsion of diplomats.

Ukraine Full Invasion (2022): Russia's "special military operation" to "denazify" Ukraine triggered NATO's largest buildup since the Cold War, energy crises in Europe, and \$100B+ in Western aid, ending arms control like New START.

These events dismantled Obama's 2009 "reset" (New START treaty) and confirmed mutual perceptions of existential rivalry.

16. Board of Peace

In News: The US President inaugurated the Board of Peace to lead efforts at maintaining ceasefire in Israel's war with Hamas.

The idea of Board of Peace is being floated as a rival to the United Nations

India has received an invitation from the United States to join the Board of Peace for Gaza, but it has not yet communicated its final decision on participation.

Primary Objective

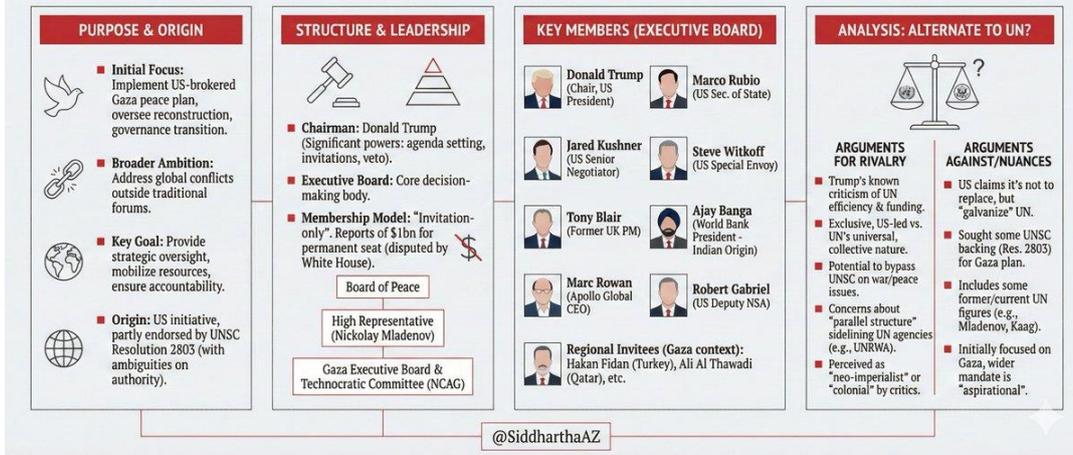
To provide strategic oversight and mobilize resources for Gaza's demilitarization, reconstruction, economic recovery, and transitional governance until a stable administration is in place. Its initial authorization lasts until 31st December 2027.

Member countries

Invitations have been extended to many countries, including Greece, Pakistan, and India. A unique funding model allows for non-contributing three-year memberships (can be renewed), while a USD 1 billion payment grants permanent status, with funds allocated for Gaza's reconstruction.

A New Global Forum or UN Rival? The 'Board of Peace'

Context: Proposed by Donald Trump as part of a 20-point Gaza peace plan, with broader ambitions for global conflict management.



About Board of Peace for Gaza

- It is a US-led intergovernmental body, established under UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2803 (2025), to enact a comprehensive US peace plan for the reconstruction of Gaza.
- It is proposed to be chaired by US President Donald J. Trump

What does this mean for India?

- Why is India hesitating:** Permanent membership demands a \$1B reconstruction fund contribution, commodifying peace as elite access.
- Vague Mandate:** Gaza-focused initially, the Board of Peace's charter uses expansive "world peace" language, risking overreach into other conflicts.
- Bypassing UN Multilateralism:** This exclusive forum excludes key stakeholders, fragmenting resolution unlike inclusive UN mechanisms.
- Risking UN membership:** India champions UN primacy and Global South reforms, joining a US-led bypass undermines this credibility.
- Risks of Exclusion:** Non-participation cedes influence over security/reconstruction talks amid emerging power blocs.
- Israel-Palestine Tightrope:** Endorsing a Trump-centric Gaza body strains India's two-state advocacy and balanced Israel ties.
- Conflict with Pakistan:** Pakistan's potential Gaza troop offer complicates India's stance: New Delhi rejects non-UN missions, prioritizing UN legitimacy for security operations.

India faces a strategic dilemma with the Board of Peace: rejecting it outright risks ceding influence over global security and reconstruction discussions, while joining a Trump-led, pay-to-enter forum could undermine its longstanding commitment to UN-centric multilateralism, complicate its balanced Israel-Palestine stance, and

expose it to Pakistan's opportunistic involvement.

The wisest path forward lies in cautious, selective engagement—observing from the sidelines initially, advocating for UN integration, and participating only on terms that align with India's Global South principles and domestic politics, thereby preserving credibility while shaping outcomes in an evolving world order.

17. 27th Amendment, Pakistan's Democratic Dilemma

In News: Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari approved the country's 27th constitutional amendment – a move seen as dismantling the last remnants of civilian rule in Pakistan.

What Pakistan's 27th Amendment means for Asim Munir?

- Pakistan's chief of army staff (COAS) is set to become chief of defence forces (CDF).
- Would become the constitutional head of Army, Navy & Air Force.
- Expected to be the most powerful military officer in Pakistan's history.
- Recently elevated to Field Marshal (a lifetime rank).
- Amendment could give him constitutional authority for life.

TOI

The constitutional amendment bill was rushed through with scant public debate: swiftly cabinet-approved, passed by the upper house, and ratified by the lower house via a two-thirds majority despite fierce opposition protests. Trailing a similarly divisive change from last year, it now fuels apprehensions of more alterations ahead.

Implications of the bill:

27th Amendment passed by Pakistan's legislature, also known as the PCA, has profound implications for the country's constitutional order. While it is officially aimed at reconfiguring the military command structure, its effects extend deep into the judiciary's role within the constitution

- Judicial Power Shift:** The PCA shifts original jurisdiction over constitutional interpretation and fundamental rights from the Supreme Court to a new Federal Constitutional Court (FCC). This sidelines

the Supreme Court in major political cases and weakens its role as Constitution's guardian. By splitting judicial oversight, the amendment exposes the judiciary to executive sway, endangering its independence.

- b. **Political Consolidation:** The amendment enables the executive to stack the new FCC with loyalists, consolidating power by controlling constitutional rulings and curbing opposition challenges.
- c. **Erosion of Rights:** Citizens' fundamental rights face weakened protection as fragmented courts delay justice, allowing executive overreach in politically sensitive cases.
- d. **Democratic Backslide:** Bypassing the Supreme Court normalizes institutional manipulation, signaling to allies and adversaries a shift toward authoritarian governance.
- e. **International Repercussions:** Reduced judicial independence tarnishes the country's global image, risking aid cuts, investor flight, and strained ties with rights-focused partners.

Implications for India:

- a. **Security risk:** With the military now steering foreign policy unchecked, risks of Kargil-like incursions rise, as opaque command structures may embolden aggressive actions assuming India's nuclear restraint.
- b. **Strategic Response Needed:** India must bolster intelligence (HUMINT, SIGINT, satellite surveillance) and rapid strike capabilities to deter misadventures, while clarifying nuclear red lines against tactical weapons. Diplomatic offensives should expose Pakistan's "garrison state" shift, countering hardened Kashmir stances that nix political resolutions.

The PCA's judicial erosion warns India against similar executive overreach, reinforcing vigilance on democratic backsliding amid South Asian trends in Bangladesh and Nepal.

18. Pax Silica Inaugural Summit

Context: Pax Silica aims to cut forced dependencies, protect worldwide tech and AI supply chains, and create reliable digital systems. India wants to join because it has solid digital infrastructure and a booming AI sector.

Overview

What is Pax Silica?

Pax Silica is a US-led strategic initiative to build a secure, prosperous, and innovation-driven silicon supply chain

Participating countries

Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, the UK, Israel, the UAE, and Australia

Aim: The initiative responds to the growing demand to deepen economic and technological cooperation with the US

should promote peace and prosperity. The Pax Silica Declaration noted that the initiative seeks to reduce coercive dependencies, secure global tech/AI supply chains, and build trusted digital infrastructure.

Objectives

- Pax Silica aims to cut heavy reliance on one country, safeguard key materials for AI, and help friendly nations build and use advanced tech on a large scale.
- China controls most of the supply chain for critical minerals used in silicon and AI—like refining over 60% of lithium, cobalt, and rare earths. Global efforts to diversify are speeding up after China's curbs on rare earth magnets caused supply disruptions.

Pax Silica's membership is growing. Key players include:

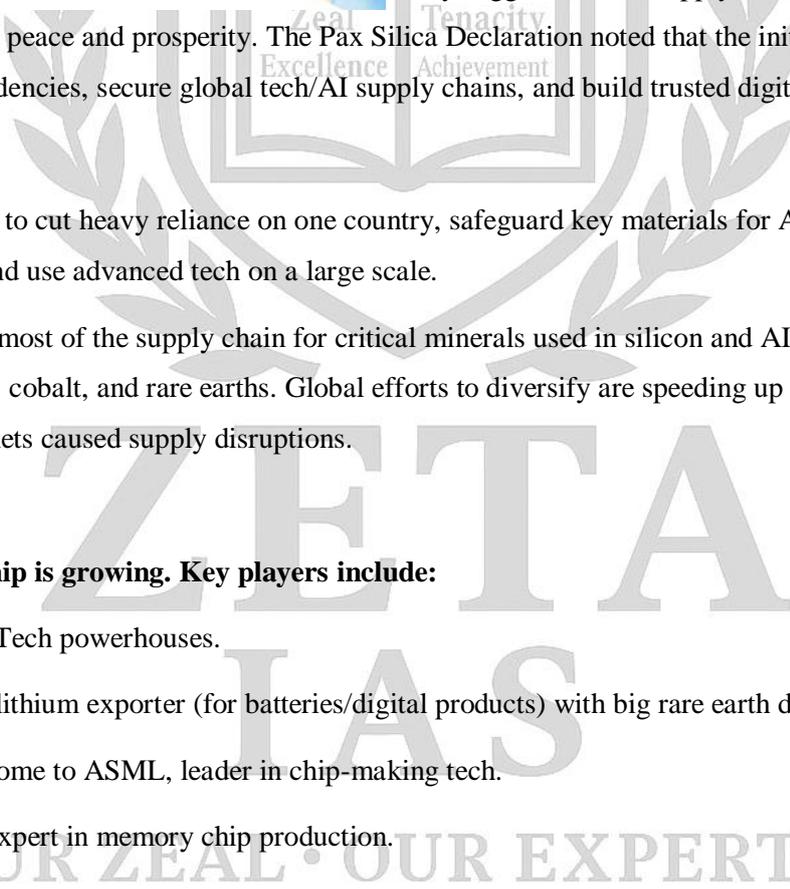
- US and Japan: Tech powerhouses.
- Australia: Top lithium exporter (for batteries/digital products) with big rare earth deposits.
- Netherlands: Home to ASML, leader in chip-making tech.
- South Korea: Expert in memory chip production.
- Singapore: Long-time chip manufacturer partnering with US firms.
- Israel: Strong in AI software, defense tech, and cybersecurity.
- UK: Third-largest AI market with top research labs and startups.
- Qatar and UAE: Big investment funds building advanced AI hubs.
- Canada, EU, OECD, and Taiwan joined the first summit as observers and could become members later.

About Pax Silica

It is a US led coalition aimed at building a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven silicon and Artificial Intelligence (AI) supply chain ecosystem through deep cooperation with trusted global partners.

The inaugural Pax Silica Summit was held in Washington, D.C. in December, 2025.

Pax' in Latin means 'peace' and 'Silica' is a key compound used in chip manufacturing — taken together they suggest that the supply chain for new technologies



Counter to China

Pax Silica's Purpose: Counters geopolitical risks from China's REE dominance; China uses exports as leverage (e.g., US halt over 2025 Trump tariffs; India's magnet imports restricted until no-defense pledge, impacting auto/electronics).

Pandemic exposed single-country supply chain vulnerabilities.

India's Contributions to Pax Silica

- a. Strong digital infrastructure and fast-growing AI market with widespread enterprise adoption.
- b. AI & Semiconductor Missions with major funding; private investments (e.g., Tatas) and US firms like Micron setting up in India.
- c. Rising AI startups and large pool of US-trained engineers returning home (due to visa policies) to boost AI/semiconductor talent.
- d. Ongoing supply chain ties with Japan/Singapore; collaborations with Israel for semiconductor fabs.
- e. Proven US-India tech partnerships; joining would scale these for robust AI/semiconductor ecosystems.

Key Challenges for India in Pax Silica

- a. **Pioneer Status:** First developing country and non-US ally (strategic partner) to join, risking 'expectation gaps' with high-income, allied members.
- b. **Strategic Autonomy:** Must ensure participation doesn't dilute India's independent foreign policy, especially on nuanced global security views.
- c. **Immature Ecosystems:** India's AI/semiconductor sectors lag behind others, needing time to scale.
- d. **Protective Policies:** Reliance on subsidies, government procurement, and import regulations for domestic firms may face pushback from US or other members.

China dominates REE supply chains with export controls and ignores emerging economies like India. Pax Silica may create its own framework, leading to dual global chains (China vs. Pax Silica). India's IT ties with the West favor Pax Silica, but strained US relations mean India wants more talks on its future path.

19. World Economic Forum summit 2026

In News: The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026 Annual Meeting was held in Davos (Switzerland) in January 2026. It focused on "A Spirit of Dialogue" amid Geo-Economic tensions, AI growth, and climate action.

Key Themes

- **Geo-Economic Confrontation:** Trade disruptions, supply chain resilience; push for diversified partnerships (e.g., EU-India in green energy).
- **AI & Tech Frontiers:** Governance, productivity boost, but job risks for youth; India's digital leap noted.
- **Sustainability:** Climate mitigation, energy transition; planetary boundaries emphasized.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Human capital, workforce reskilling; public debt strains in poor nations.
- **Global Risks 2026:** Cybersecurity #1 for India due to rapid digitalization (UPI/Aadhaar).

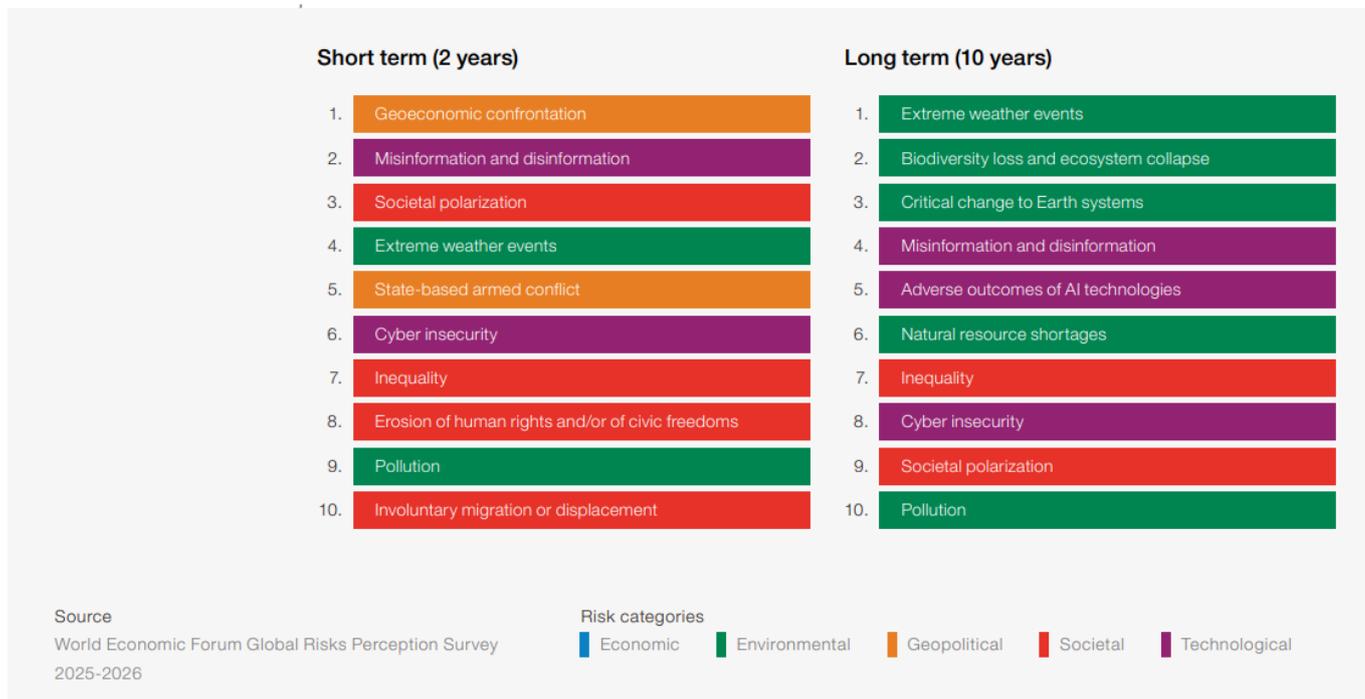
About WEF

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a Switzerland-based nonprofit founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, convening global leaders annually in Davos for dialogue on economic, social, and tech challenges
- WEF regularly publishes globally recognized reports, including the Global Competitiveness Report and the Global Gender Gap Report, Energy Transition Index, and Global Risk Report

WEF Global Risk Report

World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risks Report 2026 has identified cybersecurity as the biggest risk for India in 2026, while Geo-economic confrontation has emerged as the single most severe global risk, overtaking armed conflict and climate threats.

- **Geo-economic Confrontation:** It has emerged as the biggest global risk, overtaking armed conflict and extreme weather events as the most likely trigger of a global crisis. It refers to the strategic use of economic tools such as trade restrictions, sanctions, investment controls, and technology bans by states to advance geopolitical interests and constrain rivals, weakening multilateralism and rising protectionism.
- **State-based armed conflict:** ranks second globally, reflecting ongoing wars and regional spill-over risks
- **Climate-related risks:** extreme weather events rank next, alongside societal polarisation.
- **Technological risks:** with misinformation and disinformation ranking 5th worldwide, reflecting growing threats to democratic processes and social trust.
- **Cyber-security:** adverse outcomes of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies have entered the top 10 global risks, highlighting concerns over job displacement, ethical misuse, and security challenges.
- **Cyber insecurity:** it ranks 9th globally. Underscoring increasing digital vulnerability as economies and governance systems become more digitally dependent.



Risks for India

- Cybersecurity is the top risk for India in 2026, reflecting dependence on digital governance, fintech, and critical digital infrastructure.
- Income and wealth inequality is the second biggest risk for India, highlighting social and regional disparities.
- Insufficient public services and social protections (this includes concerns regarding education, infrastructure, and pensions).
- Economic downturn (fears of recession or stagnation).
- State-based armed conflict (this includes proxy wars, civil wars, coups, or terrorism).

The findings stress India's need for robust digital security, inclusive growth, and resilient public services.

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20. Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2025

In News: Mozambican rights activist Graca Machel to be conferred with Indira Gandhi Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025, Prize for work in education, health, and humanitarian action.

In the 1990s, Ms. Machel led a landmark United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on children, which reshaped global humanitarian responses. She has since served on several international bodies and founded institutions promoting women's empowerment, child development and social transformation.

Health

21. Huntington's disease

In News: Researchers from the University of Szeged in Hungary, in a study published in Scientific Reports, have revealed fresh insights into Huntington's disease using fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) as a model organism. This novel method offers promising clues on disease progression and potential therapeutic targets.

About Huntington's disease

- Huntington's disease is a severe neurodegenerative disorder affecting the central nervous system. It is a rare hereditary disorder in which brain cells, or neurons, in certain areas of your brain start to break down.
- It is caused by a mutation in the HTT gene, producing a faulty huntingtin (Htt) protein. The destruction of nerve cells happens in the basal ganglia, or the region of your brain that regulates your body's movements.
- It also affects the brain cortex (surface of your brain) that regulates your thinking, decision-making, and memory.
- As the neurons degenerate, the disease can lead to emotional disturbances, loss of intellectual abilities, and uncontrolled movements.

Causes of Huntington's Disease

- HD stems from a mutation in the HTT gene.
- This gene normally produces huntingtin, a protein essential for neuron function.
- In HD, the mutation disrupts DNA instructions, leading to abnormally shaped huntingtin proteins.
- These malformed proteins damage neurons instead of supporting them. Ultimately, neuron death occurs due to this genetic flaw.
- If a parent carries HD, each child faces a 50% inheritance risk

HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE STAGES	
Stage	Symptoms and functional ability
Early stage	Mild symptoms manifest 
Early-intermediate stage	Symptoms impact day-to-day activities 
Late-intermediate stage	Assistance required for most activities 
Early-advanced stage	No longer able to live independently 
Late-advanced stage	Completely dependent on others for care 

Symptoms:

- Common symptoms include uncontrollable dance-like movements (chorea) and abnormal body postures, as well as problems with behavior, emotion, thinking, and personality.
- Other symptoms may include tremor (unintentional back-and-forth movement in the person's muscles) and unusual eye movements. The eye movements can happen early in the disease.
- As HD progresses, you will need constant assistance and supervision because of the debilitating nature of the disease.
- People usually die 15-20 years after developing symptoms.

Treatment: There is no treatment that can stop or reverse HD, but health care providers can offer medications to help with certain symptoms.

22. Maharashtra becomes first to launch government-run menopause clinics

In News: Maharashtra has become the first State in India to launch dedicated Menopause Clinics across government hospitals and urban healthcare centre

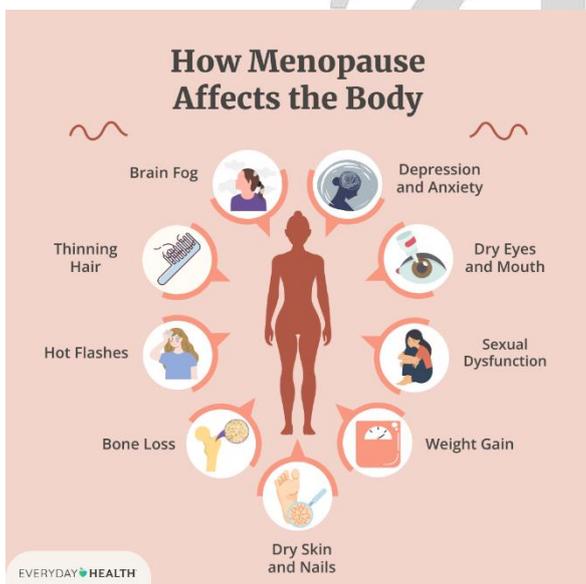
Aims and Objective

Government aims to address the issue of hormonal imbalance, bone disorders, sleep disturbances, cardiovascular risks and mental health concerns in women going through menopause.

What will the Clinics do?

Service Category	Description
Medical Consultation	Expert advice on menopause symptoms.
Mental Health Support	Counselling for emotional well-being.
Hormonal Assessment	Evaluation and balancing of hormones.
Bone Health Check	Assessments to prevent bone loss.
Heart Health Screening	Checks for cardiovascular risks.
Treatment & Medication	Personalized therapies and prescriptions.
Lifestyle Guidance	Advice on diet, exercise, and habits.

Women and Menopause



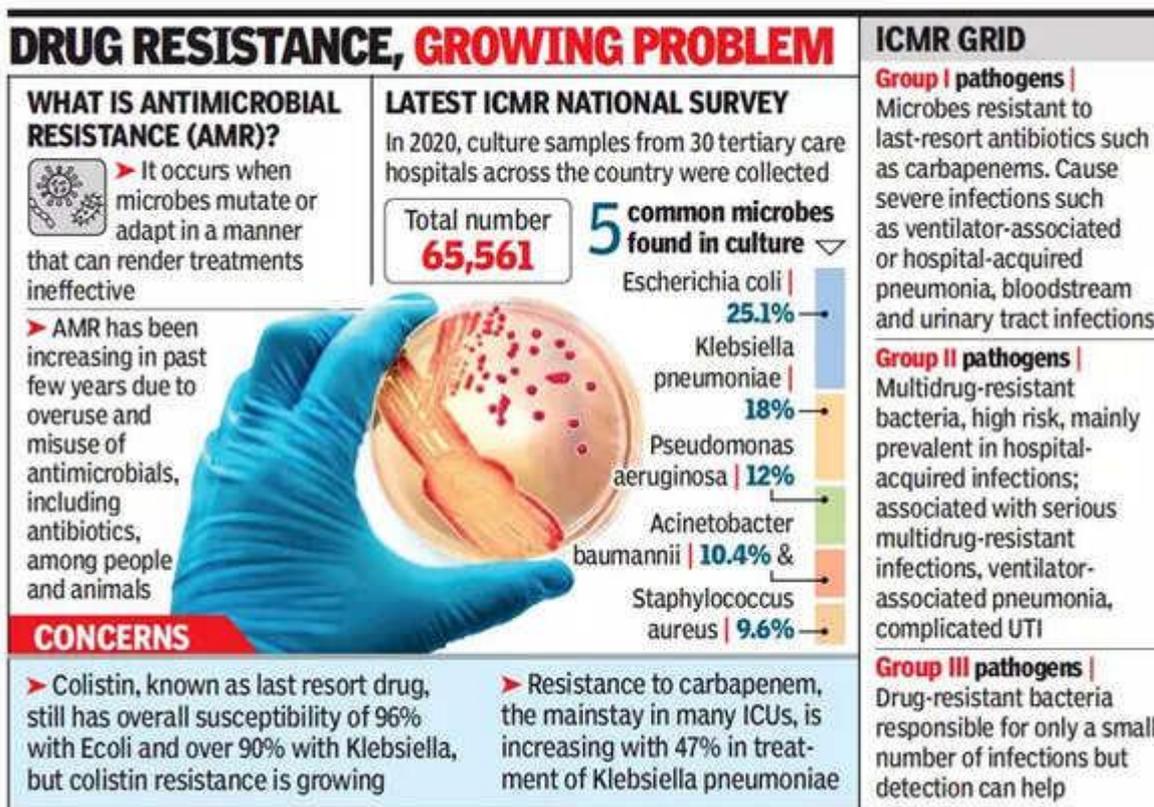
Menopause is not a disease, but a natural phase in a woman's life. However, during this period, women require strong physical and emotional support. These Menopause Clinics have been established to ensure that every woman in Maharashtra receives proper medical guidance, treatment and dignity during this phase. When women's health is strengthened, families, society and the State as a whole become stronger.

23. Fine tune this signal to sharpen India's AMR Battle

In News: PM Modi highlighted AMR risks in his December 2025 Mann Ki Baat, citing ICMR data on antibiotic misuse and urging no self-medication. This key moment calls for strong policy action.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) poses a serious threat to public health in India, with common infections such as pneumonia, urinary tract infections, typhoid, and bloodstream infections increasingly showing resistance to standard antibiotics.



Awareness is not enough given AMR's complex dynamics

- Multi-Sectoral Crisis:** AMR demands integrated action across healthcare, farming, and sanitation systems.
- Interconnected Pathways:** Resistance spreads via humans, livestock, water pollution, and soil contamination.
- Ongoing Systemic Issues:** Over-the-counter antibiotic access, poor hygiene, and farm overuse sustain the threat.

Shortcoming in AMR Surveillance

- a. **Urban Hospital Bias:** Most sentinel sites operate in medical colleges and big-city hospitals, creating skewed data that over-represents urban cases and ignores broader realities.
- b. **Rural Data Void:** Community-level tracking in villages and smaller towns is minimal, leaving rural infection patterns undocumented despite high population density there.
- c. **Narrow Lab Network:** NARS-Net includes 60 labs, but WHO-GLASS reports drew from just 41 across 31 States/UTs, reducing geographic and temporal coverage.
- d. **Pathogen Focus Limits:** Monitoring sticks to nine priority bacteria, potentially overlooking novel or regional resistance strains gaining ground.
- e. **Private Sector Oversight:** Private facilities, handling most patient care, rarely report data, making surveillance unrepresentative of actual healthcare trends.
- f. **Policy Impact:** These gaps hobble antibiotic stewardship programs and targeted interventions, as decisions rely on incomplete intelligence.

India's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2.0 (NAP-AMR 2.0), launched in November 2025, provides a comprehensive roadmap for combating AMR through 2029.

NAP-AMR 2.0 outlines six strategic priorities to guide implementation.

- a. Improve public awareness via education and training campaigns.
- b. Strengthen surveillance systems, expanding to primary care, rural centers, and private hospitals.
- c. Reduce infections through better prevention and control in healthcare facilities.
- d. Optimize antimicrobial use with stewardship programs.
- e. Promote R&D investments and innovations.
- f. Enhance governance and international collaborations.

Way forward

- Extend monitoring to primary/secondary care facilities, rural health centers, and private hospitals. This addresses urban-rural gaps and captures outpatient data where misuse is rampant.
- Link surveillance across human health, veterinary, food systems, and environment sectors. Coordinated data from ministries ensures holistic tracking of resistance spread
- India must broaden its AMR surveillance network and reinforce a unified One Health framework to curb resistance effectively. NAP-AMR 2.0 emphasizes these integrated steps for measurable progress by 2029.

Coverage (% of India's Exports)	Tariff Lines (% of Total)	Timeline/Details	Key Sectors
			products
2.9%	20.3%	Zero duty in 3-5 years	Marine products, processed foods, arms & ammunition
6%	6.1%	Preferential reduction/TRQs	Poultry, preserved vegetables, bakery products, cars, steel, shrimps/prawns

Labour-Intensive Boost: ₹2.87 lakh cr (\$33 bn) exports (textiles, apparel, marine, leather, footwear, chemicals, plastics, sports goods, toys, gems) gain immediate zero duty (from 4-26%), enhancing competitiveness and jobs.

India's offer to the European Union

Overall, India is offering 92.1% of its tariff lines which covers 97.5% of the EU exports.

Coverage	Tariff Lines (% of Total)	Timeline/Details	Key Notes
Immediate zero duty	49.6%	From FTA entry	High-tech goods diversify imports, cut business input costs
Phased elimination	39.5%	Over 5, 7, 10 years	Gradual tariff cuts
Preferential access	3%	Phased reductions/TRQs	Apples, pears, peaches, kiwi fruit

Benefits: Lower costs for Indian businesses/consumers; integration into global supply chains via EU high-tech imports.

Agricultural Growth and Farmer Livelihoods

The FTA is expected to have a significant positive impact on the Indian agricultural and processed food sector. Preferential Market Access for agricultural products like tea, coffee, spices, grapes, gherkins and cucumbers, dried

onion, fresh vegetables and fruits as well as for processed food products will make them more competitive in the EU.

Anticipated output

- a. This market access will strengthen farmers' realised incomes
- b. Reinforce rural livelihoods
- c. Elevate the global competitiveness of Indian agricultural products.

The FTA positions Indian agriculture to capture higher value in European markets, drive sectoral prosperity, and reinforces long-term resilience through sustained livelihood and reliable income opportunities.

India has prudently safeguarded sensitive sectors, including dairy, cereals, poultry, soymeal, certain fruits and vegetables, etc. balancing export growth with domestic priorities.

Product-specific rules

The FTA requires exported goods to undergo real processing or manufacturing in India/EU to qualify for duty-free access. Product-specific rules (PSRs) are fair, match current supply chains, ensure major work happens locally, and allow flexible global sourcing.

It simplifies business by letting Indian exporters self-certify origin via a simple statement—cutting time and costs. PSRs support MSMEs with quotas for shrimps/prawns and aluminium products, plus transition periods for machinery/aerospace to boost "Make in India."

Services- Driver of future growth

- The FTA ensures stable market access, fair treatment, digital services focus, and easier mobility for workers.
- EU commits deeply across 144 sub-sectors (IT/ITeS, professional services, education, business services), creating a stable EU market for Indian providers. India's high-tech services will boost exports while benefiting EU firms/consumers.
- India offers EU access in 102 sub-sectors (professional, telecom, maritime, finance, environment), enabling EU investments, innovation, and better services for Indian businesses.
- This mutual deal accelerates services trade, opens opportunities for Indian professionals, strengthens global presence, and drives innovation/skills growth.

Expanding Horizons for Indian Traditional Medicine

The FTA is expected to provide a boost to Indian traditional medicine services and practitioners. In the EU Member States where regulations do not exist, AYUSH practitioners will be able to provide their services using the professional qualifications they gain in India.

The FTA also provides future certainty and locks in the openness of the EU for establishment of AYUSH wellness centres and clinics in the EU Member States. The FTA also envisages greater exchange with the EU to facilitate trade in Indian Traditional Medicine services.

Ratification & Rollout

- **Legal Finalization:** Both sides complete "legal scrubbing" of texts (3-6 months); India seeks Cabinet nod, EU needs European Parliament and Council approval.
- **Timeline:** Provisional application by late 2026; full implementation early 2027, benefiting 2 billion people via stable trade rules.
- **Joint Mechanisms:** Bi-annual committee meetings to monitor progress, resolve disputes.

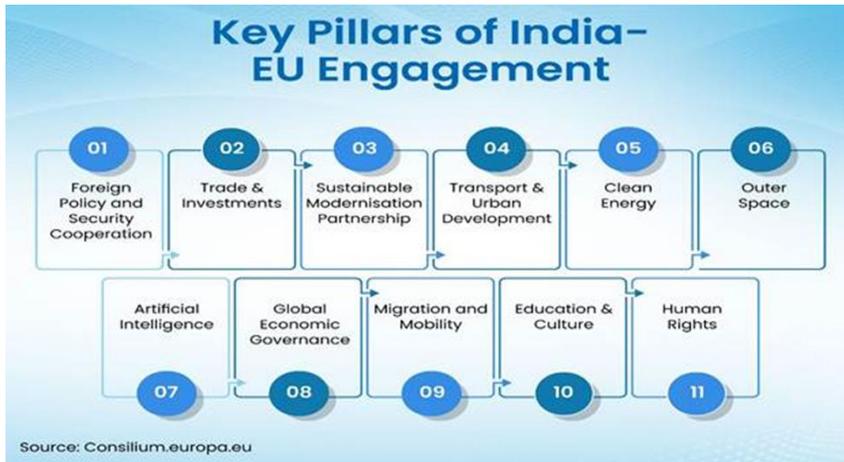
Sector	Opportunities	Expected Impact
Labour-Intensive Exports	Textiles, leather, marine → EU markets	1M+ jobs; value chain integration
High-Tech Imports	Semiconductors, machinery from EU	Lower input costs; manufacturing boost
Services	IT/ITeS, pros mobility	\$50B+ exports by 2030
Investment	EU FDI in infra, renewables	Viksit Bharat accelerato

Challenges and Mitigation

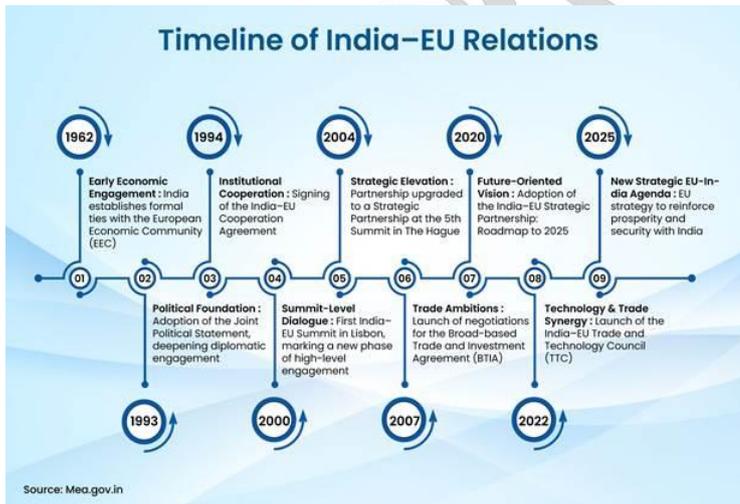
- Domestic Sensitivities:** India's farmers and dairy sectors face competition from EU's subsidized agri-exports (e.g., dairy products, poultry). Mitigation includes Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) limiting imports to manageable volumes with low/no duties, preventing market flooding. However, India has managed to safeguard its sensitive sector by keeping it out of the ambit of FTA but Auto and Steel plants need boost through production linked incentives to compete with EU manufacturers.
- Capacity building:** MSMEs is backbone of India's exports (textiles, gems) but it lacks FTA compliance know-how (e.g., self-certification, PSRs). Government training via Export Promotion Councils, digital portals for origin statements, tie-ups with EU chambers can help MSMEs in finding a firm ground.
- Geo-political edge:** FTA reduces India's China import reliance (e.g., electronics, chemicals) by diversifying to EU high-tech sources, stabilizing supply chains amid US-China tensions.

India-EU

India-EU ties are built on shared values like democracy, rule of law, multilateralism, and a rules-based world order. They span trade/investment, security/defense, climate/clean energy, digital shift, connectivity, science/tech, and people exchanges.



EU is India's top goods trading partner (\$136B in 2024-25) and key overall partner for goods/services. The 2020 'Roadmap to 2025' guides this evolving strategic partnership for mutual prosperity and global stability.



India-EU clean energy and climate ties focus on sustainability via the Clean Energy and Climate Partnership.

India-EU clean energy cooperation accelerates sustainable growth, blending shared tech, funding, and innovation to cut emissions, boost renewables, and build resilient infrastructure—paving the way for mutual net-zero success and global climate leadership.

25. Is India prepared for end of globalisation?

Context: the recent fiasco generated by the US compulsion to end oil-trade with Russia has brought India at a difficult crossroads. This exemplifies a shift in bilateral negotiations toward raw power plays. This reflects not just fractured global trade, but a crumbling political system that once governed it. Which means a possible end of globalisation.

Countries now treat trade like a power game: big surpluses mean strength, deficits mean weakness. Globalisation was more than just free trade—it shaped governments, markets, and global cooperation based on liberal and democratic values. That time is over.

New Order

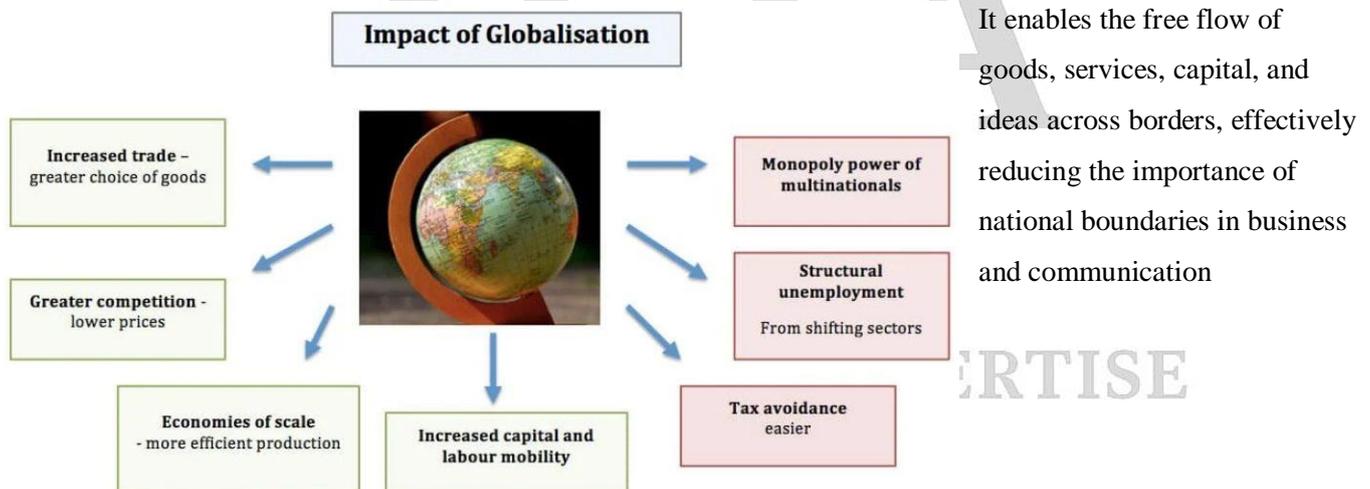
Early Global Trade: World economy globalized via force, not fairness—industrial nations built wealth through domestic exploitation and colonial extraction; trade heavily favored the rich.

Mid-20th Century Shift: Post-war, colonies gained independence (sovereignty > democracy); new global bodies created rules for world affairs.

Power in Disguise: Even dominant powers framed actions as promoting democracy, stability, or aid to maintain legitimacy.

Globalisation

Globalisation is a political system that defined how governments ran markets and societies, and how they engaged with each other and with networked global institutions that they had established.



Unintended Effects of Globalisation

- Capital vs. Wages Gap:** Profits soared for investors and corporations due to open markets, but worker wages stagnated. This widened inequality, eroding middle-class support for globalisation.
- Supply Chain Shifts:** Factories moved from high-wage (e.g., US/EU) to low-wage regions (e.g., Asia),

causing job losses in developed nations and booms elsewhere. Combined with migration surges, it sparked resentment.

- c. **Populist Backlash:** Economic losers fueled anti-globalist leaders promising protectionism, tariffs, and "taking back control" from elites and immigrants.

China's disruption

- a. **Selective Rule-Breaking:** China accessed WTO markets/tech without full reforms—state-owned firms dominated, labor repressed, internet censored maximizing gains while evading costs.
- b. **Surplus Model Harm:** Flooded world with cheap goods via overproduction (steel, solar), crushing competitors in India/Africa/SE Asia and blocking their industrial catch-up.
- c. **Alternative Powerhouse:** Proved authoritarian growth works without democracy; inspires nations seeking rapid power without liberal messiness.

Globalisation's Decline

- **Sovereignty Revival:** Leaders now reject "borderless" ideals for national-first policies—e.g., migration walls, subsidies (chips, green tech), friend-shoring.
- **Inward Turn:** Populist wins (US, Europe) prioritize domestic jobs over global efficiency; cooperation seen as zero-sum loss.
- **Era's End:** Post-WWII liberal order (GATT/WTO/IMF) replaced by bilateral bullying and blocs.

Impact on Developing World

- **Aid Weaponized:** Western donors tie climate/finance aid to migration controls or security pacts, ditching "global good."
- **Bargaining Weakened:** UN/WTO paralysis leaves India/Brazil negotiating alone vs. giants on emissions or tax havens.
- **Domestic Pressure:** Youth unemployment + rising expectations demand jobs/housing; elites risk unrest unless they deliver via pragmatic nationalism.

India's influence

India faces a precarious position in the emerging mercantilist global order: too large and populous to be dismissed, yet too economically underdeveloped to wield decisive influence.

- a. **Missed Demographic Window:** Over the past 15 years, India has been at the centre of demographic dividend. Instead of channeling it into manufacturing prowess or skill ecosystems, we've seen jobless growth, urban migration without opportunities, and a skills mismatch, leaving millions underemployed.
- b. **Deepening Inequality Trap:** The social structure has rigidified: a vast, impoverished base (rural

poor, informal workers) sustains a tiny elite apex (urban professionals, corporates). Limited trickle-down from GDP gains exacerbates this, Gini coefficient worsening, social mobility stagnant.

India retains edges in select arenas

- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** UPI, Aadhaar, ONDC as global models—exportable to Global South.
- **Renewables:** Solar leadership, green hydrogen push.
- **Services:** IT/ITeS, BPM giants; potential in education/health exports.
- **Democratic Decentralization:** Panchayati Raj innovations for local governance.

Without stronger state capability, greater social cohesion, and a social contract committed to sharing growth more evenly, India risks remaining a country that lays claim to being a Vishwaguru without the institutional foundations and economic means to achieve it. Rhetoric alone will not be enough.

26. India's consumption story has a wage growth problem

Context: The budget last year proposed a cut in income tax, later in the year GST reforms were rolled in. Despite these pragmatic measures, India's wage growth problem threatens consumption recovery as low inflation, flat pay hikes, rising household debt, and limited fiscal space weaken the foundations of sustained demand.

Government's efforts to push consumption

- 2025-26 Consumption Boost:** Income tax cuts (new regime); GST rationalisation in September to lower prices/stimulate demand.
- Demand Surge:** Consumer durables up, esp. vehicles; TransUnion CIBIL data shows 1.5x YoY loan demand during Dussehra-Diwali.
- Inflation Drop:** Headline retail at record 0.25% in October due to tax relief.
- Caveats:** Full tax benefits may not reach consumers; some demand is pent-up (delayed purchases post-cuts), potentially temporary.

RBI's November Consumer Confidence Survey (Nov 1-10) showed overall improvement in current situations and future expectations for rural/urban households vs. September.

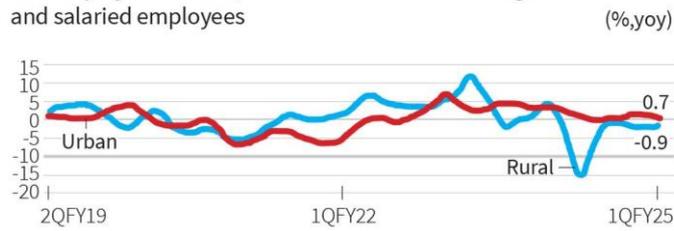
However, key details reveal weakness: Rural households reported worse current income/spending; urban households saw slight income gains but declining spending perceptions.

Inflation and growth

- **Common Narrative:** Urban demand subdued but recovering; rural demand strong due to good monsoon.
- **Data Support:** Real rural wage growth hit 4.1% in Q1 FY26 (Labour Bureau), up from zero average prior 3 years.

An Uneven Uptick in Indian Workers' Wages

The average real wage growth was tepid yet steady at 0.7% in Q1 of 2024-25, but wages declined for rural and self-employed workers, and rose a mere 0.4% for regular and salaried employees



Key Driver: Sharp inflation drop—rural CPI averaged 2.4% (Apr-Jun 2025) vs. 5.5% last year.

- **Nominal Growth:** Rural wages up 6.5% in Q1, highest since mid-2023 must sustain for real momentum.

Household Debt Strains Consumption

- **RBI curbed unsecured personal loans in Nov 2023 after retail lending boom.**
- **Financial liabilities rose from 3.9% GDP (2019-20) to 6.2% (2023-24), now at 4.7% (2024-25).**
- **Net financial assets hit multi-decade low of 4.9% GDP (2022-23), recovered to 6% (2024-25).**

Debt Burden

Real personal bank debt grew 2.9x (FY09-FY23) vs. 1.9x industrial wage rise; reached 3.6x by FY25.

Household debt-to-income ratio signals balance sheet stress.

Investment Impact

Rising debt uncertainty deters private capex—businesses hesitate to expand capacity without clear demand foundation.

Indian households increasingly rely on borrowing amid post-pandemic financial stress, raising concerns for sustained demand.

Way forward

India needs sustained policy pushes to build genuine private consumption beyond short-term boosts.

- Sustain Rural Momentum:** Extend agri-schemes (PM-KISAN hikes), skill programs for non-farm jobs; target 7%+ nominal wage growth.
- Boost Urban Demand:** Capex on housing/urban infra to create jobs; rationalize GST further on essentials/mid-segment goods.

- c. **Formalize Employment:** Incentives for MSMEs to hire via EPF/ESIC cuts; expand MGNREGA with skill linkages.
- d. **Monitor True Trends:** Track PLI/FMCG volumes (not just value), real wage consistency beyond inflation dips.
- e. **Budget 2026-27 Focus:** Shift to investment-led growth—₹13 lakh cr capex, PLI expansion—while maintaining tax relief for middle class.

India's consumption recovery shows promise from tax cuts and rural wage gains, but mixed signals on confidence and pent-up demand warn against complacency. True revival demands sustained real wage growth, formal jobs, and investment-led policies. Budget 2026-27 must pivot from relief to broad-based momentum for lasting private demand.

27. Solution to falling Rupee lies in diplomacy

Context: The rupee's sharp depreciation has rattled markets and households alike, puzzling many given India's solid growth, low inflation, and manageable current account deficit.

Economic Indicator	Current Status (2025-26)	Comparison
GDP Growth	7.4%	Strong
CPI Inflation	1.33% (4 months < RBI target)	Subdued
Current Account Deficit	0.76% GDP (H1 FY26)	Down from 1.35% last year
Rupee Value	-6% since April 2025	Sharp fall

India's trade deficit widened slightly to \$96.58B (Apr-Dec 2025) from \$88.43B last year, but the rupee's 6% fall is mainly due to capital outflows.

- **Rupee Decline Amid Strong Economy:** Rupee fell ~6% since April 2025, despite 7.4% growth, CPI inflation at 1.33% (below RBI target for 4 months), and current account deficit at 0.76% of GDP (H1 FY26) vs. 1.35% prior year.
- **Trade Deficit Not Primary Cause:** Rose modestly to \$96.58B (Apr-Dec 2025) from \$88.43B last year; not large enough to drive rupee fall.

- **Main Culprit: Capital Outflows:** Net inflows \$10,615M (Apr-Dec 2024) flipped to \$3,900M outflow in 2025; triggered by US policies under Trump.
- **US Tariff Actions on India:**
 - Initial 25% "reciprocal" tariff on Indian exports.
 - Additional 25% due to India's Russian crude oil imports.
 - Threat of another 25% on countries trading with Iran (India's trade with Iran: 0.15% of total).
- **Failed Negotiations:** Months of US-India talks yielded no resolution; ongoing stalemate risks further rupee depreciation. There seem to have been issues that could not be resolved easily. If this stalemate continues, the rupee will continue to fall.
- **Shift from Economics to Geopolitics:** Unlike 2022's 10% fall, capital outflows are caused not by strict economic factors but by fears generated by the 'hostile' attitude of the U.S. Thus, the situation has shifted from the economic arena to the diplomatic platform. When tariffs are getting weaponised for geopolitical reasons, diplomacy is the major route for a solution.

RBI intervention

India's exchange rate regime changed in 1993, moving to a market-determined system. However, this doesn't stop the RBI from intervening in the foreign exchange market. All RBI Governors since then have stressed that interventions aim to reduce rupee volatility, not to peg its value.

However, the word 'volatility' was never defined therefore it can be deduced from RBI's actions that reducing volatility means more than curbing ups and downs around the current rate. It also involves moderating sharp drops in the rupee's value. Sudden shocks from fluctuations harm the economy, so interventions aim to minimize their impact. Even so, the RBI doesn't prevent falls—it allows the rupee to decline smoothly to its appropriate level.

What must the RBI do?

RBI claims interventions only smooth volatility (swings), not target a specific rate. But "moderating falls" admits they soften depreciation speed, indirectly supporting a higher rupee level. Asymmetric intervention (e.g., selling dollars heavily during drops, buying less during rises) achieves this dual effect: curbing volatility while nudging the rate upward.

Devaluation cannot be a remedy

Devaluation is a deliberate, official reduction in a currency's value against others, typically by a government or central bank in fixed (or pegged) exchange rate systems.

Depreciation is a market-driven fall in a floating currency's value due to supply-demand forces like outflows or trade gaps (India's current rupee drop to ~92/USD from US tariffs).

- a. **Rising Import Content in Exports:** Devaluation usually boosts exports by making them cheaper abroad. However, India's exports now rely heavily on imported inputs (e.g., electronics components), so a weaker rupee raises those costs, muting the net stimulus to exporters.
- b. **Blocked US Market Access:** High US tariffs (50% on Indian goods) prevent exporters from gaining much share there, even with a cheaper rupee—price competitiveness gets nullified by duties. Full tariff impacts loom larger in FY27.
- c. **Inflation from Essential Imports:** Most imports are necessities: crude oil alone is ~25% of merchandise imports, so rupee falls hike fuel/energy prices, fueling inflation despite low baseline CPI (1.33%). No broad import substitution cushions this.
- d. **No Inflation Gap Justification:** Devaluation corrects for relative inflation via REER (real effective exchange rate), but India's inflation matches or beats Western levels, no wide disparity demands it. Undervaluing like China risks "manipulation" accusations.
- e. **Geopolitical Trigger, Not Fundamentals:** The recent sharp rupee drop (about 1-2% in the past month as of Feb 2026) isn't driven by domestic economic weaknesses like high inflation or deficits, but by market panic over escalating US trade barriers.

Way forward

India needs a multi-pronged strategy to counter rupee pressure from US tariffs, outflows, and external shocks in 2026.

- a. **Fixing US-India trade deal:** US has already cut tariffs from 50% to 18%, This drops duties to 15-20% on key exports. Diplomatic dialogue can further help in controlling the value of Rupee.
- b. **Diversification:** India has signed FTA with EU and UK in recent past. India should keep ASEAN and other regional groups in close trade proximity to be able to stabilise the value of its currency.

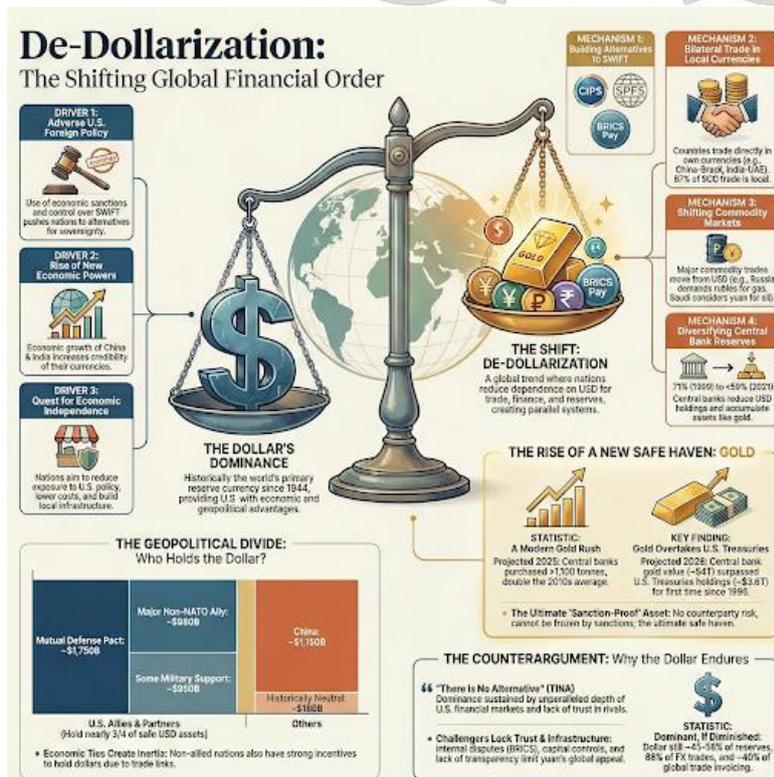
Capital outflows from foreign investors selling stocks/bonds are the main force weakening the rupee right now, tied directly to US tariff fears. Outflows often mean stock sales, crashing indices (Sensex/Nifty down 5-10% on heavy FPI dumps), eroding wealth and confidence which further fuels exit. Thus, India must resort to diplomatic channels for overall economic good.

28. De-Dollarisation: Gold shift in Global Forex

Context: Amid escalating US sanctions, geopolitical tensions, and a softening dollar, central banks worldwide are diversifying reserves away from USD toward gold speeding up de-dollarization.

Gold Price Surge

- **Record High Reached:** Gold prices crossed \$5,000/oz for the first time, despite a weakening US dollar at four-month lows.
- **Diverse Buying Forces:** Surge fueled by households hedging inflation, plus heavy central bank purchases worldwide.
- **Central Banks Lead Shift:** Major banks (e.g., RBI, China, Russia) aggressively stockpile gold, marking a strategic reserve diversification.



What's happening?

The US President's policies and sanctions are driving Central Banks of countries to hedge gold as trust in US dollar is dissipating.

US Dollar Debasement Drivers

- a. **Trade Protectionism & Sanctions:** Trump's tariffs and economic coercion undermine dollar neutrality, pushing investors toward alternatives.
- b. **Multipolar World Emergence:** Rise of BRICS and non-USD trade erodes greenback dominance amid global shifts.
- c. **Trump's Paradoxical Stance:** Threatens BRICS with tariffs for de-dollarization pursuits, yet his policies fuel doubts about USD reliability.

De-Dollarization Acceleration

- **Russia Reserves Freeze (2022):** US froze Russia's FX reserves post-Ukraine invasion, exposing dollar assets to geopolitical seizure, prompting nations to question USD safety and seek alternatives.
- **Heightened Global Concerns:** This weaponization of reserves alarmed emerging markets, accelerating diversification into gold, yuan, or euros to avoid similar sanctions risks.
- **Gradual IMF-Measured Decline:** Dollar's share in global FX reserves dropped to 58.5% (2024)—lowest in 30 years from 71% (1999)—as central banks steadily rebalance portfolios for resilience.

Way forward

- a. **Diplomacy First:** Secure US trade deal by April 2026 (framework signed; tariffs eyed at 15-20%) to halt outflows and rally rupee to 87-88/USD. Leverage BRICS 2026 presidency for rupee/yuan settlements, digital currency links reducing USD oil import costs.
- b. **RBI Stabilization:** Allow gradual depreciation (89-93/USD range) to offset tariffs while selling reserves (\$693B) to smooth volatility; build buffers via bond index inflows (\$25B expected). Target REER stability within 5%.
- c. **Diversify and Boost Inflows:** Cut US Treasury exposure further; ramp gold/EUR buys. Promote export resilience (ASEAN/EU FTAs), import substitution (oil), and FDI via eased norms—capitalizing on 7%+ growth.
- d. **Long-Term Resilience:** Advance rupee internationalization (UPI global, SRVAs); hedge de-dollarization risks with multipolar trade for remittance/FDI stability.

India must navigate rupee weakness, US tariffs, outflows, and de-dollarization with balanced diplomacy, monetary tools, and diversification.

Agriculture

29. India's Rice dominance comes with a hidden cost

Context: India has surpassed China as the world's top rice producer in 2024–25, with output reaching ~150 million metric tonnes which is nearly 28% of global production.

Hidden Costs

This surge from a decade ago highlights China's stagnant production, but brings risks: paddy's profitability drives expansion into water-scarce areas, yields vary sharply by state, and dominance threatens water stress, crop diversity, and nutritional security.

Steady Rise in India's Rice Production- Reasons

- a. Long-Term Growth Trend – India's rice output has grown consistently since the Green Revolution era. Between 1969–70 and 2024–25, the area under paddy expanded by over 36%, yields tripled, and total production rose nearly fourfold.
- b. Sharp Expansion in the Last Five Years – The most notable surge occurred recently. Paddy area increased from 43.66 million hectares in 2019–20 to 51.42 million hectares in 2024–25, while production jumped from 118.87 to 150 million metric tonnes.
- c. Growing Global Share – As output rose, India's share of global rice production climbed from 21.95% in 2011 to about 28% in 2024, placing it just ahead of China and far above other producers



India's Global Dominance: The Largest Rice Exporter in the World

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like Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Rice Stockpile Excess

India's central pool holds massive rice reserves, outstripping food security needs.

- **Record Levels:** As of Jan 1, 2026, stocks reached 63.06 million metric tonnes (including unmilled paddy), driven by production surges and heavy procurement.

- **Beyond Norms:** Far exceeds Jan 1 buffer requirement (7.61M tonnes) and annual NFSA/welfare needs (~37.2M tonnes).
- **Reduction Attempts:** Government pushes open-market sales and ethanol diversion, yet surpluses persist.
- **Regional Concentration:** FCI procured 52.55M tonnes in 2023–24 kharif (38% of output), with >50% from Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha.

Government Role in Paddy Boom

- **High MSP Guarantee:** ₹2,300/quintal for common paddy ensures stable, attractive prices for farmers.
- **Strong Procurement:** Rice gets reliable government buying, unlike riskier alternative crops.
- **Cheap Power Subsidies:** Free/subsidized electricity cuts irrigation costs, favoring water-heavy paddy.
- **Farmer Risk Aversion:** Assured returns make paddy safer than uncertain diversified

Is Paddy Production environmentally sustainable?

- **Water-Guzzler Crop:** Needs 3,000-5,000 liters per kg, straining scarce resources.
- **Groundwater Drain:** Punjab sees rapid depletion from over-pumping for irrigation.
- **Wrong Regions:** Spreads to water-stressed states unfit for paddy agro-climatically.
- **Soil Degradation:** Mono-cropping harms soil health and drops water tables.

Rice and its domination in Indian Agriculture

- **Massive Scale:** Grown across 600+ districts on 51.4M hectares—dwarfing wheat and other major crops.
- **MSP Security:** Guaranteed procurement at Minimum Support Price yields higher net returns per hectare than maize or moong.
- **Alternatives Lag:** Stagnant yields in cotton and others trail global benchmarks, dimming their promise.

- **Export Powerhouse:** World's top rice exporter; shipped 6M tonnes basmati (\$5.9B) and 14.13M tonnes non-basmati (\$6.5B) in 2024-25 to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, UAE, US, UK, and more.

Need for diversification in Indian Agriculture

India urgently needs agricultural diversification to counter paddy's dominance amid environmental, economic, and food security risks.

- Environmental Sustainability:** Paddy's massive water use (3,000-5,000L/kg) depletes groundwater (e.g., Punjab crisis) and degrades soil via monocropping—diversification restores fertility through rotation and cuts chemical inputs.
- Economic Resilience:** MSP bias locks farmers into low-yield paddy; alternatives like pulses/millets offer higher returns per water unit, reduce market risks, and tap exports beyond rice.
- Food and Nutritional Security:** Rice surplus (63M tonnes vs. 37M need) crowds out nutritious crops; growing fruits, vegetables, oilseeds ensure balanced diets, fights malnutrition, and stabilizes central pool stocks
- Climate Adaptation:** Single-crop vulnerability to droughts/pests worsens with climate change—diverse portfolios (horticulture, legumes) boost yields, biodiversity, and farmer incomes long-term.

Way forward

Promoting Oilseeds and Pulses

- The strategy prioritises oilseeds and pulses to reduce India's heavy dependence on edible oil imports.
- These crops would be promoted in a phased manner, aligned with agro-climatic suitability and soil conditions, to ensure sustainable transitions for farmers.

30. Himachal Pradesh seeks full import duty to shield

Domestic Apple growers

Context: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister has urged the Centre to raise import duty on foreign apples from 50% to 100% and impose a seasonal ban on imports from July to November to protect about 2.5 lakh apple farmers. Apples account for nearly 80% of the state's fruit output.

The Centre slashed import duty on New Zealand apples to 25% for April–August under the India–New Zealand FTA, prompting local apple growers to demand a rise in import duty, to shield against surging imports which will affect demand for domestic apples.

India-New-Zealand FTA

- Under the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, India has reduced import duty on New Zealand apples from 50% to 25% under a quota system.
- The quota starts at 32,500 tonnes in the first year and rises to 45,000 MT by the sixth year.
- Imports must meet a minimum import price of \$1.25 (₹113.6) per kg, while shipments beyond the quota will continue to attract the higher 50% duty

Apple production in India

State/Region	Annual Output (LMT)	Economy Value (₹ Crore)	Notes
Jammu & Kashmir	~20	~12,000	Dominant producer; highly vulnerable to imports
Himachal Pradesh	5–6	~4,500	Major contributor; tariff-sensitive
Uttarakhand & NE	~2	Not specified	Nascent cultivation; minor share



Farmers Concern

Apple growers fear New Zealand shipments flooding India's off-season market due to duty cuts.

- **Timing Overlap:** India harvests July–November; NZ supplies fresh apples Feb–May, competing with stored Indian stock in cold storage/CA facilities.
- **Price Pressure:** 25% duty (Apr–Aug) makes imports cheaper than domestic apples, hitting sales during key periods.
- **Peak Vulnerability:** J&K's Gala (June) and Royal Delicious

(Sep) face direct rivalry as imports align with marketing peaks.

- **Cheaper imports will depress domestic prices, reduce market share:** It will hit farmers hardest during the off-season, undermining incomes in India's key apple-producing regions

Beyond Import Challenge

- Climate Stress and Falling Yields** – Apple production in HP and J&K has been hit hard by climate change, erratic weather, reduced snowfall, prolonged dry spells, floods, cloudbursts and landslides. These factors have weakened orchards and lowered productivity.
- Rising Disease Burden** – Changing climatic conditions have led to a surge in plant diseases such as fire blight, apple scab, powdery mildew, sooty blotch and bitter rot. Reduced snowfall and higher temperatures have worsened water scarcity, increasing disease vulnerability during dry seasons.
- Production Losses and Quality Decline** – In 2023, Himachal's apple output fell to 4.84 LMT, nearly 28% lower than 2022, following devastating floods. Although production recovered to 6.87 LMT in 2025, excessive rainfall and disasters caused quality deterioration, with nearly 1 LMT rejected for poor size and quality.
- Infrastructure and Transport Bottlenecks** – Logistical disruptions have compounded farmers' problems.

Unlike New Zealand's heavily subsidized and insured apple sector, Indian farmers lack comparable direct aid, leaving them exposed to tariff concessions. Therefore, rather than ramping up foreign competition, India should prioritize domestic resilience through enhanced subsidies, productivity tech (e.g., high-density planting), crop insurance expansion, and market safeguards to protect J&K and Himachal's ₹16,500 crore apple economy while honoring trade commitments.

Defence and Security

31. Exercise DOSTI 17

In News: Exercise Dosti 17 (January 2026) is a biennial trilateral coast guard exercise between India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives held in Male.

About DOSTI

It is a trilateral coast guard exercise between India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka focused on strengthening maritime security in the Indian Ocean. It aims to enhance interoperability against non-traditional threats like piracy and smuggling, reinforcing India's SAGAR doctrine.

DOSTI-17 and Indian Ocean Maritime Cooperation: Exercise DOSTI-17 marks a renewed phase of maritime cooperation among India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. The trilateral exercise is being conducted in Malé, the capital of Maldives, reflecting deepening regional trust and coordination.

The drill strengthens collective security mechanisms in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), one of the world's most strategically significant maritime zones. The region carries a major share of global trade routes and energy transportation corridors, making maritime stability critical.

The Indian Ocean is the world's third-largest ocean and connects Asia, Africa, and Australia through vital sea lanes.

Focus

The exercise focuses on **operational coordination, communication interoperability, and mutual trust-building**. Core activities include **search and rescue operations, maritime surveillance drills, and communication exercises**.

These components strengthen the capacity of participating forces to respond collectively to emergencies and maritime threats.

Maritime Security Dimensions

The exercise directly addresses **non-traditional maritime threats** such as **piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, maritime accidents, and marine pollution**. These threats often transcend national boundaries and require coordinated responses.

Joint drills improve **crisis response time, information sharing systems, and command coordination structures**.

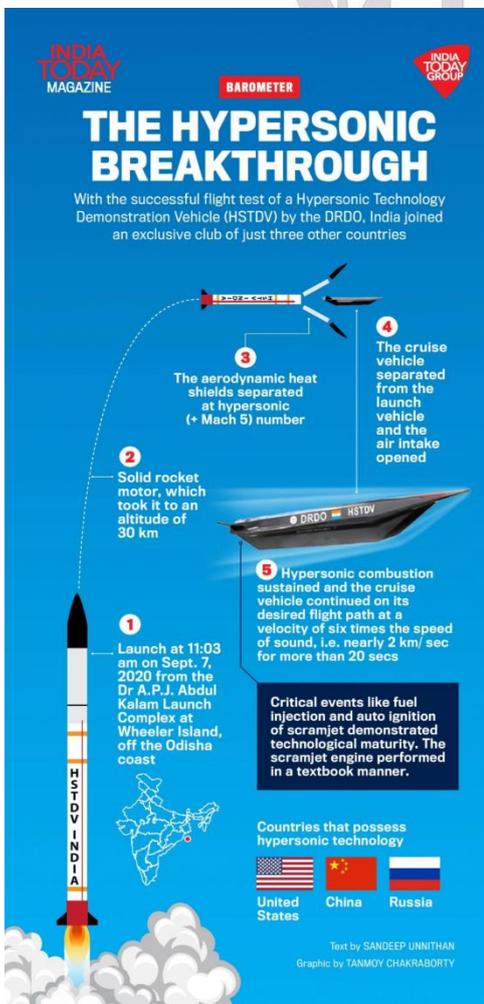
This enhances the region's overall **maritime domain awareness**, allowing better monitoring of shared waters.

SAGAR



SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) is India's 2015 maritime doctrine for the Indian Ocean Region, aimed at fostering a secure, peaceful, and prosperous, open Indo-Pacific. It positions India as a net security provider, focusing on enhancing capacity-building, maritime security against piracy and terrorism, and economic cooperation with littoral states.

32. DRDO's Hypersonic Glide Missile



In News: At the 77th Republic Day Parade on Kartavya Path, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) unveiled the Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM) for the first time.

LR-AShM: India's Hypersonic Glide Missile

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) showcased the Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM) along with its launcher.

The system is tailored to meet the Indian Navy's coastal battery requirements and can engage both static and moving targets at ranges of up to 1,500 km, carrying multiple payload options.

- **Speed and Flight Profile:** It reaches **Mach 10** initially and maintains an average Mach 5, performing multiple **atmospheric "skips"** that enhance range and unpredictability.

- **Range and Targets:** The missile can engage both static and moving targets and has a range of **about 1,500 km**, with future variants **planned up to 3,500 km**.

- **Stealth and Survivability:** Flying at **low altitude with extreme speed** and manoeuvrability, the missile is **difficult** for enemy ground-based and ship-based radars **to detect or intercept**.
- **Propulsion System:** The missile uses a **two-stage solid rocket motor**—Stage-1 separates after burnout, while Stage-2 boosts the missile before it enters an unpowered hypersonic glide phase.

- **Aerodynamic Efficiency:** High aerodynamic efficiency allows the missile to minimise drag while maintaining lift and control, enabling greater speed, range, and accuracy with optimal energy use.

33. Strategic Defence Partnership amid West Asia turbulence

Context: Amid rising tensions in West Asia—like wars in Gaza and Yemen, plus trouble in Iran—India and UAE took their friendship to the next level. UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) visited Delhi briefly, and both countries signed a deal to start a strong defence partnership.

Key Highlights of the meet

- Strategic defence partnership:** Letter of Intent signed to work towards a framework agreement, which builds on regular bilateral military exercises, exchange of Service Chiefs, and defence-industrial cooperation.
India clarified that the partnership is a natural evolution, not a response to any specific conflict, and it does not imply Indian military involvement in Gulf conflicts.
- Trade and economic cooperation:** Target to double bilateral trade to \$200 billion by 2032, which stands at \$100 billion (FY 2024–25), due to momentum driven by India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA, 2022)
- Energy cooperation:** HPCL signed a 10-year deal with UAE's ADNOC to buy 0.5 million metric tonnes of LNG every year starting 2028. This makes UAE India's No. 2 LNG supplier, boosting our energy security.
- Civil Nuclear cooperation:** India and UAE are exploring nuclear ties, including big reactors, Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), safety, and maintenance. This will happen through India's SHANTI Act, which boosts nuclear energy growth.
- Space ties:** IN-SPACe (India) and UAE Space Agency signed LoI for joint missions, commercial services, ecosystem integration, startups, and skilled jobs.
- Digital/Financial Links:** Proposal for Digital/Data Embassies to safeguard data; link payment systems for quick cross-border transactions.
Backing Bharat Mart, Virtual Trade Corridor, Bharat–Africa Setu.
- Anti-Terror & Finance:** Zero tolerance reaffirmed for all terrorism, including cross-border. Cooperation on FATF terror financing rules and anti-money laundering.

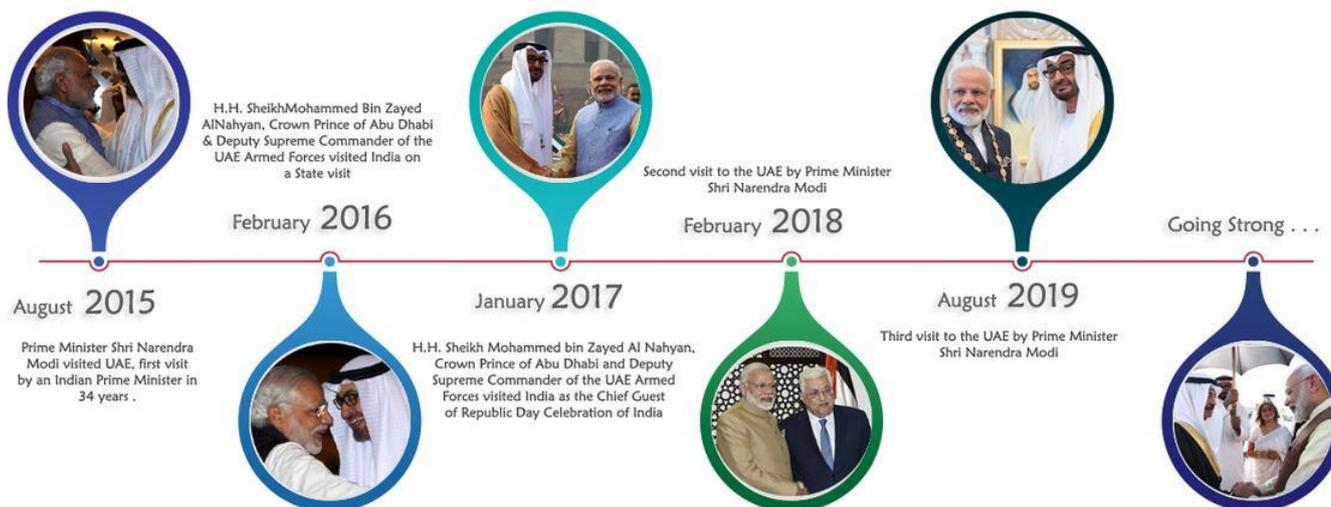
Importance of the visit

- Strengthens Core Partnership:** Elevates India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership via defence LoI, LNG deal, nuclear, space deals.
- Regional Stability:** Amid Gaza, Yemen, Iran unrest, reaffirms zero-tolerance on terrorism, FATF cooperation; UAE backs India's 2026 BRICS chair, India supports UAE's UN Water Conference—balancing Gulf ties.
- Economic Boost:** Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPA), people-to-people bond, trust in investments will further help in building economic ties.

India-UAE Relations



UAE-India Relations Have Strengthened in the Past 5 Years



YOUR ZEAL • OUR EXPERTISE

Environment and Ecology

34. India's progress on climate targets

Context: in the background of the Aravali judgement wherein the Supreme Court has restricted mining operations has also shifted the focus on India's progress on climate targets.



Paris Summit

India pledged four key climate targets at the 2015 Paris Summit under "common but differentiated responsibilities," noting its low per capita emissions despite being the third-largest absolute emitter.

India successfully lowered its emissions intensity (the amount of greenhouse gases released per unit of GDP) by about 36% between 2005 and 2020.

This beat its Paris target of 33-35% reduction early, ahead of 2030, signalling efficient "cleaner" growth despite expanding economy and emissions.

Drivers of Emissions Intensity Drop

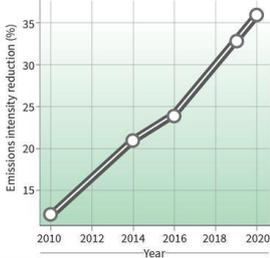
- Non-Fossil Power Surge:** Rapid growth in solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear cut electricity's carbon footprint—non-fossil capacity hit 43% by 2023 and ~50% by mid-2025.
- Services Sector Shift:** Economy moved toward low-carbon services and digital industries, lowering emissions per rupee of GDP.
- Efficiency Programs:** PAT (industry) and UJALA (LED lighting) reduced energy demand, saving electricity and avoiding emissions in FY2020-21.

India reduced emissions per unit of GDP by 36% (2005-2020), hitting its target early. But total emissions stayed high at more than 2,959 MtCO₂e in 2020 and beyond which meant cleaner growth per rupee, yet overall pollution volume remains large due to expanding economy and population. This phenomenon is called partial decoupling

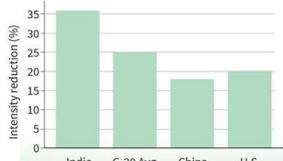
Climate promises

While India has achieved meaningful progress on specific metrics, they also obscure fundamental problems. The intensity gains achieved coexist with rising absolute emissions, and renewable capacity expansion has not translated into a proportional share of generation due to the entrenched baseload of coal

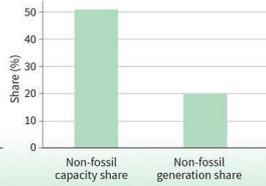
Emissions-intensity trajectory (2005 baseline)



Comparative intensity trajectories: India versus selected G-20 peers



Installed non-fossil capacity (%) versus actual generation share (%) (2024-25)



Consequences of partial decoupling

- India's economy grew faster than its emissions, so pollution per rupee of GDP dropped—without total emissions falling overall.
- This creates problems: national averages hide big differences by sector. Cement, steel, and transport emissions keep rising, even as power sector CO₂ growth slowed in 2024-25.

Roadblocks to achieving climate targets:

- Absolute emissions challenge:** Despite achieving a 33% reduction in emissions intensity by 2023, India's absolute emissions rose to ~3.35 Gt CO₂e in 2024, driven by rising electricity demand. Rapid GDP growth allows intensity to fall even as total emissions increase, shrinking the national carbon budget.
- Coal-based baseload power lock-in:** Coal remains central to energy security, with ~219 GW installed capacity contributing over 65% of electricity output. Planned addition of ~80 GW of coal capacity by 2031–32 risks long-term carbon lock-ins, delaying structural decarbonisation.
- Storage and grid constraints:** High renewable capacity is undermined by weak storage and transmission. While solar crossed 110 GW, operational BESS remains under 0.3 GWh against multi-gigawatt needs, and a 42% shortfall in transmission commissioning (FY25) limits renewable evacuation.
- Implementation and forest governance gaps:** CAMPA fund utilisation remains poor, with states spending only a fraction of released funds. Afforestation is often plantation-centric, neglecting natural regeneration, making forest carbon sinks ecologically fragile under drought and fire stress.

Way forward

- **Scaling energy storage and grid modernisation:** Fast-track the National Electricity Transmission Plan to integrate 500 GW of non-fossil capacity. Achieving 74 GW of BESS and 50 GW of pumped hydro by 2032, supported by VGF for storage, is critical to convert capacity into reliable generation.
- **Transparent coal transition roadmap:** Accelerate retirement of old and inefficient thermal plants, building on the 4.6 GW decommissioned by 2025. Repurposing abandoned coal mines for solar and pumped storage can enable a just transition for coal-dependent regions.

- **Industrial decarbonisation through green hydrogen:** Leverage the National Green Hydrogen Mission (₹19,744 crore) to decarbonise steel, fertilisers, and refining. The 5 MMT annual hydrogen target by 2030, backed by the SIGHT incentives, can structurally cut hard-to-abate emissions.
- **Reforming forest and carbon policy:** Operationalise the Indian Carbon Market (2025) with binding sectoral targets to drive cost-effective mitigation. Shift CAMPA focus from plantations to Assisted Natural Regeneration and biodiversity-rich forests for resilient, long-term carbon sinks.

35. Marching towards Himalayan Ecocide

Context: The Himalayan region is reeling from surging climate disasters, claiming over 4,000 lives in 2025 alone. Projects like the Char Dham highway, pushing deeper into fragile ecosystems, fuel fears of an environmental catastrophe fueled by reckless development.

What is Ecocide?

Ecocide refers to the large-scale, deliberate destruction or damage to ecosystems or the environment, often by human actions like deforestation, pollution, or infrastructure projects.

Aspect	Details
Legal Push	Proposed 5th ICC crime (with genocide, war crimes); "unlawful/wanton acts" causing severe, widespread, long-term environmental harm.
Examples	Oil spills, Amazon deforestation, Himalayan highways triggering landslides/glacial melt.
Status	Crime in 11+ countries (e.g., Vanuatu); global push for ICC enforcement against leaders/corporations.

- **Essential Elements:** Ecocide involves environmental damage affecting large geographical areas and ecological systems.
 - The damage caused is long-term or irreversible in nature.
 - The harm results in serious disruption of ecosystem functions and human livelihoods.
 - The destruction arises directly from anthropogenic actions, including those of states, corporations, or individuals.

Himalayan Crisis Factors

The Himalayas face escalating environmental risks from climate change amplifying the region's natural vulnerabilities.

Climate as "Force Multiplier"

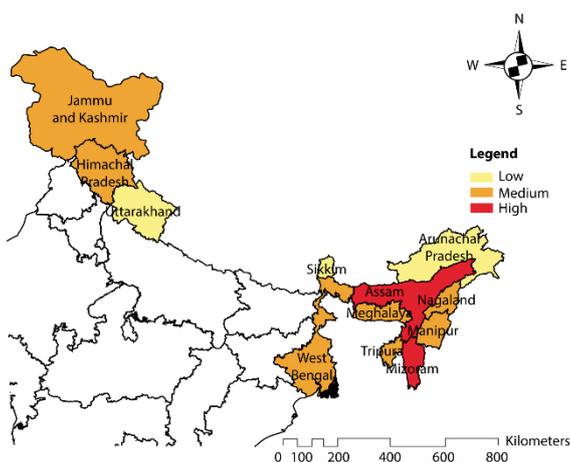
Himalayas are unstable by nature; climate change worsens landslides, floods, GLOFs (glacial lake outburst floods) by melting glaciers, intensifying monsoons, and destabilizing permafrost—turning routine hazards into disasters (e.g., 2025's 4,000+ deaths).

Geological Fragility

- Young Fold Mountains:** Formed 40-50M years ago, still tectonically active with thin, weak rock layers prone to cracking under stress.
- High Seismic Zones:** Zones IV-V cover most (90%+ risk of major quakes); frequent tremors (e.g., 2015 Nepal 7.8) shatter slopes.
- Unstable Lithology:** Loose sedimentary/fragile metamorphic rocks erode easily; heavy rains trigger massive slides.
- Active Fault Lines:** Main Central Thrust (MCT)—a 2,400km mega-thrust where Indian plate rams Eurasia—fuels constant micro-quakes and deep instability, making highways like Char Dham high-risk.

About Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)

Figure 5: Vulnerability index of IHR States



Geographical Spread: The IHR is spread across 13 Indian States and Union Territories (UTs).

Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Assam, and West Bengal.

It stretches over 2,500 km in length and covers about 16% of India's geographical area.

Population and Diversity: Home to nearly 50 million people.

Inhabited by diverse ethnic communities such as Ladakhis, Bhutias of Sikkim, Tibetan Buddhists, and Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, each with unique cultures, languages, and traditions. Known for pluralistic demographic, economic, environmental, social, and political systems.

36. India become first country to commercially produce bio-bitumen

In News: India has become the first country in the world to commercially produce bio-bitumen in road construction.

Facts & Figures

What is Bitumen?

Bitumen is a black substance produced through distillation of crude oil and is widely used to bind surfaces of paved road



3.21 MT

India's import of Bitumen in 2022-2023

5.24 MT

India's indigenous bitumen production in the last FY

Developed by CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) using agricultural waste, this eco-friendly, sustainable alternative to petroleum-based bitumen aims to reduce pollution from stubble burning, cut import dependence, and strengthen the "Waste to Wealth" initiative.

About Bitumen

Bitumen is a black, viscous mixture of hydrocarbons produced by the fractionation

of crude oil, and it serves as a crucial binder in road construction.

- Bio-bitumen is a bio-binder produced from agricultural or biomass residue, such as paddy straw, using a thermal process called pyrolysis.
- In this process, biomass is heated without oxygen, breaking it into bio-oil, gases, and char; the bio-oil fraction is refined and blended with conventional bitumen for use in asphalt.
- Bio-bitumen can be blended (e.g., 20–30% with petroleum bitumen) and meets performance standards after rigorous testing for durability, rutting, cracking, and moisture resistance.

Significance

- a. Environmental Benefits:** Reduces air pollution by providing an alternate use for crop residue that otherwise contributes to stubble burning.

Lowers lifecycle carbon emissions compared to fossil-based bitumen and supports the transition to clean, green highways.

- b. Economic and Strategic Gains:** Reduces dependence on imported bitumen, which India currently imports in large quantities, costing an estimated ₹25,000–₹30,000 crore annually.

Blending even 15% bio-bitumen can save foreign exchange and enhance rural livelihoods by converting agricultural waste into valuable inputs.

c. **Circular Economy and Rural Benefits**

Aligns with circular economy principles, creating value from waste and promoting sustainable resource utilisation.

Opens new income streams for farmers and supports rural employment through biomass collection and processing.

Strategic Impact

- **Viksit Bharat 2047 Alignment:** Advances sustainable infrastructure for a developed India by 2047, blending green tech, self-reliance, and innovation.
- **Science-Government-Industry Synergy:** Showcases seamless collaboration—MoRTH and MoST back full-scale rollout after CSIR labs' success.
- **Atmanirbhar Boost:** Cuts fossil fuel imports by replacing imported bitumen with farm-waste alternative, building domestic green material expertise.

Challenges

- a. **Policy Mandates & Incentives:** Governments must enact rules requiring a minimum bio-bitumen blend (e.g., 10-20%) in national highway contracts and state roads—similar to ethanol blending targets. Tax breaks, priority tenders, and subsidies for refineries adopting the tech would accelerate uptake, mirroring PAT scheme success in industry efficiency.
- b. **Biomass Supply Chains:** Reliable feedstock is key: Partner with farmers for year-round crop residues (rice straw, sugarcane bagasse, cotton stalks)—avoiding competition with food crops. Set up 100+ regional collection centers linked to CSIR pyrolysis plants; use apps for tracking to cut waste and fires (e.g., Punjab stubble burning).
- c. **Tackling Variability & Logistics:** Seasonal farm waste gluts (post-harvest Oct-Dec) need storage silos and modular pyrolysis units that run 24/7. Build 500km road/rail networks to refineries; invest ₹5,000 crore for 50 plants producing 1M tonnes/year by 2030—cutting import bills by \$500M while creating 50K green jobs in rural areas.

India's commercial production of bio-bitumen represents a landmark in sustainable infrastructure innovation, with environmental, economic, and strategic benefits. While this milestone demonstrates leadership in green technology adoption, the next steps will involve policy mainstreaming, scaling of production, and integration into national highway programmes to achieve meaningful impact on emissions, rural economy, and self-reliant growth.

37. Green steel can shape India's climate Goals trajectory

Context: At COP30 in Belém, Brazil last year India announced its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)—its emissions cut roadmap to the UN. This is a good time for India to become a global leader by pairing ambitious targets with concrete, credible plans for full-economy decarbonization especially tough sectors like steel, cement, and transport that lag power sector gains.

India's tryst with Steel

- a. **High Cost:** As one of the largest growing economies, the steel sector is the cornerstone of India's growth, driving infrastructure and industrial development. To reach the country's latent potential, steel production would need to more than triple from the current approximately 125 million tonnes a year to more than 400 million tonnes by mid-century. This will incur a great cost.
- b. **Carbon emission:** The sector accounts for around 12% of the country's carbon emissions today, largely due to its continued reliance on coal. This presents a twin challenge for India, one of ensuring continued development, while meeting long-term climate targets.

Need for more sustainable infrastructure

The investments made in Steel today will determine the long term outlook of steel industry. India's inability to transition to carbon efficient technology will not only be environmentally disastrous but also burden the Indian economy.

- a. **Lesson from China:** countries around the world are taking important strides to transition the steel sector. China, for example, is slated to ramp up its scrap-based secondary steel making production and investment in green hydrogen to reduce reliance on coal in steel making.
- b. **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism:** The European Union has been on the de-carbonising journey for around two decades. Its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is driving the shift to cleaner steel making for those exporting steel to the region.
- c. **Global Competitiveness:** Countries unable to demonstrate low-carbon production will face steep border charges, risk losing access to premium export markets. Early movers in green steel will secure a decisive competitive advantage

Progress so far

- India has made important strides to set direction for the steel sector. The release of the government's Greening Steel Roadmap in September last year set a practical pathway for the sector's decarbonisation.
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission, expanding renewable capacity and carbon emission intensity targets for 253 steel units under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), demonstrates momentum.

Challenges

- Limited supply and the high cost of green hydrogen
- Insufficient renewable energy dedicated to industry
- Limited availability and the informal nature of the scrap market in India
- Consistent and assured availability of reasonably priced natural gas as the transition fuel
- Lack of long-maturity, low-cost debt for green steel projects and the need to de-risk them
- Need for workforce upskilling and technology support.

Many of these are challenges of policy and investment, areas where India has demonstrated rapid transformation when it wanted to, as seen in renewable energy over the past decade.

Way forward

- Rolling out the carbon price regime at the earliest, which would provide an appropriate mechanism for dispersing this cost of green steel through the value chain.
- In Europe we have seen that near zero emission technologies could become viable only after the carbon price reached \$90-\$100 a tonne of CO₂. India can learn from this experience when it comes to scheduling its own carbon emission targets.
- Creation of a domestic market through a public procurement policy for green steel and promotion of greener products with appropriate certification mechanisms and labelling in place.
- Natural gas will be a transition fuel for the steel industry as it moves towards hydrogen-based production. The government needs to make natural gas availability for the steel sector a priority.
- The government needs to set up hubs in key areas for development of green steel where costs of this infrastructure can be shared.

India must prioritize green steel immediately. Strong policies like blending mandates and subsidies paired with companies adopting clean tech (e.g., hydrogen-based production), will cut massive emissions from steelmaking.

38. A spark to drive India's e-LCV transition

Context: Light commercial vehicle (LCV), those small (sub-3.5 tonne) trucks that are the backbone of India's booming e-commerce economy. While India has spent years regulating passenger car energy consumption, LCVs have operated in a regulatory blind spot.

India has made significant strides in regulating fuel efficiency for passenger cars through corporate average fuel efficiency (CAFE) norms for fleet-wide CO₂ emission targets. However, LCVs operate without such mandates,

despite their high utilisation and substantial market presence.

Taking note of this, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in July 2025 unveiled a fuel consumption standard proposal for LCVs, which will run from 2027 through 2032. This initiative reflects Government's ambition for decarbonisation.

Why it matters?

LCVs in India accounted for 48% of commercial goods vehicles in 2024, yet electrification remained low at 2%. Bringing this sector under regulatory oversight is pivotal for India's clean transport agenda.

- a. **Marginal Electrification matters:** India's LCV fleet averaged 147.5 g CO₂/km in 2024. Without the minimal 2% share of battery electric LCVs (e-LCVs), this figure would be 150 g CO₂/km, which shows how even marginal electrification impacts emissions.
- b. **High cost, low purchase:** Automakers have entered the Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) market with few models, offering sub-35 kWh battery packs with maximum ranges of 150 km. High upfront costs and limited model availability constrain demand. Although battery LCVs offer lower total ownership costs than conventional LCVs, inconsistent purchase incentive policies among jurisdictions are not helping.
- c. **PM E-DRIVE:** the PM E-DRIVE incentive scheme excludes LCVs, though some State policies, such as those in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, provide support to overcome the initial acquisition barrier.

Hen and Egg story

Relaxed emission rules let carmakers tweak gas vehicles cheaply instead of switching to electric ones. Proof: Electric cars are just 3% of India's fleet after 8 years of weak standards

Key fact: At 116 g CO₂/km, it's cheaper for makers to use electric light commercial vehicles (e-LCVs) than upgrade gas ones. India's proposed 115 g limit is close but too weak for big change.

There's a catch: Cheap gas trucks cost under ₹1 million; electrics cost more, so makers hesitate. Strict rules + falling battery prices can spark a shift.

China, EU, and US use "super credits"—they count each electric vehicle multiple times for compliance, making electrics the smart choice.

India's plan adds super credits for e-LCVs (zero CO₂ emissions) but also rewards hybrids and improved gas tech. This splits focus, delays full electrics, and lets gas vehicles linger longer.

Way Forward

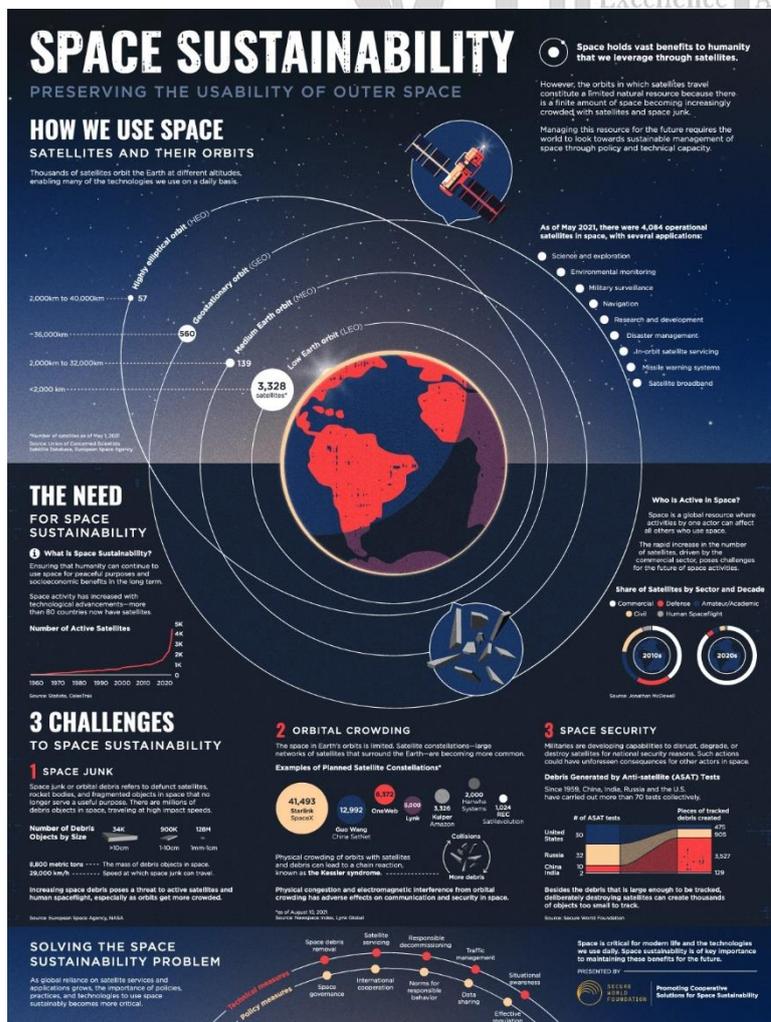
Smart policies can push truck makers to switch to electric vehicles. Strict emission limits make electrics cheaper to build than upgrading old gas trucks, while smart rewards speed up the change

India's passenger cars show what goes wrong: weak rules and extra perks keep electrics stuck at just 3%.

Science and Technology

39. How Re-usability can lead to cost-effective access to space

In News: Reusable rocket tech has transformed spaceflight from government-run, throwaway rockets to a private, reuse-driven era. Private companies, especially SpaceX, have repeatedly recovered and reused rocket stages, cutting launch costs by nearly five times and allowing more frequent launches. With the global space economy expected to cross USD 1 trillion by 2030.



Re-usable Rocket

Definition: Spacecraft designed to launch, land, and be refurbished for multiple flights.

Key Benefit: Drastically cuts space access costs by reusing expensive components like the booster; SpaceX's Falcon 9 leads the way.

How They Work

Vertical Takeoff & Landing (VTVL): Rockets launch vertically and use engines, grid fins (like on Falcon 9), and landing legs for controlled descent and landing back on Earth.

Advanced Software: Sophisticated flight computers and software manage complex maneuvers like boost-back burns, re-entry burns, and final landing.

Fuel Reserve: Carry extra fuel to perform landing burns, making them heavier but efficient overall.

Refurbishment: After landing, components are inspected, refurbished, and prepared for the next

flight, reducing the need to build new rockets.

Rocket fuel mass limits space launches in key ways.

- Rocket Equation: Shows most launch weight is fuel, leaving just 3-4% for payload in traditional rockets.

- Fuel Chain Reaction: You must carry fuel to lift more fuel, shrinking room for actual cargo.
- High Costs: Single-use rockets mean discarding everything after one flight, driving up expenses.

Why Access to Space Is Expensive

- Rockets must overcome gravity and aerodynamic drag, which requires large amounts of energy.
- According to the Tsiolkovsky rocket equation, over 90% of a rocket's mass is fuel and tanks, leaving less than 4% for payload.
- Human space missions cost 3–5 times more than satellite launches due to life-support, safety systems, redundancy, and complex mission planning.
- Traditional rockets are expendable, discarding stages after a single launch, which increases per-launch costs.

How has reusability altered rocket engineering economics?

- Stage Recovery: Enables retrieval of high-value components such as engines and avionics.
- Manufacturing Shift: Reduces dependence on repeated fabrication of complex propulsion systems.
- Launch Frequency: Supports rapid turnaround and higher mission cadence.

What operational innovations enable reusable launch systems?

- Precision Landing: Uses autonomous guidance, grid fins, and controlled burns for vertical recovery.
- Thermal and Structural Design: Ensures engines and stages withstand re-entry heat and stress.
- Refurbishment Protocols: Introduces inspection, testing, and component replacement cycles.

Can a recovered rocket stage be reused multiple times?

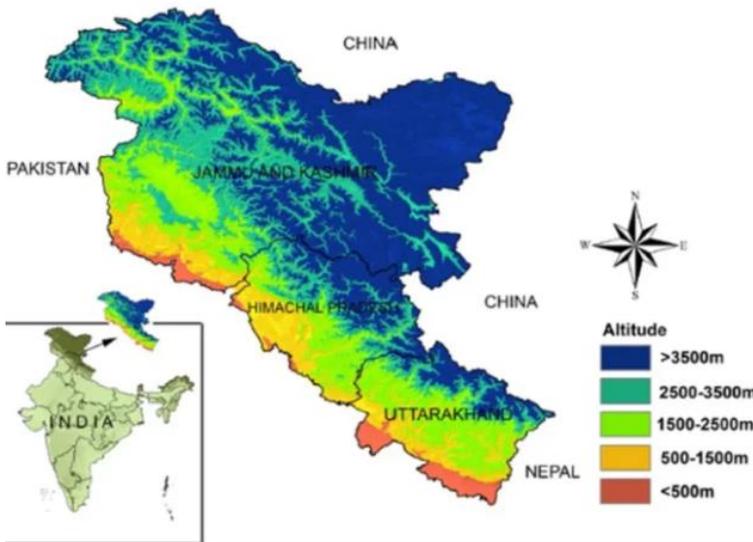
- Reuse Cycles: First stages of Falcon-9 rockets have been reused over 30 times.
- Economic Threshold: Savings from reuse outweigh refurbishment and inspection costs.
- Reliability Assurance: Requires rigorous testing to maintain safety and mission assurance.

How does reusability improve sustainability in space operations?

- Material Efficiency: Reduces consumption of metals, composites, and rare components.
- Debris Reduction: Limits discarded stages that contribute to space and ocean debris.
- Environmental Impact: Lowers lifecycle emissions by minimizing repeated manufacturing.

Geography

40. Avalanche in Sonmarg



In News: An avalanche hit Sonamarg tourist resort in Jammu and Kashmir.

What is an Avalanche?

An avalanche is a rapid downslope movement of a large detached mass of snow, ice, and associated debris, such as rocks and vegetation.

It occurs when the force of gravity on the snow cover exceeds its mechanical strength, causing the snowpack to fracture and descend rapidly down a mountainside.

Type	Description
Loose Snow Avalanche	Starts at a single point (like a "point release"); snow fans out in a pear shape as it slides; usually smaller and less likely to bury people. Can be dry (powdery) or wet.
Slab Avalanche	A cohesive slab of snow breaks off along a weak layer; most dangerous type, responsible for 90%+ of avalanche deaths; moves fast and can bury victims. Can be dry or wet.
Gliding Avalanche	Whole snowpack slides slowly as a unit over the ground; rare but powerful; often on grassy slopes.
Powder Avalanche	Forms from slab avalanches lifting into a fast-moving cloud of airborne snow; reaches extreme speeds up to 300 km/h.
Wet Snow Avalanche	Snow saturated with water; slower but heavy and destructive; triggered by warming or rain.

41. The EV Boom is accelerating a Copper Crunch

Context: The use of Electric Vehicles has increased manifold but underneath this growing demand, shortage of copper is a looming threat.



Copper is indispensable for electrification and forms the backbone of EV batteries, motors, wiring, charging infrastructure, and power grids.

Over the past decade, EVs have moved from a niche product to the fastest-growing segment of the global automotive industry, with profound consequences for the global commodity systems.

Between 2015 and 2025, global EV sales rose from approximately 0.55 million units to an estimated 20

million units, while associated copper consumption surged from roughly 27.5 thousand tonnes to over 1.28 million tons, showing copper to be the hidden backbone of the EV revolution.

However, supply growth has lagged due to decades of underinvestment, declining ore grades, and the 10-15 year development cycle for new mines. So, copper shortages could hit by 2026, shaking up global trade, sparking geopolitical fights, and slowing down EV rollout with higher costs.

EV Growth= Copper demand

EV sales growth directly drives up copper demand. From 2016-2024, copper use for EVs jumped from 39,000 tonnes to 1.1 million tonnes as sales rose from 0.75 million to 17 million vehicles. Copper demand has surged faster than the demand for EVs.

Copper deficit

While copper demand is rising sharply, global supply has begun to plateau, creating a widening gap often described as a “jaw-opening deficit”

- Lower ore quality in current mines, 10-year delays for new ones, and green opposition in big producers like Chile, Peru, and the US limit copper supply growth.
- In 2024, supply tops demand by 0.3 million tonnes. But by 2026, demand hits 30 million tonnes while supply trails at 28 million tonnes.
- The gap will grow to 4.5 million tons by 2028 and almost 8 million tons by 2030—that's like losing output from the world's top 10 copper mines.

- This could raise EV prices, slow charging networks, and miss green energy goals. Copper shortages may bottleneck electrification unless mining, recycling, and new materials ramp up fast.

Global Market Shift

China's dominance: Leads EV copper demand—from 78,000 tonnes (2020) to 678,000 tonnes (2024), hitting 780,000 tonnes by 2025 (nearly 60% of global EV copper use).

China's edge: Strong EV sales + control of 70% of battery production and full supply chain give pricing power and leverage over suppliers.

Big Picture Impacts

- **Power balance changes:** China gains strategic advantage in copper-rich areas; access rivals battery tech as top priority.
- **EV revolution's reach:** Reshapes metals trade; copper is electrification's key resource.
- **Warning for leaders:** Demand will outstrip supply soon—unprecedented crunch. Need fast action on mining, recycling, and innovation, or geology slows green goals over ambition.

Copper is electrification's hidden bottleneck. As EV demand surges, shortages will slow the green shift unless mining, recycling, and innovation scale fast turning geology into the real limit on ambition.

42. Kerala's first butterfly sanctuary



Kerala's first butterfly sanctuary is the Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary in Kannur district. Originally the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (established 1984), it was renamed in June 2025 to highlight its exceptional butterfly habitat spanning 55 sq km of tropical and semi-evergreen forests in the Western Ghats.

Key Highlights

Butterfly Diversity: Hosts 266+ species (over 80% of Kerala's total), including rare/endemic ones like Common Albatross and Danaine species.

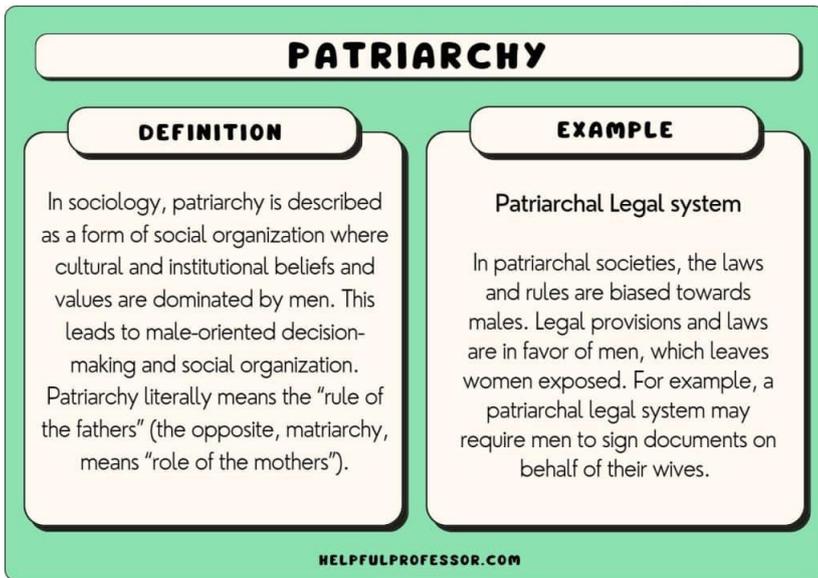
Migration Hotspot: Peak season (Dec-Feb) features massive butterfly migrations along rivers, drawing researchers and eco-tourists.

Significance: First in India; promotes conservation, surveys (25+ years with Malabar Natural History Society), and awareness for pollinator

Indian Society and Culture

43. From Shadows of Patriarchy

Context: A woman in Haryana gave birth to a son after 10 daughters. This incident has sparked discussions around maternal health, preference for a male child and how patriarchy is still deeply rooted in society.



India's push-and-pull on Reproductive Rights

India enacted a seemingly liberal abortion legislation as early as 1971, concerns about women's rights were hardly the drivers behind it.

Rather, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (MTPA) was motivated by fears about population growth in India and part of a host of measures (including forcible sterilisation) targeted at

reducing the population growth rate.

- Women's bodies were thus, at least partially, a means to achieve the State's end of population control

Legalisation of abortion

Legalisation of abortion in India was also motivated by concerns about preserving the lives of women. Here too, rights were not the frame used. Rather than centering women as competent decision-makers whose reproductive decisions ought to be respected and enabled, including by providing access to safe abortions, the State benevolently stepped in to protect women from unscrupulous medical providers.

Constitutional Provision

Constitutional & Judicial Standing: The Supreme Court recognizes reproductive choice as a fundamental right under Article 21, interpreting it to include the right to procreate or abstain from procreating.

Privacy and Equality

The right to equality and non-discrimination has gradually become part of the constitutional framing of reproductive rights in India. Privacy and equality play two distinct roles in underpinning reproductive rights. While privacy recognises that reproductive decision-making is intimate, a reflection of individual identity, equality

foregrounds that members of certain disadvantaged groups have been (and are being) denied reproductive rights because of their group identity.

Maternal Health and Male child preference

Maternal health in India has improved, with the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) declining to 88 per 100,000 live births (2020–22), yet deep-rooted male child preference continues to drive gender imbalances and endanger women's lives.

The desire for sons, driven by economic and patriarchal norms, leads to high-risk pregnancies, neglect of daughters, and a skewed child sex ratio.

TABLE 1

MORE SONS OR MORE DAUGHTERS?

	WOMEN WHO PREFER...		MEN WHO PREFER...	
	MORE SONS THAN DAUGHTERS	MORE DAUGHTERS THAN SONS	MORE SONS THAN DAUGHTERS	MORE DAUGHTERS THAN SONS
All India	15.40%	3.40%	16%	4.10%
Bihar	31.30%	1.90%	22%	2.80%
Uttar Pradesh	23.10%	1.90%	22.40%	3%
Jharkhand	24.30%	2.10%	16.40%	2%
Rajasthan	15.60%	1.70%	15.90%	2.10%
Meghalaya	15.40%	21.20%	18.40%	11.60%

This case in Haryana underscores persistent patriarchal pressures in rural India, where repeated pregnancies for a male heir endanger women, even as doctors manage outcomes successfully calling for stronger awareness and family planning support.

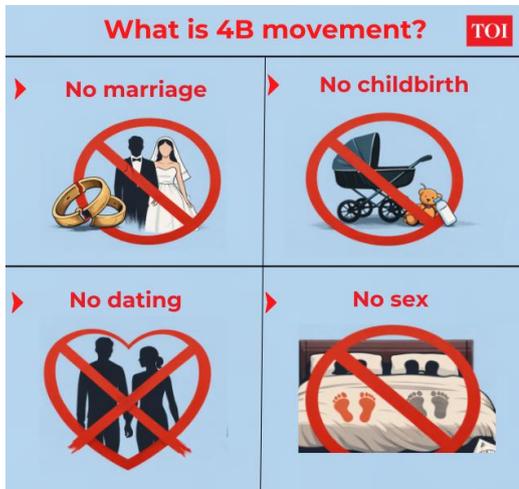
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44. 4B Movement

45. The 4B movement originally emerged in South Korea as a radical feminist idea built around four refusals: no dating men, no sex with men, no marriage, and no childbirth. It was a response to intense social

pressures, beauty standards, workplace discrimination, and deeply unequal gender expectations.

But when this concept travels to India, it does not land in the same form.



What's different in India?

India is socially, culturally, and economically different. The issues faced by Indian women are often more foundational — safety in public spaces, financial independence, unequal domestic workload, family pressure, and access to education or healthcare.

Because of this, the 4 B movement here transforms from a strict rejection into a broader conversation about choice.

Zeal Excellence Tenacity Achievement

In Indian cities, the 4B impact shows up quietly in daily choices, not big protests.

- A woman delaying marriage to finish her master's.
- Someone moving for a job despite family gossip.
- A working pro refusing to quit after getting engaged

Difference between Indian and Korean society

Approach to Change: Korea's 4B is outright protest—women reject marriage, dating, sex, and childbirth with men as radical refusal. India's version uses negotiation—postponing marriage, making motherhood optional, redefining relationships with boundaries.

Cultural Absorption: Korea pushes separation from patriarchy; India remixes global ideas into local norms, turning refusal into recalibration for dignity within society.

Visibility: Korea features organized campaigns and slogans; India shows subtle, everyday choices like delaying marriage for education or prioritizing careers quietly.

Societal Pressures

Family Influence: Both face pressure, but India's "log kya kahenge" (what will people say) weighs heavily on careers, clothes, and timing; Korea's movement confronts it head-on.

Economic Factors: India's women often battle financial dependence and disproportionate home duties; Korea's focuses more on systemic misogyny without as much emphasis on economic layers.

Safety & Mobility: India stresses practical safety (lit paths, crowds) and neglected health; Korea ties it to broader gender violence.

Outcomes

Revolution vs Revision: Korea seeks mass rejection and autonomy via isolation; India aims for balance—partnership over permission, choice over obligation, agency through "not now" pauses.

Scale & Pace: Korea's is vocal rebellion; India's is a gradual whisper in conversations, metros, and families—personal, not trending loudly.



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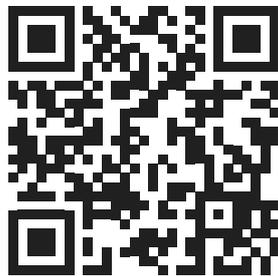
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